

Call to Action for Decent Work, Decent Life

In the course of the Lisbon Forum, a meeting of the “Decent Work – Decent Life” Campaign was held on 31 October 2007. The meeting was organized by the International Trade Union Confederation and the European Trade Union Confederation, in collaboration with the Global Progressive Forum, Solidar and Social Alert International. It launched a “Call to Action for Decent Work” in the form of a petition to build on the global campaign “Decent Work – Decent Life” that was launched at the World Social Forum in Nairobi in 2006. The Call to Action will be publicised throughout the world and the signatures collected will be presented to decision-makers at key events. The full text of the petition is reproduced below.

Call to Action for Decent Work, Decent Life

Despite the world economic boom, most of the world’s population are not seeing their lives improve as a result.

As well as significant open unemployment, many are underemployed, or not paid for work performed. Half of the world’s workforce earns less than 2 \$ a day. 12.3 million women and men work in slavery. 200 million children under the age of 15 work instead of going to school. 2.2 million people die due to work-related accidents and diseases every year. People in developed and developing countries work more for less money, and more and more people – overwhelmingly women - are forced to make their living in the so-called informal economy, without social protection or rights and in precarious jobs. Meanwhile, companies are using the threat of outsourcing to drive down wages and hard fought for rights such as the right to collective bargaining and to strike. Trade unionists that fight these trends are dismissed, threatened, jailed and even killed.

Only an international system based on solidarity and respect for people’s rights, as enshrined in United Nations and International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, can put a stop to these trends. We call on our governments to sign these conventions, to implement them urgently and to put decent work at the heart of their policy-making.

In July 2006, governments at the UN Economic and Social Council adopted a Ministerial Declaration whose first article states: “We are convinced of the urgent need to create an environment at the national and international levels that is conducive to the attainment of full and productive employment and **decent work for all** as a foundation for sustainable development.” Their call must be matched by ratification and implementation of the ILO’s standards, at the same time as international agencies use the UN’s new Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work as a first step towards fostering greater policy coherence and convergence for implementing the promise of Decent Work for All.

The time to start implementing these promises is now.

We believe that decent work is central to eradicating poverty, improving the lives of women and men and enabling people to live in peace and dignity. We hence call on decision-makers urgently to:

1. **Decent work:** Reaffirm the contribution stable and quality jobs make to a healthy economy and just and equal communities by implementing inclusive strategies for full and productive employment, including for those currently working in the so-called informal economy who need rights and justice to defend their interests. All people have the right to work, to good working

conditions and to sufficient income for their basic economic, social and family needs, a right that should be enforced by providing adequate living wages.

2. **Rights:** Workers' rights to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively with their employer are fundamental to realising decent work, and all international organisations, governments and businesses must live up to their responsibilities to respect workers' human rights.
3. **Social protection:** Strengthen and broaden social protection coverage by ensuring access to social security, pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity protection and quality health care to all. These benefits should be available to everyone, including workers in the so-called informal economy.
4. **Trade:** Change unfair trade rules and ensure that trade agreements are used as an instrument for decent work, sustainable development and empowerment of the world's workers, women, the unemployed and the poor. Binding mechanisms for the promotion and enforcement of decent work, including core labour standards, must be included in trade agreements. Governments must stop making trade deals which hurt the poor, create unemployment and lead to exploitation. The demands of workers' organisations and the rest of civil society must be listened to.
5. **Debt:** Ensure that the priorities of the international financial institutions incorporate social and environmental concerns. Particularly, loan and debt conditions which force countries to deregulate labour markets, reduce public spending and privatise public services at the cost of access and quality must be stopped. All projects funded by these institutions must adhere to core labour standards in their implementation.
6. **Aid:** Ensure that governments keep their commitment to increase the level of official development aid of rich countries to at least 0.7% of GDP. Adequate financing for development is imperative if the UN's Millennium Development Goals are to be reached.
7. **Migration:** Ensure that migrant workers are not exploited and enjoy the same rights as other workers by ratifying the relevant ILO Conventions and the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.