



# *inform* **contact**

## **NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

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### **GCTU LEADER MEETS WITH CRIMEAN UNIONISTS**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2013, General Secretary of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) Vladimir Scherbakov met with activists of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of the Crimea (FITUC), a largest regional affiliate of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine.

The GCTU leader briefed the audience on the activities and current tasks of the Confederation, stressing that the main challenge for the region's unions today was to ensure reliable guarantees of decent work and social justice.

Vladimir Scherbakov presented commemorative silver badges "20 Years of GCTU" to several FITUC leaders and activists in recognition of their contributions to the development of the trade union movement and strengthening trade union solidarity.

### **GCTU CALLS TO MARK WDDW-13 ON LARGE SCALE**

In connection with the forthcoming sixth World Day for Decent Work to be marked on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, the GCTU issued a statement 19 August 2013 entitled "Strengthening the trade union movement, a key to a successful struggle for decent work".

"In the six years that have passed since trade unions started to observe the World Day for Decent Work, says the Statement, dozens of millions of workers have taken part in different protest activities held 7 October to jointly assert their rights and freedoms, stipulated by the Decent Work Agenda adopted by the ILO in 1999.

This year, trade unions all over the world will once again be demanding social justice and decent jobs for all able-bodied people on this planet. Given that the governments are unable, or unwilling, to curb the

dominance of financial markets and transnational corporations in the global economy, it is particularly important to consolidate the trade unions, and enhance their role and influence throughout the world. Only solidarity-based actions by strong and influential unions can force the governments to get the economy back on a normal track, and ensure that it serves the interests of the overwhelming majority of population in our countries, rather than a slender group of private owners.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the GCTU held in September 2012 noted with concern that the trade union movement in our region was faced with the same problem as the trade unions elsewhere in the world, i.e. with a steady trend towards a shrinking membership. Although in some countries, such as Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the numerical strength of the unions has, in a varying degree, risen, and practically all GCTU affiliates have reported admittance of new members, all attempts to stop the decline in the numbers of union members in the region as a whole have been a failure.

In this context, the World Day for Decent Work provides us all a unique opportunity to, once again, demonstrate the effectiveness of trade unions, show they are able to protect the vital rights and interests of their members, increase confidence in the trade unions, and

motivate workers to join the union ranks.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions calls on its affiliates to consolidate their efforts, and actively mark the World Day for Decent Work on a wide scale, involving as many participants as possible.

The GCTU is positive that solidarity actions are a powerful incentive for the further development and strengthening of trade unions, improving their profile, and strengthening their influence in society

This will provide reliable guarantees of promoting decent work!”.

### **ARMENIA: UNIONS & EMPLOYERS SIGN AGREEMENT**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA) Edward Tumasian and President of the Republican Employers' Union Gagik Makarian signed a cooperation agreement that will allow both parties to make joint efforts aimed at strengthening and developing social partnership.

The parties agreed they would together analyse draft laws and regulations affecting workers' socio-economic interests and rights before these acts were approved by the relevant agencies, and sub-

mit their common comments and opinions to the appropriate authorities.

The agreement is valid until 1 October 2016.

### **BELARUS: FPB AGAINST CHANGES IN SICK PAY**

The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) issued a statement 29 August 2013 expressing their disapproval of Government Decree No. 569 and demanding its cancellation.

Under the new regulation, the early period of temporary disability, which is now paid at the rate of 80 per cent of the average daily wage, has been raised from six to 12 calendar days. In addition, the settlement period for calculating the benefit amount has been increased from two to six months. The changes will seriously aggravate the situation of workers for whom the premiums were paid for less than six months, and will also entail a serious cut in the maternity benefits.

“After the Ministry of Labour has taken this new decision to change the sick pay procedure, what is the use talking about strengthening the social positions? On the contrary, the document infringes upon workers’ rights”, FPB President Leonid Kozik told a meeting of the National Council on Labour and Social Affairs held on July 25. “More than

that, the adoption of this decision violates a provision in the General Agreement, and the Decree of the Head of State that obliges the government and employers’ associations to consult trade unions. Why sitting here at this table, if the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has already adopted the new document in private?”

### **GEORGIA: GTUC CONGRESS GATHERS IN KOBULETI**

Vice President of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) Viktor Karnyushin attended the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation (GTUC) held in the town of Kobuleti, Western Georgia, from 20–21 September 2013.

As part of the Congress, two seminars were held on its first day with the participation of foreign guests: “Collective bargaining in the industrial sector – recent trends, experiences and challenges” and “Women’s rights in Georgia – the activities and plans for the future of the GTUC Women’s Committee.”

GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili reported to the Congress on the activity in the period under review, which had been carried out in a complicated political and socio-economic situation. He dwelt, in particular, on the changes made to the Labour Code, and on the problems with the observance of labour

legislation, ILO Conventions, the European Social Charter, and other international instruments.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2013, the Georgian Parliament had amended the Labour Code with the aim of improving it. At the initial stage international organisations and the social partners, including trade unions, were invited to contribute to the development of the draft. However, after the first reading of the bill in Parliament, the government abandoned the social partnership format, and focused exceptionally on consultation with the employers. As a result, changes, disadvantageous for workers, have appeared in the text that were absent in the original draft.

On the whole, the new Code will to some extent improve the situation of workers. In particular, it provides more accurate definitions of the subjects of labour relations and the obligations of employers, strictly bans oral or short-term employment agreements (contracts), sets a 40-hour working week, etc.

However, trade unions are alarmed at the fact that the new Labour Code leaves the possibility of concluding fixed-term employment contracts, which may restrict the right of association and collective bargaining. Besides, employers have increasingly often used fixed-term contracts as a weapon in their struggles against trade union

leaders. Over the last few months, a large number of union activists have been fired after the expiration of their contracts. Under the law, the employer is not even obliged to justify the reason for his/her reluctance to renew the contract. The speaker cited many examples of violations of workers' rights.

The Congress adopted a resolution on the report of the GTUC Board together with several resolutions on the acute issues of social and labour relations, and elected the governing bodies of the Confederation. Bro Irakli Petriashvili was re-elected GTUC President.

### **GEORGIA: UNLAWFUL PRACTICES TO BE PUNISHED**

Three workers of the Ferroalloy Plant in the village of Argveti owned by GTM Group were dismissed for the sole reason of their active participation in the creation of a trade union.

The primary trade union organisation was built in the enterprise 25 July 2013 following the long-term outreach and awareness-raising work carried out by the Union of Workers in the Metallurgical, Mining and Chemical Industries of Georgia. From the very beginning, 45 out of the plant's 130 workers joined the union. The founding meeting elected Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and a trade union committee of 14 members.

On the same evening, the CEO fired three members of the committee, and on July 27 summoned the union leader to his office, abused him verbally, and ordered the security service to remove him from the plant and never let him in again.

Faced with this gross legal offence ignoring international law, the national industrial trade union filed applications to the police and the prosecutor's office. Letters were also sent to the Government of Georgia, and the union started preparations for public actions involving all legitimate forms of protest.

### **KAZAKHSTAN DISCUSSING DRAFT UNION LAW**

At its meeting held 19 September 2013 in Ekibastuz, the regional Tripartite Commission for Social Partnership discussed the new draft law "On the Trade Unions of Kazakhstan". Participants included also President of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FTURK) Abelgazi Kusainov and Minister of Labour and Social Protection Tamara Duseynova.

The FTURK President told the session the new bill defined distinctly the mechanisms of interaction of trade unions with employers and employees. In particular, it makes it possible to implement a single political line in all union activities on the basis of effective social dia-

logue and social partnership with state authorities and employers.

At the end of the meeting, its participants agreed on the need to support the bill as it sought to guarantee the protection of the labour and social rights of union members.

### **KYRGYZSTAN: TU LABOUR INSPECTORATES BRINGING RESULTS**

Over the first half of the year 2013, labour inspectors of Kyrgyzstan trade unions have considered 469 complaints and written applications.

According to the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU), 401 applications came from citizens, and 68 from enterprises. All the applications have been replied in a written form. In 210 cases, trade union specialists helped calculate the amounts of redress indexation, lump sums, earnings lost, and penalties – for a total sum of 35 million soms, or \$ 714 thousand.

Trade union representatives participated in 219 court hearings.

### **MOLDOVA: UNIONS CONCERNED ABOUT UNWORTHY WORK CONDITIONS**

"The number of Moldovans working in inappropriate conditions in-

creased in 2012 by four per cent as compared to the year 2011”, said the Head of the Labour Inspectorate of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova (CNSM) Gheorghe Burbulea.

According to official statistics, last year this figure reached a maximum of eight per cent of the total workforce, or about 49,000 people, but in reality the number of those employed in conditions that do not meet the health and safety requirements is as high as 25–28 per cent.

“The unions will do their best to change the situation. Managers should understand that the health and safety of citizens must always come first”, said CNSM President Oleg Budza.

### **MOLDOVA: UNIONS REINSTATE UNLAWFULLY DISMISSED**

According to the CNSM legal department, over 300 Moldovan workers were reinstated in 2013 owing to trade unions’ intervention.

Complaints from employees come to the trade unions in large numbers every day. But the resolving of dispute situations is often complicated by the fact that many complainants are not union members, or even have no formal employment contracts.

Given the situation, the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova intends to increase the number of stationary centres of legal support to workers across the country.

### **MOLDOVA: NEW MOTIVATION TO JOIN TRADE UNIONS**

Starting from this autumn, trade union members in Moldova will be able to enjoy a range of new first-class services at the Trade Union Advisory and Diagnostic Medical Centre. The Centre will provide medical care to union members and their families. The cost of consultation and diagnosis in the health facility is 25 per cent of the prices set by the Government.

Signing up for a survey in the Centre can be done in any regional CNSM office. Once the diagnosis is made, the patient is sent to the appropriate clinic for treatment of the disease detected.

“For the short time that our Centre exists, we have managed to detect accurately a lot of diseases, and cure them. This has helped to save a great deal of human lives and significantly improve the overall health of our patients”, said the head physician of the Centre Vasile Ursu.

The Trade Union Advisory and Diagnostic Medical Centre opened in October 2012. Currently, it carries out a whole number of echo-

graphic analyses, including the ultrasound examination of the liver, pancreas, kidneys, uterus, ovary, mammary gland, prostate, heart, and great vessels, as well as pregnant women.

Within only a few months almost a thousand people have availed themselves of the services rendered by the Centre.

### **RUSSIA: FNPR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DISCUSSES PENSION STRATEGY**

The Executive Committee of Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) met in Moscow 24 July 2013 to discuss the challenges of implementing the strategy of development of Russia's pension system till 2030 approved by Parliament last December.

“As regards the implementation of the Strategy, the developments in this field hope for improving the situation of pensioners or formulating a socially just and financially sustainable pension scheme for working people”, said David Krishtal, a FNPR Vice President.

Addressing the meeting, Chair of the Duma Committee on Labour, Social Policy and Veterans' Affairs and First Vice President of FNPR, Andrey Isayev, said: “Our debates have identified several points on which we disagree with the

Government, and which must be taken into account by the authorities: the unacceptability of deteriorating the situation of pensioners, and the need to preserve the preferential seniority retirement for certain categories of public sector employees”.

“The issue of pension provision is multifactorial. We must take into account the interests of all parties to the discussion if we want to avoid failures when someone wins and someone loses in pension provision. Perhaps, this cannot be achieved in a single document, and will require producing several more”, said FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov.

### **RUSSIA: FNPR EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS TO MEET IN ST. PETERSBURG 29 OCTOBER 2013**

The General Council of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) met in Moscow 18 September 2013 to consider the complications that had arisen in the negotiations on the draft General Agreement to be concluded by the all-Russia trade union centres, the national associations of employers, and the Government for 2014–2016.

Since at the preparatory stage the negotiations had failed to reach agreement on key trade union proposals, the FNPR Executive

Committee issued a statement a day before the General Council meeting warning against infringements of citizens' rights and freedoms.

In her report, FNPR Vice President Nina Kuzmina said that major differences at the negotiations had emerged in the following four areas: economic policy, wages, incomes and living standards, and the socio-economic problems hampering the development of Russia's regions, including the Far North and similar areas. When discussing the report, speakers pointed that the recent governmental initiatives, including the idea to incorporate incentive and compensation payments into the minimum wage, and set a social quota for the consumption by population of electricity and, subsequently, water and residential heat, would lead to a sharp drop in Russians' living standards.

FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov said only strong trade unions could make the government and employers meet their demands. For the unions to be able to successfully face the challenges of the time, the FNPR Statutes should be amended with a view to enhancing the position of the organisation. The dramatically changing socio-economic and political situation calls for adequate responses from the unions. For this reason, steps must be taken to raise their prestige in society.

Meanwhile, the decisions of the 7<sup>th</sup> FNPR Congress on institutional strengthening and the improvement of personnel management, finance, and information policies have largely remained unfulfilled. Another serious problem is the declining membership, and the weakening of the middle link in the trade union structure, that is the regional, provincial and republican organisations. Pressing problems of staffing have not been resolved either.

In view of the urgent problems accumulated in the trade union movement, and the overdue need to formulate the tactics of trade union action and amend the FNPR Statutes, the General Council decided to call the 8<sup>th</sup> (Extraordinary) Congress of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia 29 October 2013, in St. Petersburg to discuss statutory issues.

### **UKRAINE: FPU LEADER MEETS WITH MINISTER**

President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) Yury Kulyk had a working meeting with Ukraine's Minister of Social Policy Natalia Korolevska 5 July 2013.

They discussed the possibilities of closer cooperation between the social dialogue actors when addressing problems concerning

workers, and touched upon the prospects of concluding a new General Agreement.

Yury Kulyk drew the Minister's attention to the growing number of complaints coming to FPU about delayed transfers of funds for social needs by the State Treasury, and highlighted such a painful issue as the late payment of wages. "This is a very alarming sign", he said, "and all parties to social dialogue should make every effort to solve the problem".

### **UKRAINE: FPU WILLING HIGHER PRESTIGE FOR LABOUR**

In accordance with the decree of the FPU Presidium, a regular meeting of the working group on a draft concept of raising the prestige of labour in Ukraine was held in Kiev 13 August 2013.

"To enhance the prestige of labour, working occupations, and conscientious and skilled work in today's Ukraine is a long-overdue and acute necessity", said FPU President Yury Kulyk, commenting on the Presidium decision. "When developing such a global, strategic programme, we'll undoubtedly have to take into consideration and utilize all existing international experience. It is for this reason that we intend to request the ILO, the GCTU, and the FNPR to provide us with materials on decent

work and the ways to raise its prestige".

### **COUNCIL FOR CIS TIMBER & FORESTRY COMPLEXES ENDORSES FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT**

President of the GCTU-affiliated Federation of Timber and Related Industries Workers' Unions of the Commonwealth of Independent States Viktor Karnyushin addressed the 13th session of the CIS Intergovernmental Council for the Timber Complex and Forestry held in Belarus from 21–23 August 2013. He reported on the draft framework collective agreement between workers and employers in the CIS forest industries, developed by trade unions.

Before it was submitted to the Secretariat of the CIS Intergovernmental Council for the Timber Complex and Forestry, the document had been peer-reviewed in the relevant GCTU departments, and approved by the session of the Central Council of the Federation held 16 May 2013 in Chernihiv (Ukraine).

The Intergovernmental Council decided to recommend the framework collective agreement as a model document for all agencies and enterprises subordinate to the ministries of forest industries in CIS countries, and for their trade union organisations.

## **BUILDERS' TUI CRITICAL OF SECURITY IN INDUSTRY**

A workshop seminar on occupational safety and the use of the risk management theory in construction practice was held 4 June 2013 by the International Trade Union Confederation of Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers in conjunction with the International Construction Union, and representatives of science.

Seminar noted that the establishment of an effective occupational safety system was hampered by a number of circumstances, and, above all, by the state's withdrawal from safety and health management, the disregard for experiences gained, and the low professionalism in construction.

Participants agreed to continue their study of the topic and develop concrete proposals aiming to enhance the role of trade unions in ensuring safety in construction as an essential national issue.

## **MOPROP HOLDS 15<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS IN BAKU**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the GCTU-affiliated International Community of Defence Industry Workers' Unions (MOPROP) was held in Baku (Azerbaijan) 25 June 2013.

The Congress received messages of solidarity from several interna-

tional organisations, as well as from GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov.

Participants heard reports on the activity of affiliates for the period from June 2012 to May 2013, and information on the socio-economic situation in the industries, and elected the governing bodies of MOPROP

The final resolution adopted by the Congress sums up the activities of the member organisations, and sets the guidelines for MOPROP and its affiliates in the period to come.

## **UNIONS CONSIDER SITUATION IN OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

The Council of the GCTU-affiliated International Confederation of Trade Unions of Workers in the Oil and Gas Industries and Construction Workers in the Oil and Gas Complex held its regular meeting in Kiev (Ukraine) 23 July 2013 to consider the socio-economic situation of workers in the oil and gas complex and the challenges facing the sector's trade unions.

The final resolution adopted following the debates recommends the affiliates to:

- monitor continuously the economic situation in the oil and gas sector of the Commonwealth, and prevent deterioration of workers' socio-economic conditions;

– insist that measures to promote decent work be included in the policy documents on priority activities, and collective agreements and accords of the oil and gas unions, and to consolidate the efforts of social partners.

### **MEDICAL WORKERS DISCUSS SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP**

The role of social partnership in protecting health workers' interests in the context of health care reform was discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Confederation of Health Workers' Unions held in Astana and Karaganda (Kazakhstan) in August 2013. Participants also reviewed the activities carried out by trade union committees at regional and provincial levels to strengthen and develop social partnership.

The Executive Committee agreed to ask the national trade union centres to support the proposals of health workers' unions, and draw the attention of their national governments to the plight of health care, the scarce funding of the sector, and the social insecurity of health workers.

### **AGRICULTURAL UNIONS MEET IN DUSHANBE**

The capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, hosted a meeting of the Advisory

Committee of the International Organisation of Agro-Industrial Unions from 27–29 August 2013. Attending the event were leaders of national trade unions in agriculture and the food processing industries of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

The meeting discussed a whole range of issues, including the world economic situation, the state of agricultural industries, the trends in agriculture and the food processing industry, the practical actions by trade unions to protect social and labour rights of their members; the implementation of the Guidelines for the Organisation's activity in the period up to 2017, etc.

In her report, the Organisation's President Natalia Agapova presented an overview of the general socio-economic situation in the CIS countries and in the rest of the world in 2011–2013, with an accent on the employment trends, the changing forms of labour and industrial relations, and the wages in the sector. Special attention was devoted to actions by the social partners in the labour market, and to the tasks of agro-industrial trade unions.

Members of the Advisory Committee told the meeting about the state of affairs in their respective countries, and the steps taken to implement the objectives set by the Conference of the International Organisation of Agro-Industrial Unions and by the GCTU 7<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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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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