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NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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GCTU ATTENDS ITUC CONGRESS, SENDS MESSAGE

A delegation led by the General Secretary of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU), Vladimir Scherbakov, took part in the 3-rd World Congress of the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ITUC) held in Berlin from 18-23 May 2014. The GCTU sent the Congress a message of solidarity which reads as follows.

“Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU, numbering about 50 million members, extends warm fraternal greetings to delegates and all participants in the 3rd World Congress of the International Trade Union Confederation.

This ITUC Congress is being held at a difficult, crucial moment of world development requiring a resolute response from the unions. A worldwide social crisis has come in the wake of the global economic crisis.

Hundreds of millions of workers, especially young people, around the world have found themselves outside the gates of companies and institutions. A huge number of working people live in desperate straits or on the verge of abject poverty, with social inequality growing. Wages, pensions, and social payments and benefits are rapidly depreciating. The overdue problems of working women, youth, and migrant workers remain unsolved. The gap between rich and poor and between developed and developing countries keeps on widening, which makes it difficult to achieve the UN goal of eradicating poverty all over the world. The neo-liberal model of development has failed, showing its complete inability to deliver.

Against this background, an actual war has been declared on social and labour rights, which imperils all previous gains by workers. Under the pressure of transnational capital, governments and employers are still trying to eliminate the consequences of the crisis at the cost of violating

basic workers' rights, while keeping intact the unchecked power of large corporations, oligarchies, banks and multinationals.

In this situation, the role of trade unions is as important as never before. We welcome the fact that Congress will discuss a wide range of issues related to various aspects of strengthening the trade union movement, and enhancing its role as the principal defender of workers, as an important civil society force. We are positive that the decisions to be taken by this ITUC Congress will equip world trade unions with new and efficient tools and methods of struggle for the interests of its members in the context of protracted economic stagnation.

The GCTU member-organisations, like the ITUC and other unions in the world, are convinced that the post-crisis world needs a fundamentally new model of economic development, one that will comfortably combine and respect the interests of all its actors, with regard for the requirements of climate and environment protection. We stand in solidarity with the ITUC course to change radically the nature of globalisation and establish effective control over the activities of the international monetary and financial institutions.

The GCTU supports the idea contained in Congress documents that the world should develop towards building a society that will respect the dignity of today's working person. It must be based on the principles of decent work and social jus-

tice, respect for international labour standards and human rights, and easy access to quality public services.

We agree that a central place in the new global decision-making process should be given to the ILO. This was discussed at the International Conference "For Decent Work and Social Justice" organised by the GCTU and its affiliates in Moscow 10 April 2014. The Conference called upon the social partners in the countries of our region "to sustain their efforts in the struggle for the development of socio-economic policies conducive to the successful implementation of the principles of decent work and justice."

Recent developments have once again clearly highlighted the objective need for further cohesion of workers and their unions at national, sectoral and global levels. We are confident that this Congress of yours will map out an efficient strategy for the activities of the trade union movement in the present-day conditions. Guided by the Congress decisions and the principles of international solidarity, the Confederation will remain at the forefront of the fight for the triumph of decent work and social justice, improving social dialogue, and securing the rights of workers and trade unions.

In these endeavours it can count on the support and solidarity of the GCTU and its affiliates.

We wish you a successful Congress!"

GCTU HOLDS CONFERENCE FOR DECENT WORK

An international scientific and action-oriented Conference “For Decent Work and Social Justice” was held by the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) 10 April 2014 in Moscow. Attending the event were over 100 delegates representing GCTU affiliates, international and interstate agencies, scientists and experts.

The keynote report “Decent Work and Social Justice: Two Major Prerequisites for Socio-Economic Development” was presented by GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov. He outlined the social milestones to be reached on the way to decent work. These include, among other things, creating new and quality jobs, pursuance of an active labour market policy; cutting down unemployment, especially among the youth, and securing a first workplace to labour market newcomers. The reporter stressed it was important to raise significantly the average wages, and bring them up at least to the level of subsistence minimum. The unions were aiming to get the tax system improved by insisting on the introduction of a progressive scale of taxation.

Several leaders of GCTU-affiliated national trade union centres and industrial Trade Union Internationals, and representatives of the CIS Executive Committee, the EurAsEC Secretariat, the CIS Interstate Statistical Committee, and the ILO sub-

regional office in Moscow contributed to the discussion. They told participants of the current situation in their respective countries or areas of activity, and of the prospects for solving problems related to the implementation of the decent work agendas. Scientists from the Institute of the Economy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow’s Lomonosov State University, the Academy of Labour and Social Relations, and others shared the results of their research with Conference participants.

The Conference concluded with the adoption of a final document that was submitted for consideration to the GCTU Council.

GCTU EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DEBATES ILO CONVENTIONS

The Executive Committee of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) held a session at the Palace of Labour in Moscow 10 April 2014.

The agenda included, inter alia, the item “Ratification of ILO Conventions in the countries covered by the GCTU”. The Committee described the results of the efforts made by the unions since its previous session in April 2013 to accelerate the ratification of the major Conventions as more than modest.

Particularly concerning is the lack of progress in the ratification of Convention No.102 on the minimum standards of social security and

Convention No.168 on employment promotion and protection against unemployment. These instruments, essential for workers, have not been ratified by any state in the region. Only two of the countries have ratified Convention No. 117 on the principal aims and standards of social policy.

The Executive Committee called on the affiliates not to loosen their monitoring of the ratification and observance of ILO Conventions in their respective countries and industries. Special attention should be devoted to the speedy ratification of Conventions 102, 168 and 117.

The session adopted the Statement on the World Day of Safety and Health at Work marked annually on 28 April. The GCTU believes it necessary for trade unions to make more extensive use of public control to secure stricter observance of safety and health legislation.

The Session approved a Plan of Joint Activities by the GCTU and the Association of Public Organisations of War Veterans (Pensioners) of the Newly Independent States to prepare for the celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The decision taken on this matter encourages the affiliated organisations to get more actively involved in the decision-making on issues concerning the improvement of veterans' social situation and pension schemes.

GCTU COUNCIL APPEALS TO MARK MAY DAY

The GCTU Council met 11 April 2014 in Moscow to hear the report by General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov on the Confederation's activity in the period after the GCTU 7th Congress (September 2012).

Based on the discussion, the Council called on the member-organisations to contribute more actively towards the realisation in their countries of the slogan proclaimed by the Congress: "Reliable Guarantees to Ensure Decent Work and Social Justice!"

The Council also reviewed the socio-economic situation in the Newly Independent States and the challenges facing the unions. The leaders of the national trade union centres of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and the General Secretary of the GCTU-affiliated International Confederation of Railway Workers' and Transport Builders' Unions reported on the developments in their countries and industries.

The decision adopted on the issue says the structural reorganisation of the economy should be accompanied by the creation of quality jobs with favourable work conditions and decent pay. The trade unions will continue their struggles for increasing the real wages, and raising the minimum pay at least to level of the subsistence minimum.

They will also insist that the governments adopt measures to reduce

the shadow employment and bring to account the employers who use such schemes, and ensure that social protection embraces all categories of workers, including self-employed.

The Council adopted an appeal in connection with the forthcoming Day of International Workers' Solidarity, 1 May.

“This year’s May Day, the Appeal says, will be observed in a world dominated by massive unemployment, especially among young people, with unacceptably low rates of work remuneration, delayed wages, growing poverty of working people and retirees, and a widening gap in the incomes of different population groups. The burden of taxes and charges becomes ever heavier, the discrimination against women continues, and the problems of labour migration are increasingly grave.” In this context, the GCTU called on its member organisations to mark this May Day with mass actions in the form of demonstrations, street marches, rallies, and pickets under the common slogan “Decent Work, Decent Life, Social Justice!”.

CHERNOBYL LESSON NOT FORGOTTEN

The 26th of April, the day of the Chernobyl disaster, is internationally marked as the Memorial Day to remember the victims of radiation accidents. In this connection, the GCTU sent its affiliates the appeal issued

by the International Organisation “The Chernobyl Union”.

Over the years since the Chernobyl disaster, the trade unions of the Commonwealth of Independent States have firmly stood for continued government support of its victims, and for a consistent policy of social protection of those who suffered from radiation accidents and nuclear tests.

Much attention is given to the establishment, in conjunction with the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, of a uniform legal base at interstate level that will help provide social protection to radiation victims. In this sphere, the GCTU cooperates actively with the International Organisation “The Chernobyl Union” and the Chernobyl Union of Russia.

GCTU CONGRATULATES FPB ON 110TH ANNIVERSARY

GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov sent a congratulation letter to the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) on the occasion of the 110th Anniversary of the trade union movement in Belarus.

The letter notes that the Belarus trade unions deserve praise and deep respect for their proud history and today’s vigorous fruitful activity for the good of working people, development, and prosperity of the nation.

The unions are actively involved in the solution of major social and

economic problems, persistently and constructively protect the vital interests of employees, work purposefully to ensure decent wages, employment and better workplace conditions, and deal successfully with other challenges in their multi-fold activity.

FPB also contributes largely to the activity and development of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, and to the strengthening of the solidarity and cooperation among trade unions in our region.

TRADE UNIONS OF THE REGION MARK MAY DAY

On the Day of International Workers' Solidarity, 1 May, workers in the countries of the region, led by their trade unions, took to the streets to take part in demonstrations and rallies in order to place their demands on the authorities and employers.

Large-scale actions, with more than 2.5 million participants, including almost a million young people, were organised in 1187 cities and towns of Russia. They demanded decent wages, full employment, safety and health at work, fair pensions, and the observance of workers' right to organise.

For the first time since the disintegration of the USSR, trade-union columns, numbering over a hundred thousand representatives of work collectives, marched through the Red Square. After the demonstration, a

group of trade union leaders led by FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov met with President of Russia Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

Greeting the marchers, Mikhail Shmakov said "On this May Day we put forward demands for decent work and social justice, and we shall relentlessly insist on their fulfilment, guided by the desire to protect the vital interests of working people".

Trade unions of Armenia held a massive march in central Yerevan and a rally near the House of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia. The main slogans of this year's May Day were "Decent work and decent pay!" and "We want a decent present for our youth and a decent future for our children!" in addition to calls for the creation of new jobs.

Affiliated organisations of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) organised actions calling on workers to rally around the unions in the struggle for labour and social rights, and for a decent life. The main slogan was "Trade unions for an integral Ukraine, for peace and understanding in society, and for the improvement of the people's well-being."

Because of the tense situation in the East and the South of Ukraine, the trade union organisations in the Donetsk, Kharkov, Lugansk, Zaporozhye, and Odessa regions were advised to refrain from mass actions, marches or street rallies.

These regions confined themselves mostly to holding indoor meetings of trade union activists and representatives of work collectives, with the involvement of labour veterans, members of labour dynasties, and the chairpersons of district coordination councils. In some regions the May Day events were held in the form of demonstrations and rallies under the slogans “For an integral Ukraine!”, “Unity is our strength!”, “A strong trade union means a decent life!” etc.

In Georgia, May Day celebrations coincided with the first session of the Tripartite Commission on Social Partnership on whose establishment the trade unions had insisted for a long time. At the session the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) was granted an unprecedented opportunity to speak openly about the problems existing in the country. Moreover, all the initiatives and remarks voiced by the unions met with a positive response.

After this session the national trade union centre organised a traditional May Day march in Rustaveli Avenue, the main street in Tbilisi, and a mass rally.

GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili told the meeting that the country’s Prime Minister had instructed the Government to declare the Day of International Workers’ Solidarity 1 May a public holiday.

The GTUC official website carried a May Day Manifesto which gave an

analysis of the challenges facing the country in the sphere of economic and social development, and a summary of trade union demands and proposals how to solve them.

BELARUS PRESIDENT MEETS FPB LEADER

President Lukashenko met the leader of Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) Leonid Kozik 16 April 2014.

During the meeting, much attention was given to issues relating to the celebration of the 110th Anniversary of the trade union movement in Belarus. The FPB leader told the President that, in the run-up to this event, work collectives were organising all kinds of activities. The results of labour competitions were being summed up, and national review-contests were held on various themes, such as “The Best in the Trade”; “The Best Collective Agreement”, etc. All these activities were aiming to restore respect for the working person, raise the prestige of blue-collar professions, and promote the labour dynasties in the country.

The Head of State highly appreciated the work done by FPB to restore the Federation’s ownership of real estate objects, and stressed that nobody had the right to claim to it. Leonid Kozik assured the President that the FPB property was still intact and indivisible and belonged to the four million trade union members.

KAZAKHSTAN GETS NEW LAW ON UNIONS

The Kazakhstan Parliament passed the final version of the Law on Trade Unions 11 June 2014, redefining the organisational foundations of the country's trade union movement.

The Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FTURK) believes the document will enhance the role of trade unions in the development of social partnership, the protection of workers' labour, economic and social rights and interests, and the prevention of potential labour disputes. In particular, the Law stipulates compulsory implementation of regional, industrial and general agreements, and specifies the contents of the documents.

The Law provides for measures encouraging more active trade union participation in social dialogue as part of social partnership at all levels. It identifies the priorities of trade unions in representing the interests of workers and bargaining with the employers, and broadens the mandates of the commissions on social partnership.

The principle of associated membership introduced by the Law will make it possible for all trade union organisations to participate, at all levels of social partnership, in the decision-making on issues affecting the socio-economic and labour interests and rights of citizens.

Before it was adopted, the FPRK affiliates had the possibility to dis-

cuss the draft law and make their remarks and proposals. The final version of the draft received full approval of trade unions⁴ at all levels.

KYRGYZSTAN: UNIONS MANAGE TO KEEP THEIR PROPERTY

Kyrgyz officials of different ranks have repeatedly shown undue interest in trade union property and expressed their desire to lay hands on it. At the beginning of 2014, passions over trade union real estate ran especially high. A certain Mr Asanov, posing as the representative of a newly founded nongovernmental organisation, circulated, through the Internet and the press, the allegations that the Kyrgyzstan trade unions illegally possessed resorts, sanatoria, tourist facilities and other real estate. Simultaneously, he requested that the high state authorities dispossess the unions of their property.

Soon after that, high-ranking inspectors paid a surprise visit to the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) with the aim of investigating, with obvious bias, the Federation's real estate inventory and the legitimacy of its origin. They were given a whole batch of the title-establishing documents confirming that all movable and real estate was common and indivisible property of the unions and had never belonged to the State – neither in the Soviet, nor in the post-Soviet period. This is explic-

itly defined by the Constitution and other laws.

This time the raider attack has been beaten off. But for how long?

UKRAINE: UNIONS ALARMED BY DECREASED SOCIAL GUARANTEES

The Joint Representative Body of All Ukrainian Trade Union Associations issued a statement on the inadmissibility of reducing citizens' social guarantees in the context of unpopular reforms, and on the need to create the conditions for economic growth in Ukraine.

The Statement says some of the anti-crisis measures had been developed by the Government without participation of the social partners, in a flagrant violation of Ukraine's laws and the provisions of the General Agreement. The authorities had once again resorted to unpopular measures, calling on Ukrainians to tighten their belts, and only promising to create the prerequisites for further economic growth.

Meanwhile, quite a few state social standards and guarantees had been frozen, including the minimum wages and the subsistence minimum, whereas the taxes and levies had been raised. What makes the situation even more dramatic is that the price rises go hand in hand with the freezes, if not cuts, in the real wages of the overwhelming majority of the population, all that in the face of a looming spike in unemployment.

Moreover, 7 April 2014 the Government submitted to Parliament a bill curtailing the rights and freedoms of workers and trade unions in the budgetary sector. The Ukrainian trade unions have never experienced such a large-scale offensive on the rights of workers.

However, society could not see any clear-cut plans to pull the economy out of the shadow, create the conditions for economic growth in the country, or combat corruption.

The unions urged the Government to prepare and implement immediately a programme of revitalisation of the economy, the development of domestic production, and the protection of the population against unemployment. Special emphasis should be laid on the strengthening of the internal market, which would provide most real and solid support for the domestic manufacturer.

UKRAINE: FPU ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

At its session held at Kyiv's Hotel Tourist 26 June 2014, the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) elected the new leader of the Federation.

Out of the five nominees, Hryhory Osovy was elected FPU President by a majority vote. Prior to his election, Bro Osovy had been FPU Acting President, and before that served for a long time as FPU First Vice President.

During the session, over 30 unknown assailants tried to storm the hotel in order to disrupt the elections. They knocked out the entrance doors and caused considerable damage to the hotel by actually crushing its lobby. The attackers used a noise grenade and tear gas against the police who tried to stop them. Nevertheless, the FPU Presidential election was held in full compliance with the procedure, and on a competitive basis.

The newly elected FPU President commented on the provocative incident at the hotel. “I’d like to say,” he told the journalists, “that no one: neither authorities nor any other political force or public organisation is allowed to interfere with the activities of any other public organisation, including such a numerous one as today’s Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine.”

The Council considered expanding the participation of trade unions and FPU’s economic entities in the provision of humanitarian assistance to the victims and refugees from the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions and from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The FPU leaders were instructed to compose a working group out of the members of the FPU Council to coordinate further work on rendering humanitarian assistance. Participants also considered a number of other important issues, such as:

- tasks of trade unions to protect workers’ social and economic rights and interests;
- strategy of upgrading FPU and its affiliates;

- preparations for the FPU 7th Congress;
- strategy for union property management and the use of trade union assets in the interests of working people; and
- execution of the FPU budget in 2013 and the FPU budget for 2014.

RAILWAY UNIONS DISCUSS INDUSTRY PROBLEMS

The Council of the GCTU-affiliated International Confederation of Railway Workers’ and Transport Builders’ Unions met for a session from 1-3 April 2014 in Sochi. Participating in event were delegations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia and Uzbekistan plus Mongolia (as an observer).

The meeting was also attended by the Chairman of the Directorate of the CIS Railway Transport Council Peter Kucherenko, the specialist of the Moscow ILO Office Sergeyus Glovackas, and a delegation of the General Confederation of Trade Unions headed by GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov.

Participants considered several pressing issues relating to the activity of railway workers’ unions in the CIS countries, Georgia and Baltic states, and outlined the tasks for the forthcoming period in the context of declining economic growth and, accordingly, shrinking volumes of transportation.

Council members believe that nowadays the prime attention must be devoted to such universal problems as the declining membership and the search for new forms of organising, including the use of market-oriented motivation incentives; the work with young people; the need to reform the trade unions, and consolidate and strengthen their structures; and more effective resistance to the offensive by employers against the trade union rights.

Some speakers thought that trade unions should take a more balanced and cautious approach to the privatisation processes imposed by managements in a number of countries.

Participants listened with interest to the address by GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov.

It was decided to hold the next session of the Council in October 2014 in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

OIL AND GAS UNIONS FOR INFORMATISATION OF TU ACTIVITIES

The International Confederation of Trade Unions of Workers in the Oil and Gas Industries and Construction Workers in the Oil and Gas Complex held a seminar on “Modern aspects of the informatisation of the priority areas of trade union activity” from 17-24 May 2014 in Turkey. More than 250 trade union leaders and activists in the oil and gas complex came from Azerbaijan, Belarus,

Kazakhstan and Russia to take part in the seminar. The guest speakers included GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov who made a report on the social and economic situation and trade union activities in the CIS countries.

Seminar participants listened to a course of lectures on informational support policies. They unanimously agreed on the necessity to improve the forms and methods of informational support through the use of electronic forms of studying, generalising and disseminating positive work experiences. The leaders of the Confederation’s affiliates placed particular emphasis on the importance of adequate funding of such activity at all levels of the union structure, for which purpose special funds should be allocated in the financial plans.

The trade union leaders from the field drew the participants’ attention to the importance of establishing effective feedback at all levels of trade union structure, which will allow them to maintain the constant monitoring of the developments in the member organisations of the oil and gas trade unions.

STATE AND PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES DISCUSS MOTIVATION

The capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, hosted a regular session of the Council of the International Trade Union Federation of State and Public Service Employees 28 May 2014.

The session brought together the leaders of the Federation's affiliates from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan, representatives of regional, municipal, and district committees of the Trade Union of State and Public Service Employees of Tajikistan, and President of the All-Israel Committee of Tax Workers.

President of the Federation, Vladimir Savchenko, informed the participants of the social and economic developments in the countries of the region, and of the tasks currently facing the trade unions. Council discussed the practical steps being taken by the State, Public Service and Banking Employees' Union of Tajikistan to motivate and increase new membership, and heard the presentations by the leaders of the Federation's affiliates on their activities, the results achieved, and the problems to be solved.

The session summed up the results of the contest for the most successful efforts in the field of organising in 2013. The biggest success was scored by the Azerbaijani union which was awarded the honourable diploma.

CIS FORESTRY & TIMBER UNIONS MEET IN KYRGYZSTAN

From 3-6 June 2014, the town of Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) was the venue of an extended session of the Executive Committee of the GCTU-affiliated Federation of Timber

and Related Industries Workers' Unions of the CIS. Participants in the session included the Executive Committee members from Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the leaders of several regional trade union committees, and trade union activists from Kyrgyzstan.

Participants heard the report on the Federation's activity in 2013, and discussed some topical issues, including the attitude of the unions towards the improvement of tax legislation, the principal areas of cooperation of the CIS countries in forestry and timber industries, etc.

President of the Federation, Viktor Karnyushin, presented a detailed analysis describing the current situation in the industry and in its trade union movement, and stressing the need for wider use of the framework collective agreement between workers and employers in the CIS forestry and timber industries. The agreement had been developed by the Federation and approved by its Central Council in 2013. Thereafter, it was endorsed and adopted as a model document by the CIS Intergovernmental Council for the Timber Complex and Forestry. Viktor Karnyushin also dwelt on incentives in organising, and on how to halt the downward trend in the union membership of the forestry and timber industries.

The leaders of several national forestry and timber unions, and representatives of regional and

district trade union organisations contributed to the debate. The discussion showed, once again, that participants held similar views on the most important trade union issues.

The session adopted resolutions on all issues discussed, and approved the Plan of the Federation's Activities for the upcoming period.

BUILDERS' UNIONS INTENT TO PROMOTE DECENT WORK

The Executive Committee and the Council of the GCTU-affiliated International Confederation of Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers' Unions held their regular sessions and a round table on "Trade Unions and the Youth" in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) from 24-26 June 2014.

At its session 24 June 2014, the Executive Committee reviewed the preparations for the World Day for Decent Work to be marked 7 October 2014 under the motto "Reliable Guarantees to Decent Work and Social Justice". The Builders' TUI and its affiliates spare no effort to contribute towards the creation of political and economic conditions necessary for the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda. With this purpose in view, the Session decided to prepare and hold, in the first half of 2015, a scientific and action-oriented conference on the promotion of decent work and social justice in the construction industries of CIS countries.

The Session of the Council held 26 June 2014 considered the socio-economic situation of workers in the construction complexes of CIS countries and the activities of the Confederation's affiliates to protect the economic interests of union members.

The final resolution adopted by the Council encourages all member organisations to take persistent measures to alleviate the negative impact of the economic instability on the industry's workers, using all lawful forms and methods. In particular, the affiliates are called upon to make and implement promptly efficient decisions, based on the data provided by the trade union monitoring of social and economic situation in the industry and the labour market conditions. The Council decided the Confederation should continue its consistent efforts to ensure the observance of collective agreements; monitor and promptly respond to critical situations that may arise at individual enterprises or in the industry as a whole; insist on effective sanctions against those members of the business community whose policies are incompatible with the principles of corporate social responsibility.

Having reviewed the outcome of the round table "Trade Unions and the Youth", the Council recommended the affiliates to make union activists aware of its results; and use its conclusions in their practical activity.

The Council also considered a number of other activities of the Builders' TUI.

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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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