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NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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CGTU GENERAL SECRETARY MEETS ELECTRICAL TUI ACTIVISTS

The GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Shcherbakov took part in the working meeting of the Industrial Trade Union International "Electropofsoyuz" (Electrounion) which was held in the city of Kazan 6-10 February 2017.

The leaders of the national industrial trade unions, chairmen of the regional committees and industrial councils of trade unions of workers in the Energy, Electrotechnical and Power Industries and TUI "Electroprofsoyuz" discussed the issue which was topical for the industry: "On the practical work experience of the trade union committees, aimed at making use of the provisions of the industrial tariff and collective agreements while setting and approving the electric and thermal energy tariff rates".

Vladimir Shcherbakov took part in the debate, addressing the participants with the report on the trade union activities, aimed to protect the rights and interests of workers in the current

social and economic situation in the countries of region which was welcomed by the audience.

GCTU COMMISSION SCRUTINISES SITUATION IN THE CIS COUNTRIES IN 2016

The GCTU Commission for the Protection of Workers' Social and Economic Interests met in Moscow for an ordinary session 2 March 2017 in the GCTU Headquarters in Moscow.

The session's agenda included the issue: "On the social and economic situation in the CIS countries in 2016". The keynote report was delivered by a GCTU Deputy General Secretary Natalia Podshibyakina.

Mrs. Podshibyakina believes that the main challenges of 2016 are ambiguity and uncertainty.

The problems of poverty and social inequality, as everywhere else round the world lead to social tensions.

The current situation is a result of

a continuing monetary policy in the countries of the region and absence of a new model of development both in the social and economic spheres.

Following an active debate, the session decided to take a note of the report "On the social and economic situation in the CIS countries in 2016".

The GCTU Department for the Protection of Workers' Social and Economic Interests was asked to make amendments to the report with due regard to the opinions of the Commission's members and send it to the GCTU affiliates.

GCCTU DELEGATION TAKES PART IN HIGH-LEVEL CIS EVENTS

The GCTU delegation, comprising a Deputy General Secretary of GCTU Natalia Podshibyakina and a Deputy General Secretary of GCTU Valery Yuriev took part in the 46th Session of IPA CIS, held 27 March 2017 in St.-Petersburg (the Taurida Palace).

During the Opening Ceremony, the Chair of the IPA CIS Council Valentina Matvienko informed the audience on the Statement adopted by the IPA CIS Council in connection with the 25th Anniversary of IPA CIS and placed a particular emphasis on the importance of the elaboration of Framework Laws.

Lyudmila Kozlova, a member of the IPA CIS Permanent Commission for Social Policy told the audience about the GCTU active involvement in the development of the Recommendations "On the establishment of a uniform approaches to the investigation of

damages to workers' health during the performance) of their professional duties in the CIS countries, and the Recommendations " On the establishment of a uniform approach to the formulation of the statistical reporting, regulating safety and health at work in the CIS countries.

On the 28th of March 2017, a GCTU delegation, led by the GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Shcherbakov took part in the IPA CIS ceremonial meeting, devoted to the 25th Anniversary of the organisation.

In addition to the parliamentary delegations from the CIS countries, the meeting, which was held in the Taurida Palace (the IPA CIS Headquarters), gathered together the Chairs of the PACE and OSCE Parliamentary Assemblies, Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), representatives of other inter-parliamentary organizations and prominent state, and public figures.

Addressing the audience during the Ceremonial Meeting, the Chair of the IPA CIS Council Valentina Matvienko especially emphasized the importance of the

IPA CIS legislative activity. She pointed out, that the IPA CIS had adopted 370 Framework Laws and Codes. More than 80 percent of them had been directly incorporated into the national legislation of the CIS countries. "This figure proves the demand for the IPA CIS work and shows a high quality of the prepared documents", – said Mrs. Matvienko.

On the whole, the current session adopted 15 Framework Laws and

4 legislative acts, of which 5 Laws: “On autonomous institution”, “On the state ownership”, “On the state cadastre of the real estate”, “On the state registration of the rights to real estate” and “On the notariate” had been developed with the active participation of the GCTU.

The meeting was followed by the ceremonial concert in the Taurida Palace. The concert program features the artists from the CIS countries.

GEORGIA: PROTESTS OF WORKERS AT THE “RUSTAVSKY AZOT” PLANT

Employees of the JSC “Rustavsky Azot” organised their first protest action on Sunday on 29 January 2017 to Tbilisi. The “Rustavsky Azot” plant is the only manufacturer of mineral fertilizers in the South Caucasus region. Its’ new management had laid off 350 workers.

The participants of the action which was organised by the National Trade Union of Workers in the Metallurgical and Chemical industries and which was joined in solidarity by the representatives of some of the capital’s industrial enterprises and also by the non-governmental organisations and students’ associations, organised a march to the main office of the Bank of Georgia – the largest commercial bank of the country, which had recently become the owner of the plant.

The participants were holding banners with slogans: “350 workers – 350 families”, “Give us our jobs back!”, “We are in solidarity with the “Azot” plant workers and others.

The dismissed workers, supported by trade unions, the several non-governmental organisations and students during several hours protested near the plant’s entrance. They insisted that the management should meet them, however the protesters were not allowed to enter the plants’ premises.

The situation became especially tense in the afternoon when some of the protesters had managed to enter the office building. Then the police was called. Both physical and verbal interventions were used. The policemen used force to throw the protesters out of the building.

The protests continued during next days both in the country’s capital, and the city of Rustavi.

According to the GTUC representatives on the 7th of February the participants in the protest action gathered in Tbilisi near the metro station “Rustaveli”, and marched along the Rustaveli Avenue to the building of the Bank of Georgia in the Freedom Square.

Representatives of the Georgian Confederation of Trade Unions participated in the action called “Solidarity with workers” along with the dismissed employees of the chemical factory, the non-governmental organisations and students.

The laid off workers of the “Rustavsky Azot” chemical factory are going to file a lawsuit against the management, demanding their jobs back and asking for the revision of their labour contracts.

The action's participants say that their protests will continue until their demands are met. They demand a meeting with the President and the Prime Minister of Georgia.

KYRGYZSTAN: NEW GENERAL AGREEMENT CONCLUDED

The General Agreement for 2017–2020 between the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) and the National Association of Employers was signed 27 February 2017 in the House of Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The General Agreement provisions include the description of the main activities in the sphere of economy, regulation of wage payment and social security, development of the labour market and promotion of employment.

Addressing the participants, the President of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) Mirbek Asanakunov who had been elected to this post in January 2017, said that mutual obligations in the sphere of social and labour relations, should include, first and foremost, the guarantee of an additional responsibility of the constituents for the development of the Kyrgyz economy and labour market, wage payment guarantees, ensuring safety and health at work and raising of the living standards of the population. First of all, they should envisage

raising the minimum wage rate to match the subsistence minimum level.

In addition, the KFTU continues to support the Law "On labour protection" since it includes some of the legal provisions which are not included into the Labour Code and other legal acts of the Kyrgyz Republic, and which the Government wishes to cancel.

"By signing the Agreement, we thereby express our will and readiness to cooperate while solving these important problems and all our actions should be co-coordinated. Only together, we can overcome a set of difficulties arising in the course of the country's development, determining the new guidelines of the country's development strategy which is presently elaborated by the Government and which will continue a course, aimed at creating a strong, independent and economically developed state", – said Mr. Asanakunov, the trade-union leader of Kyrgyzstan.

KAZAKHSTAN: FPRK SUPPORTS CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS OF THE PRESIDENT

The FPRK Statement issued 7 March said, that the FPRK Executive Committee of entirely supported the constitutional reforms, described in the Message of the Head of the State Nursultan Nazarbaev.

The distinctive feature of this message is the description of 7 provisions which envisage the creation of new jobs. In addition, this process should be entirely financed by the respective government programs, conducted within a framework of 5 institutional reforms.

The issue, which especially concerns the unions, is a subsistence minimum

level rate which was mentioned by the Head of the State in his Message. The real cost of a consumer's basket in Kazakhstan consists of the expenses on food (37,4 percent) and non-food items (62,6 percent).

As a result of reforms, the Government will be formed by the parliamentary majority, and that fact considerably enhances the responsibility both of the executive power, and the parties which will win the elections.

Real steps will be taken to strengthen the independence and objectivity of the judicial branch of power, thus meeting the indispensable requirement of every democratic society – proclaiming the supremacy of law, civil rights and freedom.

MOLDOVA: EDUCATION AND SCIENCE WORKERS' UNIONS DEMAND WAGE INCREASE

The Education and Science Workers' Union, supported by the leaders and activists of all national trade-union organizations organised pickets 17 January 2017 near the Government building, demanding salary increase to educators, industry maintenance personnel and other categories of workers, employed in the budgetary sphere.

When it became clear, that trade unions would not backtrack on organising the protests, the Government announced its' readiness to start negotiations with the protesters, starting from 12.00 o'clock the same day. As a result, the negotiating commission was set, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Moldova, responsible for

regulating social issues. According to the existing legislation, the commission included representatives of the Government and trade unions.

Oleg Budza, the President of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova, said that the change in the Government stance and start of the negotiations was a result of the persistence and unity, shown by trade unions. "We have shown our strength. Now, we shall observe how the group works, control the fulfillment of our demands and see the future developments", – said Mr. Budza.

The same day, the leaders both of the industrial trade union and national trade union centre held a joint press conference. Dumitriy Ivanov, the Chairman of the Federation of Education and Science Workers' Unions said: "We shall resolutely stand by our demands. If we don't see our demands met, we shall organise a new stage of protest actions and strikes and strikes at schools!"

On the 10th of March 2017, the authorities came up with the proposal to raise wages for 1-6 categories of workers, employed according to the unified wage tariff system, but, regrettably, only by 10 percent.

Representatives of the Federation of Education and Science Workers' Unions decided to interrupt their negotiations with the Government starting from 10 March 2017 to protest this decision.

Trade unions promise to organise new protest actions in the near future.

MOLDOVA: CNSM CONFEDERAL COMMITTEE'S SESSION IN CHISINAU

The Confederal Committee of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova (CNSM) met for a session 24 February 2017, which considered the issue of social dialogue in the country and trade union proposals on changes and amendments to the country's legislation, regarding this issue.

The leaders of the CNSM Labour Inspectorate made a report on the Activity Results for 2016 and the activities, planned for the coming period.

According to the report, during last year period trade-union inspectors conducted 513 inspections of the country's enterprises, with a view of checking their compliance with labour legislation and other legal acts, regulating labour relations and safety and health at work.

The overall number of employees, working at these enterprises was 63 661 people, out of which 44 232 are the members of trade unions.

The CNSM Committee decided to convene the next General Council 27 April 2017.

RUSSIA: FNPR EXECUTIVE MEETS FOR A SESSION

The Executive Committee of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia met for a session 1 March 2017 in the Palace of Labour in Moscow.

The Executive Committee considered the issue on the May Day Action 2017. The members of the Executive Committee pointed out, that despite the stabilization of the situation in some of the industries and general inflation slowdown, the living standards of the majority of country's citizens continued to decrease. In this context, the authorities' policy, aimed at wage payment devaluation and reduction of workers' social guarantees looked unacceptable.

It in this context, the session decided to organise the All-Russia May Day Action of trade unions 1 May 2017 in the form of marches and meetings. The main demand of the action will be: decent wages, promotion of full employment, reliable social guarantees for workers and ensuring safety, and health at work.

The FNPR Executive decided to convene the next FNPR General Council 3-4 April in Moscow.

RUSSIA: FNPR PRESIDENT IS AGAINST PROPOSALS OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia Mikhail Shmakov harshly criticized the proposal of the Minister of Finance Anton Siluanov to decrease the amount of social payments of employers to 22 percent of the wage pool and raise simultaneously the value added tax to 22 percent.

Addressing the audience at the Russian Business Week Social Forum

14 March 2017, he said that: “The deputies who support the Minister of Finance are either unscrupulous or don’t understand the economy basics”.

According to Shmakov, after the implementation of that proposal both the net cost of production and inflation would surely increase.

“If you have listened to the report by Siluanov, you could have come to the conclusion that, at present, the trust of all layers of the population in such a Government has reached a zero level”, – he said.

TAJIKISTAN: FNPT FACES LEADERSHIP CHANGE

The regular meeting of the Council of the Federation of the Independent Trade Unions of Tajikistan (FNPT), which considered the resignation request of Salimzoda Sherkhon who had decided to change the place of work, was held 20 February 2017 in Dushanbe.

As a result of voting Kodiry Kosim was elected a new FNPT President.

The session considered other issues, relating to the FNPT implementation of budget targets in 2016, approval of the budget for 2017, FNPT Plan of Activities in connection with the declaration of 2017 – “The Youth Year”, etc. The session approved the decisions on all of the issues mentioned above.

In the end of the session, the newly elected FNPT Kodiry Kosim expressed his gratitude to the President

of the Republic of Tajikistan for his support of trade union activity.

The GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov congratulated Kodiry Kosim on his election to this important post and wished him every success in his activity.

UKRAINE: THE COUNTRY’S PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT MEET THE UNION LEADERS

On the 30th of January 2017, a working meeting of the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and the leader of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) Hryhory Osovy, accompanied by the trade union representative in the Supreme Rada Sergey Kaplin, took place.

The leader of trade unions informed the President of Ukraine on the activity of trade unions, aimed at protecting the legitimate rights and interests of worker.

The meeting’s participants discussed the existing challenges, facing the employment and wage payment, the ways of the revitalization of social dialogue, some issues, relating to the activity of the National Tripartite Social and Economic Council and efforts to find additional ways to use trade union resort facilities for providing necessary treatment not only to those who had social insurance, but also to the military operations participants, temporary displaced person, socially vulnerable members of the society and other categories of citizens, who needed a resort treatment.

The Head of the State appointed an executive from the Presidential Administration, responsible for maintaining contacts and liaising with trade unions on a permanent basis.

On the 2nd of February 2017, the Prime Minister of Ukraine Volodymyr Groysman met the President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine Hryhory Osovy.

The FPU President informed the Head of the Government on the trade union activities, aimed at implementing the wage payment innovations, particularly, relating to the minimum salary increase to the amount of 3200 hryvnas.

According to Hryhory Osovy, the majority of employers understand very well that the minimum salary increase is not only a step to overcome poverty among the working people, but also a move to restore justice in wage payment system which the Government of Ukraine fully supports.

In the end of a meeting the FPU President handed the Prime Minister the document, containing the results of the FPU experts' legal research analysis on the draft law, submitted for the public consideration by the country's Ministry of Economic Development, regarding the nationalization of property of national public organisations.

Hryhory Osovy informed the Prime Minister on the stance of trade unions, numbering millions of activists, who believed that such measure would be unconstitutional and socially dangerous.

UKRAINE: FPU PRESIDUM IN KYIV

The Presidium of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, held 16 March 2017, considered important issues, relating to the enhancing and deepening of the social dialogue, ensuring an effective protection of the legitimate rights and interests of the working people, development of trade-union movement and strengthening of the organisational structure, material base, and property rights of trade unions.

The session heard the information report, delivered by a FPU Deputy President Volodymyr Saenko "On a current situation, regarding the management and utilization of FPU's property, and proposals, aimed at protecting the property rights of trade unions at legislative level" which had developed as a result of economic crisis in the country – the hikes of tariff rates for public utility services (above all for energy) and both the land tax and land lease increase.

The FPU Presidium instructed the relevant FPU's executives to develop and submit for the Presidium's consideration a detailed plan with a view of leading the FPU entities out of recession.

The Presidium approved the Statement "On safety and health at work situation in the country" which said that in the context of the financial and economic crisis, budgetary funding constraints, deregulation of the mechanisms of state supervision in Ukraine, the country faced an extreme challenge with safety and health at work at the majority of the indus-

trial enterprises. The FPU Statement says that the unions demand that the Government should make public the results of the investigation of the accident at the “STIEP” mine, which took place 2 March 2017. It should call to account all the officials, responsible for the accident, and take comprehensive measures to guarantee the prevention of such accidents in the future.

TRADE UNIONS ARE ANXIOUS TO PROTECT WOODS FROM FIRES

The President of the Federation of the GCTU-affiliated Federation of Timber and Related Industries Workers' Union of the Commonwealth of Independent States and GCTU Vice President Viktor Karnyushin took part in the round table, held 16 February 2017 by the Committee of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation on the Agricultural and Food Policy and Wildlife Management and addressed the participants with the report: “On the forest fire-protection measures in 2017: the challenges and ways how to meet them”.

In his report to the audience, Viktor Karnyushin stressed in particular that it had taken more than ten years since the adoption of the Forest Code of the Russian Federation for everybody to realize the erroneous decision to reduce the number of forest service workers. At that time, the Code had not mentioned anything about either foresters or foresters' rounds and forest regulation, which later led to the total lack of control over the condition of woods. Numerous appeals by the research-

foresters and trade unions to various government agencies had been neglected.

Trade unions warmly welcomed the adoption of the President's Decree, signed 31 January 2017 “On the issues, relating to the use and forest protection and conservation”.

Mr. Karnyushin believes that the key issue is the guarantee of the number of the state forest inspectors, in accordance with the forest protection standards. It is important to allocate funds in 2017 to implement at least the currently set standards which envisage the deployment of 50 thousand foresters.

President of the Federation of Timber and Related Industries Workers' Union came up, in particular, with proposals which are as follows:

- to raise the prestige of foresters' work and increase their salary;
- to enhance the responsibility of regions' heads for fire prevention measures and organising of forest protection and fire-prevention community outreach campaigns;
- to arrange special leisure areas and secure a safe passage of vehicles to forest areas during the summer period;
- to pass special Government decision to solve social and labour problems, relating to the work of forestry workers, engaged in the fire-fighting operations and employed under civil-law contracts, etc.

Following the results of the debate, the participants in the Federation Council round-table adopted the detailed Recommendations.

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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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