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NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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GCTU HOLDS ITS SEVENTH CONGRESS

One hundred and thirty-nine delegates from 10 national trade union centres and 28 industrial Trade Union Internationals representing a total of approx. 50 million workers took part in the 7th Congress of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) held 12 September 2012, at the Palace of Labour in Moscow. Among the invitees were also representatives of interstate CIS structures, the business community, friendly international and national trade union organisations, and media representatives.

In his report to the Congress, GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov summed up the activities of the Confederation in between the 6th and the 7th Congresses of the GCTU (2007–2012.).

He said, in particular, that the last five year period had been full of significant political, economic and so-

cial developments in the countries of the region. Their internal policies had paid more attention to the social component. Democratic institutions had been further developed, trade unions had a greater say in society, and their influence on issues in the sphere of social and labour relations had increased. The solidarity of trade unions in the fight for workers' rights and interests had stood the test and grown stronger.

However, the global crisis that broke out in 2008 had a negative impact on all aspects of social life. It not only caused an economic recession, slowed down the growth and modernisation of the economy, but also brought about an obvious rollback in the social sphere.

In the period to come, the GCTU and its affiliates will concentrate on the fight for the creation and preservation of decent jobs, for full and productive employment, for a significant increase in wages and salaries, for a radical increase in the minimum pension,

and for fair distribution of the national product. The unions will strongly resist any attempts to infringe on labour rights and trade union freedoms, and to dismantle the system of collective and individual labour relations as a most important foundation for social stability. They will also in every way protect trade union property.

With this purpose in view, the unions intend to cooperate extensively with progressive political forces and other civil society organisations and international trade union federations.

Congress approved the trade union slogan for the next five year period: «Reliable Guarantees for Decent Work and Social Justice».

Fifteen delegates contributed to the debates on the progress report. The discussion was wound up with the adoption of several important documents, among them:

- Guidelines for the Activity of the General Confederation of Trade Unions in 2012–2017;
- Resolutions «Protect Workers' Rights, Defend Trade Union Freedoms», «The Minimum Wages: Current Challenges and the Tasks of Trade Unions in the Newly Independent States», «The Trade Union Youth Policy», «A Decent Living to the Region's Pensioners»; and
- Statement «Together with World Trade Unions in the Fight for Decent Work and Social Justice!» (See below).

The Congress elected the governing bodies of the General Confederation

of Trade Unions. Bro Mikhail Shmakov, the leader of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, was elected President of the GCTU, and Bro Viktor Karnyushin, Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of CIS Forest Industries, Vice President of the GCTU. Bro Vladimir Scherbakov was re-elected GCTU General Secretary.

The Congress also formed the Council and the Executive Committee of the GCTU. At its first session held immediately after the Congress, the Council elected Sis Natalia Podshibyakina and Bros Albert Potapov and Valery Yuriev as Deputy General Secretaries of the Confederation.

TOGETHER WITH WORLD TRADE UNIONS IN THE FIGHT FOR DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

*Statement by the GCTU
7th Congress*

The delegates to the 7th Congress of the General Confederation of Trade Unions mark the steadily growing demand for international solidarity and united actions by world trade unions, and reaffirm that the GCTU and its affiliates are willing to contribute towards their further development and strengthening.

The global financial and economic crisis that broke out in 2008 and has brought a social crisis in its wake is still being felt in most countries. Its main outcome is the unprecedented growth of mass unemployment involv-

ing over 200 million people worldwide, including 75 million youths. This is accompanied by a serious drop in the living standards and social protection of workers, attacks on their rights, and attempts by governments and employers to dilute the very essence of social policy.

The crisis has exacerbated the challenges of globalisation, and revealed the distortions and ills that have prevailed in the global economy over the last decade, which trade unions have repeatedly warned against. The real economy was actually in the service of financial capital, while the role of multinational corporations, banks, and international monetary, financial and trade institutions had unduly increased. The persistent idea is being impressed on the peoples that privatisation of vital public services is an inevitable necessity and that the state and municipal sectors of the economy are losing ground. As their brothers and sisters all over the world, workers in the countries of GCTU affiliates have also been hit by the negative effects of the crisis.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions is deeply concerned with the anti-union campaigns inspired by employers and authorities at different levels that have become too frequent in the region, as elsewhere in the world. The purpose of the attacks is to curtail the universally recognised trade union freedoms, and the rights of trade unions to protect workers' interests, including the fundamental right to organise and bar-

gain collectively as enshrined in the ILO Conventions.

Convincing evidence of the increased attacks on trade union rights and freedoms is provided by the destructive position taken by the Employers' Group at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2012, as they blocked the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards, and made an attempt to undermine the whole supervisory machinery of the Organisation. Delegates to the GCTU 7th Congress strongly condemn such acts by employers, and call on all trade unions of the world to give them a fitting rebuff.

In these circumstances, workers and trade unions need more than ever to join forces and develop solidarity and unity of action among the various components of the world trade union movement. The resemblance or similarity of tasks to be solved pushes them objectively to do so. The recent global economic crisis showed that such unity can be a possibility, as the world trade union movement, with unprecedented unanimity, raised their voice against the plans to pull the world economy out of recession at the cost of gross violations of social and labour rights. This encouraging fact was received with great satisfaction and enthusiasm by the trade union movement in our region.

Congress urges trade unions in all countries to jointly seek solutions to the two fundamental global chal-

lenges: implementation of decent work and promotion of social justice for all. The accomplishment of these two tasks will bring humanity closer to a New Era of Social Justice proclaimed as an aim to be achieved by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The guidelines and benchmarks for these actions should be drawn from the Decent Work Agenda adopted by the ILO in 1999, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation of 2008, the Global Jobs Pact, conventions, and other ILO instruments.

We are confident that the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda will facilitate a sustained economic growth in the world, help establish the principles of social justice in the labour relations, reduce poverty, and strengthen the viability of enterprises, jobs, and society in general.

Congress declares that the GCTU as a stakeholder interested in the success of this struggle is, as always, ready to work together with other organisations of the international trade union movement in order to:

1. Prevent a return to the old order of things in the world economic relations. The new model of the global economy should be geared to the goals of social justice for a fair globalisation, and be built with due regard for the interests of all national economies through effective, democratic and responsible governance, in the spirit of the demands and proposals contained in the Washington, London, Pittsburgh and other well-

known declarations by the Global Unions, supported by the GCTU and its affiliates.

The dominant role of financial markets in the world economy should be eliminated. We must in every possible way reject the attempts by employers and/or governments to use the current and future crises as an excuse to justify their policies that worsen the living and working conditions, reduce social security, infringe on workers' rights and the freedom of trade union activity, and refuse to respect the collective agreements and other commitments in the sphere of social policy.

2. Insist on a speedy resolution of the most acute among today's social problems, namely the elimination of mass unemployment on the basis of the ILO Global Jobs Pact. Full and productive employment must be provided for all, and primarily for young people. The path to this goal lies through increased investment in the real economy, strengthening its public sector, enhancing the regulatory role of the state, and expanding green employment. Simultaneously, a decisive rebuff must be given to the policy of extending the informal economy, the increasingly wider spreading of agency contract labour and other forms of atypical or precarious employment that reduce workers' protection and erode the traditional framework of social dialogue; and the use of child, forced and bonded labour. We believe that the active involvement of world trade unions in the implementation of the

decent work principles will speed up the fulfilment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by the world community.

3. Seek to preserve and expand universally the social guarantees and worthy, adequate work remuneration. Trade unions of all countries should join efforts in the fight for decent wages, for the creation of social protection nets covering all workers without exception. Congress appeals to the world's trade unions and other civil society organisations to insist that the governments and employers ratify and observe ILO Convention No. 102 on the Minimum Standards of Social Security, and support and implement ILO Autonomous Recommendation No. 202 on the Minimum Social Protection Floors adopted by the 101st session of the International Labour Conference.

4. Through joint efforts and fraternal solidarity, thwart any encroachments by governments and employers on workers' social, economic and political rights, including the right to organise and bargain collectively. We are confident that full respect for trade union rights and freedoms is easier to achieve where social dialogue is well established and where a strong system of collective bargaining is available at all levels, including TNC structures.

We call on the member organisations of the General Confederation of Trade Unions to step up their fight for decent work and social justice to be established in the whole world.

Congress confirms that in the forthcoming period the GCTU and its affiliates will carry on their policy of open, constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with the International Confederation of Trade Unions and its Pan-European Regional Council, the European Trade Union Confederation, the Global Union Federations, and other regional and national trade union organisations. As an integral part of the international trade union movement, our Confederation will, within its mandate, continue to do all it can for this cooperation to be successful.

GCTU CALLS TO MARK WDDW

On the occasion of the forthcoming World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) 7 October, the General Confederation of Trade Unions appealed to its affiliates 22 August 2012 with a Statement which, in particular, reads as follows:

«The Decent Work Agenda launched by the ILO in 1999 was enthusiastically supported by the world trade union movement. Since 2008, on the initiative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), a World Day for Decent Work has been marked throughout the world.

«As part of their fight for decent work, world trade unions pay individual attention to the specific problems of certain categories of workers, such as women, youth, the unemployed (whose number has recently been soaring); migrant workers, work-

ers in the informal economy with its most severe exploitation, agency workers and other categories in the new forms of employment generated by the rapid advance of globalisation and scientific and technological progress.

«The ITUC proposes that the provision of youth employment, as the most acute problem to be solved in the world of work, should be made a main theme of this year's WDDW. Today, young people make up 40 per cent, or 75 million, of the world's unemployed, which is four million more than in the pre-crisis year 2007.

«The General Confederation of Trade Unions shares fully the concern of the international community over the current situation. In our region, the problem of youth employment has been particularly aggravated by the global financial and economic crisis. Today, the unemployment rate among young people in the countries is two to three times higher than among older workers. In some of the states, they account for over 40 per cent of the total number of unemployed. This represents a serious barrier that will hamper the progress of the younger generation to a living in dignity.

«Together with trade unions around the world, the GCTU believes that overcoming the employment crisis and, above all, solving the problem of youth unemployment, will require appropriate adjustments to the investment policies. Trade unions should insist on creating new jobs through heavier investment in the real econ-

omy, establishing up-to-date systems of vocational training and retraining tied to the real needs of the market, and cultivating the idea of inter-generational solidarity in public opinion.

«Our post-crisis times are also characterised by increasingly sharp all-out attacks by employers (often with the support or connivance of the authorities) on the rights of workers and the freedom of their trade unions, including the paramount rights to bargain collectively and to strike. Such a trend can be observed both at national and international levels. At the recent session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, the Employers' Group actually questioned workers' right to strike. This goes to show that the business quarters intend to deal with the effects of the global crisis by deteriorating the working and living conditions and encroaching upon the rights of employees and trade unions, rather than by sound economic restructuring, with due regard for the lessons learned from the crisis. And this is still another serious challenge facing trade unions now.

«The fight for decent work and social justice, and for full and productive employment, including the provision of jobs for young people, will be the motto and keynote of the upcoming 7th Congress of the General Confederation of Trade Unions to be held 12 September 2012. We are confident that its decisions will provide a good guidance and help in the struggles waged by trade unions in our region to protect the dignity of the working person».

The GCTU called on its affiliates to mark, widely and publicly, the World Day for Decent Work 7 October 2012, with a particular accent on youth employment and the need to rebuff resolutely attacks on workers' rights and trade union freedoms.

AZERBAIJAN: PRESIDENT ALIYEV GETS GCTU AWARD

A delegation of the General Confederation of Trade Unions led by GCTU President Mikhail Shmakov met with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in Baku 3 July 2012.

During the meeting, Mikhail Shmakov expressed his appreciation for the constructive cooperation the state authorities of Azerbaijan maintain with the trade unions which play a worthy role in the social and political life of the country. GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov added that the recent session of the GCTU Executive Committee in Baku had adopted a special resolution approving the effective contribution by the Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation to the development of social partnership.

President Aliyev was presented the highest GCTU award – the Golden Badge of Honour for services to the trade union movement.

He said he received it as a sign of high appreciation for the collaboration between the government and the trade union movement, and stressed that the main objective of the

Azerbaijani state was to improve the social conditions of the people, and to raise the country's economy to a new level. In solving these problems, the Government will continue relying on the unions.

AZERBAIJAN: LAW ON UNIONS PARTIALLY REVISED

On the 21st of August, 2012 the Parliament passed a resolution on the addendum to the Law on Trade Unions.

According to the amendment introduced, «trade union dues shall be collected from the wages of employees through the accounts department of the enterprise/organisation, regardless of their form of ownership, and shall within four days be transferred by the employer to the account of the trade union organisation.»

This decision is expected to enhance the role of trade unions in enterprises, and improve their material basis.

BELARUS: FPB WILLING TO BE INVOLVED IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) intends to get involved in the parliamentary election campaign.

According to FPB President Leonid Kozik, «elections are a most important campaign, which has a direct effect on the further development

of Belarusian society, as for the next four years the MPs we elect will largely determine the country's course through passing new laws. The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, as the largest mass public organisation, can't stay away».

The election campaign started 18 June 2012, and the unions are actively nominating their representatives to the election commissions. About 300 people from FPB and its affiliates are expected to be working in the 110 district commissions.

BELARUS: COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS – FOR UNION MEMBERS ONLY?

Speaking to the plenary meeting of the FPB Council 17 September 2012, the President of the Federation Leonid Kozik pointed to the major problems that trade unions will have to solve in the near future. These include, among others, higher wages, growth of productivity through modernisation of production, enforcing discipline and order in the workplaces, etc.

Speakers at the meeting said a lot had been done to protect the rights and interests of workers over the previous six months. Thus, the average real monthly pay in the Minsk area had increased by 10.1 per cent, while the industrial production by 5.1 per cent. However, the incomes of those employed in agriculture, education and health remain relatively low. The improvement of housing

conditions is also an acute problem to be solved.

Council members said they would insist that the terms and conditions of the collective agreements should apply only to union members on whose behalf they were concluded. FPB has been advocating the adoption of such a law since 2003, but, until now, the initiative has not received support from either the government or the employers. In this connection, the FPB President suggested that, for the time being, collective agreements should contain separate articles for unionised and nonunionised workers.

The plenary decided that the discount on health resort vouchers for members of FPB-affiliated unions should be raised to reach 25 per cent of the total cost.

GEORGIA: AND ONCE AGAIN, LABOUR CODE

The Chief Adviser to the Georgian Prime told representatives of the ETUC and ITUC in July 2012 that the government was planning to amend the discriminatory articles of the Labour Code to bring it into conformity with ILO Conventions. A similar statement had been made by spokespersons of the Georgian government last January at a meeting at the U.S. Department of Commerce

The Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) believes that the serious shortcomings in the Labour

Code have hampered the development of free trade relations with the United States and the EU, and this fact forces the authorities to make concessions. The unions are concerned that the government is doing so under the pressure from abroad, avoiding contact with their social partners.

The issues have never been discussed with trade unions of Georgia. Meanwhile, the government should know that international partners will never recognise the amendments, unless they have been developed with trade union involvement.

The GTUC, once again, called on the government to take immediate steps in this direction. For their part, the unions are willing to actively participate in the preparation and implementation of the overdue amendments to the Labour Code.

KAZAKHSTAN: FTURK DEMANDS STOP TO UNION HARRASSMENT

On the 7th of September 2012, the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FTURK) issued a statement «Stop the attack on the constitutional rights of trade unions and their leaders,» which, in particular, says:

«The Federation of Trade Unions has been receiving numerous complaints from different regions of the country about facts of interference in trade union activities by public supervision and control agencies, in particular, lo-

cal prosecutor's offices, national security bodies, the financial police, and tax authorities.

Such unlawful actions are not conducive to the development of cooperation and partnership relations of the authorities with the largest public organisation, the trade unions. On the contrary, they will lead to division and resentment, which is dangerous in itself.

In this connection, the Federation of Trade Unions voices its protest and warns that it will legally protect the rights of each trade union structure and their leaders.

We demand that the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO) suspend its order for establishing unduly stricter control over the activities of local trade union bodies. In accordance with the memorandum signed, we call on the PGO to join our efforts to eliminate the 100-billion wage arrears and prevent violations of labour legislation by employers.

We urge trade union leaders and activists to be more principled and firm in performing their duties to protect labour rights, and social and economic interests of the union members, and, simultaneously, strictly observe the rules of law.»

Over the entire history of independence, the Statement says, even at its most dramatic moments, the trade unions of Kazakhstan, organising a total of 38 per cent of the country's employees, have never resorted to

destabilising actions, seeking to resolve all disputes within the legal framework.

The FTURK appealed to President Nazarbayev as the guarantor of the constitutional rights to protect trade unions against the attacks, and proposed that 2013 be declared the «Year of the Working People.»

KYRGYZSTAN UNIONS DISCUSS INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT

As part of the preparation for the World Day for Decent Work-2012, the Youth Council of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU), in conjunction with the Union of Construction Workers, held a workshop on informal employment in Cholpon-Ata from 20-23 September 2012.

The purpose of the workshop was to exchange experiences and views on issues such as strengthening the position of trade unions vis-à-vis their social partners and the executive authorities in the attempt to solve the problem of employment in the informal sector, and mobilise society for protecting workers' rights in the informal economy.

In addition to trade union activists and the Youth Council members, participants in the workshop included representatives of the National Social Fund, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment, and the State Inspectorate for Environmental and Labour Safety.

MOLODVA: CNSM REJECTS LIVING WAGE LAW

The National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM) appealed to the country's President Nicolae Timofti asking him not to promulgate the law on the subsistence minimum.

In a letter sent to the head of state, CNSM Vice President Mihail Hincu described the Act of Parliament as inefficient and proposing nothing new.

«The aim of the law was to establish an indicator providing a basis for calculating the minimum social protection guarantees; besides, this indicator was also to be used as an «argument» for stabilising these guarantees within the financial capacity of the state. Well, we know only too well that the financial capacity may change together with circumstances», said Mihail Hincu.

According to him, the unions were against such phraseology, but, being aware of the limited financial resources in the state, proposed that a step-by-step plan should be developed to achieve the goals.

Nor do the unions accept the statistical method for determining the average sum spent monthly on foodstuffs and services, as it does not reflect the actual needs. For this reason, the CNSM insists that the law on the subsistence minimum be recommitted to Parliament for reconsideration.

RUSSIA: UNIONS DISCUSS DECENT WORK STANDARDS

At its session held 22 August 2012, the Executive Committee of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) reviewed the preparations for the World Day for Decent Work to be marked on October 7.

In addition, the session addressed issues related to trade union monitoring of the regional programmes of health-care modernisation, and took stock of the FNPR youth policy. The participants elected delegates to the 7th congress of the General Confederation of Trade Unions.

The Executive Committee decided that FNPR should be actively involved in the preparatory work for the International High-Level Conference on Decent Work to be organised in December 2012 by the Russian Government jointly with the national organisations of trade unions and employers, and with the support of the ILO.

As part of this process, trade unions in the federal districts will hold scientific and action-oriented conferences 'Decent Work as the Basis for Social Policy». The conferences will end with the adoption of the document 'Standards for Decent Work' that the FNPR intends to present to the December conference in Moscow. Prior to that, the 'Standards for Decent Work' will be widely discussed at the events to be organised by trade unions at various levels in connection with the World Day for Decent Work.

RUSSIA: FNPR AGAINST TRANSFER OF LABOUR INSPECTION TO REGIONS

The Russian government has instructed the relevant agencies to develop a draft law on the transfer of the federal powers to supervise the compliance with labour laws to the executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

In a letter sent to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in late August FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov reminded him that the Russian Constitution expressly and unambiguously refers the state supervision and enforcement of federal laws to the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

Inspections made by the Federal Labour Inspectorate have revealed that regional and local authorities often violate federal law themselves (especially in what concerns wages and labour protection), or in every possible way cover such violations and violators.»

«The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia considers it unacceptable to transfer the federal powers in supervising the observance of labour legislation to the executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. We believe that the Federal Labour Inspectorate and its regional bodies must be subordinated directly to the Government, and renamed to the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Labour», the letter says in conclusion.

Responding to the FNPR request, the Government has instructed the relevant ministries and departments to give the matter additional consideration, and prepare proposals in consultation with the trade unions.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT MEETS WITH APEC UNION LEADERS

On the eve of the APEC Summit in Vladivostok, the leaders of the Asia-Pacific Labour Network of the ITUC (ITUC/APLN) met in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin 3 September 2012.

Participants in the meeting, organised on the initiative of FNPR, discussed sustainable economic development, economic integration, job creation, protection of labour and social rights, and other questions. In addition, they touched upon some issues in connection with the forthcoming G-20 presidency of Russia.

The trade union delegation consisted of ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the TUAC OECD John Evans, General Secretary of the ITUC Regional Organisation for Asia-Pacific Noriyuki Suzuki, FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov, and leaders of other trade union centres of Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, and Vietnam.

«We have handed President Putin the union statement for the APEC summit, which sets out our proposals for solving labour relations problems in

the Asia-Pacific region», said Mikhail Shmakov after the meeting.

According to Sharan Burrow, President of Russia generally supported the trade union idea to promote dialogue between the unions and labour ministries in the course of preparations for the G-20 summits and other high-level meetings.

RUSSIA: FNPR CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY

Within the framework of «Week of Trade Unions», dedicated to the anniversary of FNPR, the Academy of Labour and Social Affairs (ALSR) organised a discussion club meeting on 18 September 2012 to debate about the modernisation and innovative development of trade unions.

The discussion was attended by leaders and experts of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) and its member organisations, as well as researchers from the ALSR.

Speaking to the session, FNPR Vice President Galina Kelekhsayeva stressed that a successful modernisation of trade unions implied new tools of motivation, improved human resource management, and «access to outer world».

Trade union MP Mikhail Tarasenko pointed to the imperfection of the legislative and regulatory framework of trade unions, which hinders the development of rational trade union pat-

terns, while the Chair of the FNPR Standing Committee for Organising and Personnel Policies Andrey Chekmenev spoke of the need to improve the management of trade union structures.

TAJIKISTAN: MINIMUM WAGES TO GO UP BY 2.5 TIMES

Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon issued a decree declaring a new stage in raising the minimum wages, the minimum and maximum pensions, students' scholarships, and the salaries social institutions employees that will begin as from 1 September 2012.

The minimum monthly pay in all industries will increase by 2.5 times to reach 200 somoni, or around 42 USD, as against today's 80 somoni, or about 16 dollars.

The salaries of those employed in general education institutions, in particular, teachers in secondary schools, colleges, high schools, and all types of boarding schools, preschool teachers, and workers in homes for the elderly and disabled will increase by 60 per cent, while the salaries of science and higher education workers by 30 per cent.

Simultaneously, the state scholarships for students and postgraduates, and the minimum and maximum retirement pensions will be raised by 30 per cent.

It should be noted that benefits and social pensions will rise together

with the minimum pension, as they are calculated based on the latter's amount.

UKRAINE: FPU IDENTIFIES SOLUTIONS TO TOPICAL PROBLEMS

At its meeting in Kyiv 10 July 2012, the Presidium of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) considered several topical issues of workers' socio-economic protection.

The meeting identified the position to be taken by trade unions on the introduction of a contributory system of compulsory state pension insurance. In particular, the Federation will see to it that the new system does not produce a negative effect on the financial support of the current solidarity pension system.

The Presidium recommended that the FPU leadership initiate the development and adoption by state authorities of regulatory legal acts that would ensure the safety of pension funds.

Presidium members discussed a number of other pressing issues, including streamlining the system of benefits to certain categories of people, the preparations for signing the General Agreement for a new term, the measures to be taken by FPU to promote ILO Conventions and other instruments of international law as directly applicable acts, and optimising the system of higher education institutions.

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GCTU INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT AND
GCTU PUBLIC RELATIONS CENTRE
42 LENINSKY PROSPEKT
119119 MOSCOW, RUSSIA
TELEFAX +7(495) 938-2155
PHONE +7(495) 938-0112
Web site: www.vkp.ru;
E-mail: inter@vkp.ru

THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, GCTU, IS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATION THAT WAS FOUNDED AT ITS FIRST CONGRESS ON 16 APRIL 1992.

ITS CONSTITUTION, WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE FIRST CONGRESS, WAS AMENDED AND SUPPLEMENTED BY THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 22 SEPTEMBER 1993, THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 18 SEPTEMBER 1997, AND THE FIFTH (EXTRAORDINARY) CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 26 MARCH 2004.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GCTU ARE:

- CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' ACTIVITIES ON THE PROTECTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS OF WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PENSIONERS;
 - ASSISTANCE IN THEIR PROTECTION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES;
- AND
- ORGANISING TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY AND CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.

THE GCTU BUILDS ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITH FULL RESPECT FOR ITS AFFILIATES' COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND THE EQUALITY OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES.
THE GCTU AFFILIATES NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRES OF ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN AND UKRAINE, AND ALSO 28 INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS.

THE GCTU IS READY TO CO-OPERATE WITH ANY OTHER NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR AFFILIATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

THE CONFEDERATION ENJOYS OBSERVER STATUS WITH THE CIS AND EURASEC INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLIES, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, THE CIS INTERSTATE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, ETC.

INTERNATIONALLY, IT IS IN CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE ILO , THE UN DPI AND THE ECOSOC.

THE GCTU SUPREME BODIES ARE THE CONGRESS, CONVENED EVERY FIVE YEARS, AND, IN THE INTERVALS BETWEEN THE CONGRESSES, THE COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IS EXERCISED BY THE GCTU AUDITING COMMISSION.

PRESIDENT OF THE GCTU IS MIKHAIL SHMAKOV,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GCTU IS VLADIMIR SCHERBAKOV

DEAR READERS

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