



# *inform* **contact**

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

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### **GCTU MEMBER ORGANISATIONS MARK 10<sup>TH</sup> WDDW**

In its appeal of 17 August 2017, the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) urged its affiliates to observe the tenth anniversary of the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) by organising different activities, with particular emphasis on work remuneration problems, and, in particular, to:

- demand that wages be brought up to a level providing a comfortable living for workers and their families;
- express solidarity with the ongoing GCTU campaign “Minimum Wage not Lower than the Subsistence Minimum!”

GCTU member organisations promptly responded to the call. Participants in the events staged by trade unions in early October throughout the region reaffirmed their loyalty to the traditions and ideals of solidarity in the struggle of the international

trade union movement for the rights and interests of employees, against all forms of social injustice

The congress of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA) held 6 October 2017 in Yerevan adopted an appeal in connection with the World Day for Decent Work. The CTUA Training and Research Centre, industry-based trade unions, and work collectives in large enterprises held various events to discuss decent work and social problems.

As part of the WDDW activities, the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) held a round table conference on “Raise Wages to a Decent Level!” In addition to trade unionists, its participants included members of parliament and government, and representatives of employers’ associations and international organisations. The final resolution adopted by the conference draws the attention of the authorities to the cases of violation of ILO conventions and the country’s Labour Code, par-

ticularly in what concerns the establishment of a minimum wage at least equal to the subsistence minimum of the able-bodied person.

Activists of the Youth Commission of the National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM) launched an information session entitled "Trade Union Hour" at the National Teachers' University in Chisinau. The aim of the dialogue with students was to raise their awareness of decent work and its components; undeclared work and the risks it involves; the legislative aspects of combining studies with work, and the role of youth in the trade union movement. CNSM representatives informed the students about the work being done by trade unions to protect the rights of young specialists as they seek employment or sign a labour contract.

The Federation of Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) conducted this year's nationwide action "For Decent Work!" at all levels mainly by organising meetings of tripartite commissions on the regulation of social and labour relations.

The agendas of the meetings, which involved over 1.2 million trade unionists, included burning issues of social and labour relations, such as the implementation of the Presidential decrees on raising salaries in the public sector, the establishment of the minimum wage and its indexation at the national and regional levels in 2018, etc.

## **ARMENIA: TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION HOLDS CONGRESS**

One hundred and ten delegates, 61 per cent of them women, took part in the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA) held 6 October 2017 in Yerevan.

The activity report was presented by CTUA President Eduard Tumasian who also outlined the tasks to be tackled by the Confederation in the forthcoming period. The delegates heard reports by the Auditing and the Credential Commissions, and approved the Programme of Activities of the trade union centre for 2017-2022.

Both the activity report and delegates' contributions to the discussion gave a positive assessment of the work done by the Confederation, and identified the outstanding problems to be solved by the country's trade unions. They include, among others, the need to calculate an economically justified subsistence minimum and establish a fair minimum wage on its basis; preserve the legislative guarantees and benefits, develop a procedure of compensating for the losses incurred by employees in bankrupt enterprises, etc.

In the period from 2017 to 2022, the unions will be contributing actively to the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme, and take measures to contain the spread of informal and precarious employment.

Bro Eduard Tumasian was unanimously elected President of the CTUA for a new term.

Attending the congress was Natalia Podshibyakina, a Deputy General Secretary of the General Confederation of Trade Unions.

### **BELARUS: FPB SUMMING UP FOR THE YEAR**

The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) held a meeting 22 December 2017 to summarise the results of the Federation's activity in the outgoing year and outline the guidelines for the year to come.

Over the year, the unions had focused on issues, such as production development, raising the quality of products, enhancing the work conditions, promoting employment, increasing wages, and improving the pension schemes. The national trade union centre was also actively involved in the standard-setting process, and initiated a number of amendments to current laws / with the aim to improve the protection of workers' rights and interests.

Since last May, the Federation has been monitoring the prices of essential goods and services. The pro-active stand of its technical labour inspection has helped to keep the downward trend in the number of occupational accidents in the country. In the meantime, FPB af-

filiates had taken further steps to build up new primary trade union organisations, raise the efficiency of collective bargaining campaigns, improve their personnel policy, and organise training courses for trade unionists.

Simultaneously, participants paid special attention to the outstanding problems, first of all, the need to raise wages in several industries and ensure their timely payment. Even with all incentive payments and fringe benefits taken into account, some categories of workers still get pay below the minimum wage. Trade unions at all levels are seriously concerned over the work remuneration situation in agricultural enterprises.

### **BELARUS: WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS FALLING**

According to reports by the FPB technical inspection, the number of severe injuries decreased by 15 per cent in 2012-16, while the number of fatal production accidents went down by 29 per cent (169 cases in 2012 and 119 in 2016).

In 2017, the downward trend continued, largely owing to checks carried out by the FPB technical inspectorate. The trade union control made employers take more responsibility for labour safety issues. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, during the nine months of the current year, 95 employees

were killed and 401 seriously injured in occupational accidents, which is, respectively, four and 41 people less than in 2016.

Despite the positive dynamics, the FPB sticks to its principled position that the responsibility of both employees and employers for work health and safety should be enhanced.

This question was, in particular, discussed at a recent workshop organised for labour safety inspectors by the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. Participants of the meeting involving 137 trade union specialists mentioned that, over the nine months of 2017, FPB inspectors had revealed more than 50 thousand violations and imposed bans on the use of 1,900 pieces of equipment.

“We have to develop proposals how to raise the responsibility of both employees themselves and public labour inspectors”, said FPB Secretary Anna Varfolomeyeva. “Where it concerns the matters of labour protection, we must strictly adhere to our principles.”

### **GEORGIA: UNIONS CRITICAL OF HEALTH & SAFETY BILL**

The Parliament of Georgia is considering the draft law on safety and health at work developed by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection.

The work on the bill began soon after four workers were killed in an accident at a coal mine in Tkibuli (Imereti Region) last May. Representatives of the public, trade unions, and other non-governmental organisations launched a broad debate about the need to tighten control over work conditions, especially in hazardous industries.

Trade unions believe that the statistics about deaths from work-related injuries in the country call for urgent steps to make the work safety rules much stricter.

However, trade-union experts are of the opinion that the adoption of the law in its present form will not improve the situation with the protection of workers' rights.

“The bill will have to pass an appraisal by ILO experts,” said President of the Georgian Trade Union Confederation (GTUC) Irakli Petriashvili. He believes the authorities should first of all see to it that the law is duly respected by those for whom it is written. “We have the Labour Code, which is better than the one we had before 2013, but most of its provisions are not observed. It does not matter what kind of document we adopt, what matters is how it will affect the real life of society. Even if we had 25,000 labour inspectors, we would still be in the hell in which we are now, unless society and its treatment of workers change,” he concluded.

## **KAZAKHSTAN: FTURK ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT**

The meeting of the General Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (FTURK) held 22 November 2017 in Astana elected 52-year-old Bakytzhan Abdraim President of the Federation.

Abelgazi Kusainov, who stood at the helm of the FTURK in 2013-17, was dismissed from his post at his own request.

On the following day, 22 November 2017, Bakytzhan Abdraim was received by Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev. During the conversation, the Head of State said the unions were playing an important role in regulating the labour relations in the country and in building constructive dialogue between employees and employers.

## **KAZAKHSTAN: FTURK PLANNING FOR FUTURE YEAR**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 2017, the FTURK called a trade union conference in Astana to define the priority tasks facing the Federation in the near future, discuss current problems, and outline the ways of addressing them.

Addressing participants, FTURK President Bakytzhan Abdraim paid special attention to the problem

of preventing the emergence of social tension hotbeds and taking timely measures to settle labour disputes.

Today the FTURK unites 18 national sectoral unions and 16 territorial trade union organisations. There are more than 18,000 primary trade union organisations in the country; and over 11,000 occupational safety and health councils in industrial enterprises.

## **KYRGYZSTAN: KFTU WOMEN DISCUSS MATERNAL PROTECTION**

The Women's Council of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) held a session 25 December 2017 in Bishkek, with the participation of the KFTU Vice President Rysgul Babayeva.

Participants reviewed the maternity protection situation in the country, including issues such as benefits for pregnant women, parental leave, improvement of women's working conditions, and family support.

Council members said they were willing to make an active contribution towards the implementation of the goals set in the Kyrgyzstan National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality till 2020, and intended to submit relevant proposals to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

Speaking at the conclusion of the session, Rysgul Babayeva said that: “today we have outlined the main guidelines for our Council’s activity in the coming year. I am positive that our joint efforts will help overcome the acute social problems now facing our women. “

### **KYRGYZSTAN: STRONGER FRIENDSHIP TIES WITH UZBEKISTAN UNIONS**

A delegation of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) paid a friendly visit to the capital of Uzbekistan Tashkent and the Tashkent Region 8 December 2017.

The delegation met with leaders of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan to outline the main areas of cooperation between the two trade union centres in the spheres of labour, culture, youth policies and tourism. In conclusion, participants considered and approved the draft memorandum on cooperation that is expected to be signed in the near future.

The colleagues also exchanged experience of social partnership, and discussed prospects for establishing regular cooperation between trade unions of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The representatives of Kyrgyz trade unions also got acquainted with the functioning of the health resort system run by their Uzbekistan counterparts.

### **MOLDOVA: PLAN OF CNSM ACTIVITIES IN 2018**

The meeting of the General Council of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova (CNSM) held in Chisinau 30 November 2017 considered a number of topical issues facing the country’s trade union movement.

CNSM President Oleg Budza told participants about the work done by the trade union centre since its last congress in June 2017, and outlined perspectives for future activities.

One of the main tasks, he said, was to ensure decent pay, and the first steps had already been taken in this direction. The unions managed to win a wage increase for several categories of employees in the budget sector. For example, teachers’ salaries had been raised by 11.3 per cent as from September 1.

Oleg Budza was concerned over the increasingly harsh attacks on trade union rights. In particular, the recent changes in the Labour Code favour the employers over the employees, disregarding the positive experience of cooperation with the social partners.

The meeting approved the Plan of CNSM activities in 2018 as part of the implementation of its Strategy for 2017-2022 adopted by the Congress.

## **RUSSIA: FNPR REJECTS PAY MEDICINE**

Amidst the heated public debates on the need to reform the health care system, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) made a statement expressing its bitter disagreement with appeals to involve citizens in the co-financing of medical care. The unions believe that, given the low incomes of the bulk of population, the growing number of paid services, explicit or hidden, will lead to further inequality in health and education, and, consequently, deeper stratification of society, all of which will undermine the state.

“Throughout history,” the statement says, “governments considered it most important to ensure free access to health care and education as essential components and conditions of equal development of every citizen. The FNPR considers it impermissible to push the authorities to violating the primary articles of the Constitution of the social state, and demands an end to the irresponsible steps and discussions in this field that escalate tensions and arouse mistrust towards the government.”

## **RUSSIA: FNPR URGES PUTIN TO RUN FOR PRSIDENCY**

The FNPR General Council held a session in Moscow 25 October 2017 to discuss the current tasks of Russia’s trade unions. In his re-

port delivered at the meeting, FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov said the Federation should insist that Vladimir Putin run for the presidential election in 2018.

“It was he who has acted on behalf of the state as a responsible and proactive party in social dialogue,” stressed the leader of the Russian trade unions. “It is thanks to his actions and decisions that the incomes of Russian citizens have gone up.” He added that Putin was the person who was capable to lead Russia into a new and efficient stage of development, increase the incomes of the population, and protect workers.

Members of the General Council voted unanimously for a resolution containing a call on Vladimir Putin to run for the office of President in the elections of March 2018. They also formulated a mandate for the presidential candidate, with an emphasis on the protection of workers’ social and labour rights and trade union freedoms.

## **RUSSIA: UNIONS WANT CHANGE OF ECONOMIC COURSE**

A massive concert rally was organised at Moscow’s *Luzhniki* Stadium on the National Unity Day 4 November 2017, with the direct involvement of the FNPR and the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions. According to official data, the event gathered about 130 thousand peo-

ple, including trade unionists, civil society activists, prominent public figures, Olympic champions, and theatre and film stars.

Addressing the rally, trade union representatives urged society to close the ranks in a difficult economic situation and simultaneously demand a change of the government's economic course which does not lead the nation to increased well-being, but, on the contrary, is the cause of numerous crises in the economy.

Speakers stressed that the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia had always stood and would continue to stand guard over the rights of workers, trade union members and their families.

### **UKRAINE: FPU WORRIED OVER ATTACKS ON LABOUR RIGHTS**

At its meeting 5 October 2017 in Kiyv, the Presidium of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) reviewed the Concept of Trade Union Action to Protect Workers' Social and Economic Rights in Times of Reform.

Members of the Presidium said the reforms in the socio-economic sphere had entailed a total infringement of the rights of citizens, particularly in the field of pension and medical provision. The government as an employer does not respect the general agreement. When making socially important decisions, the

principles of social dialogue are being violated.

Following a long discussion, the FPU President was instructed to make the necessary arrangements for meetings of the Presidium members with the Prime Minister and leaders of Parliament to consider the prevailing situation. The meeting also decided to set up a working group on the development of a package of national trade union demands, and get down to preparations for an all-Ukraine protest action to be held in Kiyv and the regions 14 November 2017.

Participants adopted a statement on the occasion of the World Day for Decent Work and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

### **UKRAINE: UNIONS DISSATISFIED WITH BUDGET**

The FPU issued a statement 15 December 2017, expressing its sharp disagreement with the antisocial nature of the law "On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2018" approved by Parliament

The Federation has repeatedly insisted that the budget should provide for financial support of social guarantees, including the establishment, in 2018, of a minimum wage at least equal to the subsistence minimum, with subsequent raising its amount in the course of the year, depending on consumer price rises. However,



the budget developers had ignored the requirement.

The FPU does not believe that the State Budget-2018 cares for workers' interests; on the contrary, it only whips up social tensions, given the recent wage raises for parliament members and civil servants. The Federation will continue its struggle for a fair subsistence minimum and decent wages by all available means.

### **NEW GUIDELINES FOR RAILWAY WORKERS & TRANSPORT BUILDERS**

GCTU General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the GCTU-affiliated International Confederation of Railway Workers' and Transport Builders' Unions held 6 December 2017 in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan. The congress brought together 32 delegates and more than 60 observers and guests from the Confederation's affiliates, totalling about 2.5 million members.

The activity report was delivered by the General Secretary of the Confederation, Gennady Kosolapov, who dwelt on the work done to implement the decisions of the previous, 4<sup>th</sup> Congress.

He said the decline in transportation volumes in the industry in 2013-2016 had led to a reduction in working hours, cuts in bonus payments, and

the dismissal of employees, despite the bitter opposition of the unions.

On the whole, the analysis of the present day situation in the railway workers' unions indicates its stability. The only exception is the trade union of railway workers of Armenia, where mistakes made by the leaders have resulted in the collapse of the organisation. In Belarus and Kazakhstan, several transport trade unions have been successfully merged into single organisations. Confrontation between the unions and the railway administrations persists in Georgia and Moldova.

The trade unions have chosen constructive dialogue with employers as their strategic course. New collective agreements and accords have been signed by the unions on favourable terms. In most countries, they apply to all employees, but in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Moldova now exceptionally to trade union members.

In the period to come, the unions will continue their fight in defence of human rights, and trade union rights and freedoms, strengthen the methods and institutions of social dialogue and partnership, and promote trade union unity.

The Congress adopted the Guidelines for activities of the Confederation in 2017-2022, and elected the new leaders. Gennady Kosolapov was elected General Secretary for a new term in office.

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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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