



inform **contact**

NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

No.101

July-September 2018

WDDW-2018 STATEMENT BY GCTU

On the 7th of October, 2018, the world trade union movement will mark the eleventh World Day for Decent Work (WDDW). This day has over the years become a successful supplement to the Day of International Workers' Solidarity, a historic holiday celebrated by all organised workers across the world on the 1st of May, when they traditionally take to the streets to confirm their unity and make their basic demands. The WDDW offers an ample opportunity to trade-unionists in all countries to, once again, remind the governments and employers of their fundamental requirements and express their support for the Decent Work Agenda adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 1999.

The ILO Agenda aims to provide all workers in the world with safe quality jobs, decent and fair labour remuneration, and reliable social guarantees, with the full respect of

employees' and trade unions' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining in an atmosphere of democracy, equality and enhanced dignity of working people.

The ILO Decent Work Agenda met with broad support and understanding in the international trade union community. Year after year, WDDW activities have been involving ever growing numbers of participants. Today they have become a unique regular review of the strength and influence of trade unions, their consistent adherence to the ideals of struggles for world workers' rights and interests.

The need to intensify the union struggles for the rights and interests of working people retains its relevance today. The global financial and economic crisis of 2008 entailed a deep social crisis, whose impact is still felt in most countries of the world, including the region where affiliates of the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) operate.

Despite the protests by trade unions, the ruling circles and transnational companies continue attempts to overcome the economic difficulties by openly trampling workers' fundamental interests and rights. The mass unemployment, especially among young people, the impoverishment of working people and pensioners, the ever widening income gaps, the enormous burdens of taxes and payments, and the discrimination against women, migrants and other vulnerable groups have become habitual today.

While advocating in principle social dialogue, the unions are increasingly aware that negotiations, appeals and statements alone will not be sufficient to improve the world situation. More and more often, they have to resort to such forms of struggle as protest actions, rallies, demonstrations, and strikes. Thus, since the beginning of this year, mass strikes of transport workers, power engineers, miners, civil servants, students etc. have swept across many countries in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

The implementation of decent work principles is an acute problem also in our region. Today, our economies are not going through one of their best periods. Almost everywhere the key indicators are deteriorating, inflation is on the increase, the national currencies are depreciating, and services and basic consumer goods are rising in price. Consequently, the real incomes of the population have

fallen. In addition, there remains a rather high level of hidden unemployment and informal employment, wages are unreasonably low as compared with the cost of labour, discrimination in the world of work has not been eliminated, and the labour migration situation is alarming. Despite all demands and actions by trade unions, the retirement age is being raised, wage arrears persist, and the social stratification keeps deepening.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions calls on its affiliates to hold their WDDW-2018 events under slogans and requirements most relevant to the workers of their respective country or industry, and help provide for their mass character and wide coverage in the media.

*General Confederation
of Trade Unions*

UNIONS PAY TRIBUTE TO MEMORY OF SHELEPIN

A round table memorial meeting was held in Moscow's Palace of Labour 21 August 2018 to commemorate the birth centenary of Alexander Shelepin, a most prominent trade union leader of the Soviet period, who headed the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, AUCCTU, from 1967 to 1975. Prior to the meeting, participants visited his grave at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow, where they laid wreaths and flowers.

In his keynote address to participants, General Secretary of the General Confederation of Trade Unions, GCTU, Vladimir Scherbakov said, "During his career, Alexander Shelepin held a variety of leading posts that would require of him seemingly incompatible abilities and talents. But he had always coped successfully with his duties, leaving a good memory of himself wherever he worked."

Vladimir Scherbakov dwelt on Shelepin's trade union activity describing it as very fruitful both for his personal career and for the most massive organisation of workers. Under his leadership, the unions became a truly influential force in Soviet society, occupying its rightful place in the country's political, economic, social and spiritual life.

ARMENIA: GOVERNMENT & UNIONS IN FAVOUR OF CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Representatives of the government and civil society took part in a conference that was held in Yerevan as part of the Constructive Dialogue Programme funded by the European Union. Its participants discussed the current situation in the country's trade unions and prospects for its development.

Addressing the gathering, President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA), Eduard

Tumasian commended highly the conference agenda and said he hoped the debate would help develop and strengthen new democratic provisions. As a leading civil society subject, he added, the Confederation protected the social and legal interests of its members strictly in accordance with the Law on Trade Unions.

Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Arman Udumian stressed that the policy of the new government takes account of the existence of independent and powerful trade unions.

Participants pointed to a number of outstanding problems in the trade union movement, including the lack of real dialogue between trade unions and employers, and the low awareness of employees about union activities.

AZERBAIJAN GETS NEW TRADE UNION

A founding conference held in Baku 11 September 2018 voted unanimously to set up a trade union for customs officers. Participants approved the union's statute and decided to join the Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation (AHIK).

Upon considering organisational and personnel issues, Conference elected Safar Ibrahimov President of the newly built union. He promised he would do his best to justify

the confidence and engage actively in the work to solve union members' social and economic problems.

At the end of the Conference, AHIK President Sattar Mehbaliyev assured the delegates that his Confederation would render all necessary support to the new union.

BELARUS: FPB CONSIDERS STRATEGY VIS-À-VIS LABOUR CODE AMENDMENTS

The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) held a meeting in Minsk 5 July 2018 to consider, among other things, the strategy of trade union actions to be taken following the first reading approval of the bill amending the Labour Code.

In conjunction with relevant ministries and agencies, the FPB had worked on the document for more than a year, and made about 40 proposals many of which had been taken into account.

“We have succeeded in changing Article 365 of the Labour Code concerning the extension of collective agreement coverage to employees on whose behalf they were not concluded,” FPB President Mikhail Orda told the session. “The unions have been raising the issue for 20 years now. In fact, what we have achieved is a revolution in our collective bargaining practice.”

A number of other trade union proposals have been taken into account. For example, from now on the union will be entitled to participate in the contract negotiation with a union-member worker. This may help exclude situations where the worker is offered obviously unfavourable terms of employment. Also, the bill provides for notification of the union committee if the employer has no intention to renew the contract with a union-member employee.

Unfortunately, the updated draft law does not contain a provision on the mandatory extension of labour relations with *bona fide* employees. The FPB has repeatedly pointed to the problem of “hidden staff reductions”, when, instead of following the established redundancy procedure, the employers simply terminate contracts with employees who have not been subjected to disciplinary action, and thereby solve their financial issues.

KYRGYZSTAN TRADE UNIONS IDENTIFY PRIORITY SDG

A regular meeting of the working group to identify priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and develop a plan to achieve them by 2030 was held by the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) 2 June 2018.

The meeting addressed the role and strategy of trade unions in the im-

plementation of the global sustainable development agenda.

The task of the KFTU Working Group was to define strategies, actions and measures necessary to eliminate child and forced labour, and strengthen the tripartite cooperation and social dialogue. The proposals to be developed by the group will form the basis of the strategic plan of actions for the trade unions in the period to come.

The KFTU Vice Chairperson Ryskul Babayeva told journalists present at the meeting she believed that the UN SDGs-2030 should be incorporated into the national programmes of Kyrgyzstan.

MOLDOVA: UNIONS CONCERNED WITH WORKPLACE LABOUR SAFETY

Representatives of the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova (CNSM) took part in a session of the National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining held 31 July 2018 in Chisinau.

For the first time ever the Commission considered the issue of work-related diseases and occupational medicine.

“Our unions insisted that the Commission meeting address the issue. We don’t believe that the official statistics on occupational diseases

provided by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection reflect the real-life situation. While West European countries report 1,800 cases of occupational diseases annually, Moldova has registered only three. We need to launch mechanisms that would help protect the employees and reduce occupational risks,” said CNSM President Oleg Budza.

During the negotiations, trade union activists had once again stressed the need to ratify ILO Convention No. 161 on Occupational Health Services (1985), which provides for workers’ participation in decision-making on health and safety issues.

Meanwhile, in her report to a meeting of the CNSM Confederal Committee 24 August 2018, Head of the Trade Union Labour Inspectorate, Elena Charchilan, said the unions were concerned about the aggravating occupational safety and health situation in the country. Employees’ constitutional rights to fair and favourable work conditions, life protection and healthcare were under threat.

One reason, she said, was that, with the adoption of new legislative amendments last October, the functions of the Labour Inspectorate were reduced only to mere control. This has resulted in the lack of efficient machinery for coordinating actions and measures taken in the sphere of labour protection in a context of systematic violations of oc-

cupational safety and health rules at workplaces.

All this at a time when the State Labour Inspectorate has received 194 reports about occupational accidents, out of which 27 involved 31 deaths.

RUSSIA: FNPR PROPOSES AMENDMENTS TO PENSION AGE BILL

Parliamentary and public hearings on “Improving Pension Laws” were held in the State Duma 21 August 2018.

On the eve of the hearings, the Federation of Independent Unions of Russia (FNPR) had come out with proposals amending the draft law on raising the retirement age. The unions insist that the pension age issue should be considered in one package with legislative measures to be taken in the social sphere, including:

- ratify ILO Convention No. 102 without the exemption of Section IV (unemployment benefit);
- do away with the off-the-books payment of wages;
- introduce a progressive tax on personal income;
- unify the procedure for appointment and receipt of pensions for all categories of employees, including civil servants and municipal employees, as well as senators and deputies of all levels who work on a fee basis;

RUSSIA: FNPR SUMS UP COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CAMPAIGN

The session of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia held 18 September decided to convene the FNPR General Council 31 October 2018 in Moscow.

The Committee confirmed the earlier decision to make its contribution to this year’s World Day for Decent Work that will be globally observed 7 October. This time the Russian trade unions will mark the WDDW mainly by organising special meetings of tripartite commissions on the regulation of social and labour relations, rallies, and other events.

As they discussed the draft law on raising the retirement age, EC members stressed that any measure to improve the pension system should be preceded by a complex of serious socio-economic transformations involving the development of the labour market and wage policies, and production reform. They also reminded that participants in the 64 mass rallies, 187 picket lines and 6,695 trade union meetings held throughout the country were sharply critical of several provisions of the bill.

Summing up the collective bargaining campaign, Committee noted that the work done by the member organisations to preserve

guarantees in the sphere of labour was in line with the FNPR recommendations. Over the period, the General Agreement for 2018–2020 had been signed, together with six agreements in federal districts, 61 industry-based agreements at the national level, 1,065 industrial accords at the regional level and 3,534 branch agreements at the territorial level, 79 regional tripartite agreements, 1,814 territorial tripartite agreements, and 130,727 collective agreements at workplaces.

UKRAINE: PROTEST ACTIONS BY MINERS

A new all-Ukraine protest action against wage delays was staged by miners 5 July 2018 in Kyiv.

The miners came up with posters: “We are here to collect our pay!” “Stop talking, start acting!”, “Give us our wages!”, “No closing the mines!”

“We demand an immediate settlement of wage arrears,” said Viktor Turmanov, Chair of the Coal Miners’ Union of Ukraine. “Equally important is the demand that our MPs pay heed to the voice of trade unions and work collectives, and finally adopt a law that would increase the funding of the industry by 2.8 billion hryvnias. This will make it possible to pay back the miners’ salaries by the end of the year.”

In case of noncompliance with their demands, the miners threatened to organise new protest actions.

Meanwhile, in June the wage arrears to miners rose by 307.6 million hryvnias, and the total sum of non-payment amounted to 685.9 million hryvnias.

UKRAINE: PROTECTING TRADE UNION PROPERTY

“Unity Is Our Strength!” “Hands off Trade Unions’ Property!” “Let Us Give Decisive Rebuff to Raiders from Government!” Such and other calls were chanted at a trade union rally that took place outside the District Administrative Court in Kyiv 26 July 2018.

Participants demanded cancellation of the government order on the transfer of trade union property to the Prosecutor General’s Office in Poltava and the Transcarpathian District Court in Uzhgorod.

Attempts to take away training centres and other objects from trade unions are being made in Transcarpathia, Kyiv, Ivano-Frankovsk, Odessa and Chernovtsy.

“We declare resolutely that trade unions’ right of private property is guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine, it has equal rights with state property and, therefore, nowise can be seized, withdrawn or “nationalised” in the interests of those who

head government agencies,” says the statement adopted by the protesters.

UKRAINE: UNIONS TO LAUNCH ALL-UKRAINE PROTEST

The Presidium of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) decided to launch an all-Ukraine trade union protest action that will be held in two stages.

The first, or warning, stage will take place on the 9th of October as part of the World Day for Decent Work in Ukraine’s regions, involving work collectives in enterprises and organisations.

The second, and final, stage will be held in Kyiv on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17 October. The mass rally will grow into a march that will proceed from Maidan Nezalezhnosti to the Supreme Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

The main demands put forward by trade unions are:

- raise the wages and pensions;
- stop the rise in prices of consumer goods and services;
- take into account the trade union proposals in the process of developing the draft state budget;
- put an end to the state raiding, and the Government’s encroachment upon the property rights of trade unions.

The Presidium set up an organising committee (headquarters) that will deal with preparations for the action, and took the decision on public events to be held by the FPU on the World Day for Decent Work and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

TAJIKISTAN: FITUT URGES EMPLOYEES TO JOIN UNIONS

In accordance with its work plan, the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Tajikistan (FITUT), supported by local administrations, ran a campaign “Come out of the shadows, join a trade union!” in the Khatlon and the Gorno-Badakhshan Regions in August.

The action was organised in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan in the form of theatrical performances. The meetings that were held in Houses of Culture, trade union offices, and market places gathered large numbers of people.

During the action, free legal advice was provided to participants, and topical booklets were distributed. All in all, the actions reached out to almost 10 thousand people, with some of the events being broadcast on local television. Taking into account the media coverage, the total figure may amount to 50 thousand.

FORUM OF WOMEN TRADE UNIONISTS IN TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

From 26–27 July 2018, the town of Aktau, Kazakhstan, hosted the First International Women’s Forum of Transport Trade Unions under the motto “Happiness: Territory of Women”. Attending the event were representatives of the transport workers’ unions from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

The Forum was organised by the International Confederation of Railway Workers’ Unions (ICRWU) and the Kazakhstan sectoral trade union of workers of railway, automobile, air and water transport (Kazproftrans).

Today, women make up over 35 per cent of employees in railway companies, representing a broad variety of professions. A large number of women workers are employed in jobs with harmful or dangerous conditions. In the ICRWU-affiliated unions women chair a significant percentage of primary organisations, and even more shop floor organisations. Occupying these posts implies the necessity to work in direct contact with people, answer their questions, or solve their specific problems with the manager. In this connection, the unions considered it necessary to help them share experience gained.

Addressing participants, Gennady Kosolapov, ICRWU General Secre-

tary, stressed that “gender equality is a basic factor of social well-being that has a huge impact on the growth and competitiveness of our economies, and on the degree of their readiness for the future.”

Speakers said that trade unions were facing the task of strengthening work with working women. It is they who make up a sizeable active component of the trade union movement, and their being union members provides them with an opportunity to solve their issues relating to work, training, health improvement of their families, and career advancement.

Participants in the discussion were of the opinion that the labour standards relating to the protection of women from the impact of harmful working environments, the ban on their employment in physically demanding jobs, and the mandatory transfer of pregnant women to easier work need to be preserved and supplemented. In general, labour legislation must be aligned with ILO Convention No 156 Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities.

The Forum ended with the adoption of a resolution that points to the need for regular meetings of that kind providing an information platform for sharing work experience, and stresses the importance of enhancing the current gender policy in the transport industry and raising the prestige of the family.

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

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

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

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GCTU ARE:

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

THE GCTU BUILDS ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITH FULL RESPECT FOR ITS AFFILIATES' COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND THE EQUALITY OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

THE GCTU AFFILIATES NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRES OF ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN AND UKRAINE, AND ALSO 28 INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEAR READERS

The GCTU information bulletin "Inform-Contact" is also distributed by E-mail. Apart from that, the English and French versions of our publication are available on our web site: www.vkp.ru