

- for the worldwide observance of core labour standards and the development of other elements of a socio-economic floor for the global economy, including full employment policies and, as a first step, minimum income security and access to basic educational services and basic health care;
- against policies that seek to erode existing levels of decent conditions of work and life;
- to ensure that international standards cannot be used to reduce agreements, rights or standards existing at the national level;
- for the respect of legal limits on hours of work and, where appropriate, the reduction of working time;
- to encourage the professional, social and ethical responsibility of professional and managerial staff and measures to protect them in case of conflicts.

#### To meet these commitments, UNI will:

##### *At the global level:*

- press for a more democratic system of global governance, in line with the recommendations made by the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation;
- urge the principal actors of the multilateral system to endorse and promote the decent work agenda;
- press for multinational companies to respect all the dimensions of decent work;
- insist that all relevant international organisations, including IMF, World Bank and the WTO, respect and promote core labour standards in all their policies and measures;
- include the elimination of child labour and HIV/Aids in its discussions with employers on corporate social responsibility and global framework agreements;
- put the elimination of child labour on the agenda of UNI events;
- work with NGOs sharing the same policy goals including the regulation of global financial markets, sustainable development, the effective application of core labour standards and reform of the international financial and trade institutions;

##### *At the sectoral level:*

- review UNI programmes in the light of the decent work agenda, especially with a view to relating economic restructuring to the creation of decent jobs and employment growth to reduce poverty and inequality;
- advocate decent work strategies in their existing dialogue with companies and employer groups, and seek to extend relations to other groups seeking to promote decent work and sustainable development;
- highlight the women-specific consequences of globalisation;
- put emphasis on equality of opportunities and treatment between women and men as one of the fundamental dimensions of decent work in all sectors;

- pay special attention in negotiations with companies and employers' organisations to achieving decent working conditions for workers involved primarily in "modern" information and knowledge-based activities where special factors contributing to humanising the work environment have to be taken into consideration, e.g. in terms of working hours;
- take a critical but constructive approach when assessing companies' innovation policy to ensure that greater weight is given to job-creating, social and decent work innovations rather than job-destroying rationalisation measures;
- promote exchange of experiences regarding successful projects and practices carried out by UNI affiliates to promote decent work.

##### *At the regional level:*

- call on governments to establish decent work programmes that, within a framework of national and local stakeholder dialogue and action, identify major decent work deficits; define priorities and targets, in particular targets for the reduction of unemployment and underemployment; and measure progress;
- urge governments to include trade unions in labour inspection services; especially in developing countries, demand that all socio-economic policies are consistent with the goal of employment growth to reduce poverty and inequality;
- ensure that decent work objectives and policies are integrated into World Bank-sponsored Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and national Millennium Development Goals reports;
- promote the assessment at regional and national levels of the social implications of government economic, financial and trade policies, with the participation of national stakeholders and multilateral agencies (IMF, World Bank, WTO, UNDP, ILO, etc.);
- urge governments to request the ILO to assist them with programmes to promote core labour standards in connection with bilateral and regional agreements on trade and investment.
- work with civil society groups, including NGOs and community-based organisations, to enhance capacity and resources to progressively eliminate child labour and to promote sustainable, social and ecological development.



## ***Waking up the World to Decent Work***

# **UNI'S Action Plan for Decent Work**

To have a decent job is a basic need of people in all countries. The ILO's decent work agenda encompasses four strategic objectives: employment promotion, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue. The decent work agenda is based on the realisation that those objectives are best pursued together, as progress towards each of them reinforces and complements action towards the others. As a framework for social development, the decent work agenda requires policy coherence and favours sustainable development based on the three pillars of economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

The right to decent conditions of work and life is a widely accepted international principle. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations), 1966, recognises the right of all workers to remuneration that provides them with, among other things, "a decent living for themselves and their families". In 1976, the ILO's World Employment Conference called for "the achievement of full productive employment in decent working conditions".

The decent work agenda is consistent with traditional trade union objectives and demands for "more and better jobs", "jobs with justice", "the right to a decent job". From a trade union perspective, the decent job agenda comprises full and freely chosen employment, workers' rights and favourable conditions at work, equality of treatment and opportunity, social protection and public services for workers and their families, social dialogue and democratic governance, and an international system that supports the realisation of those objectives.

Decent work objectives move upwards with economic and social progress. While there is no ceiling, there is a floor, set by the fundamental principles and rights at work spelled out in the ILO Declaration of 1998 (core labour standards), and by the need for people to have opportunities for decently paid work and security of income.

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Core labour standards cover the right to organise and to bargain collectively; the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation; the elimination of forced labour; and the abolition of child labour. These rights are vital to human dignity, equality and security.

Throughout the world, workers suffer from decent work deficits in the form of unemployment or underemployment; unfavourable or dangerous working conditions; denial of trade union rights; discriminatory or unjust treatment; inadequate vocational training and protection in the face of unemployment, injury, disease, disability or old age; a lack of social services; or a combination of these disadvantages.

Efforts to overcome these deficits are hindered by undemocratic governance, with widespread corruption in some parts of the world and massive tax avoidance in others. Global competition for markets, investment and jobs has put downward pressure on working conditions worldwide, and has led to cases of severe abuses, as in many export processing zones. Companies are able to play on worker fears of a "race to the bottom".

Well remunerated full employment for men and women is at the heart of the decent work agenda. That is the most effective way to raise general living standards and to secure a more equitable distribution of income. Especially in developing countries, all socio-economic policies should be consistent with the goal of employment growth to reduce poverty and inequality. Such a policy requires not only economic growth but also direct measures to improve the living conditions and skills of the poor and to make assets available to them (infrastructure, production inputs, equipment, credit). Rural development must be a central component of the strategy.

Workers' rights at work include their rights to organise, to defend and further their interests, and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The decent work agenda requires the removal of obstacles to the organisation of workers into unions or to collective bargaining over pay and working conditions. The agenda's anti-poverty commitment calls for special efforts to train and organise low-income workers, the self-employed, as well as wage earners. Decent conditions also require anti-discrimination policies, and protection against occupational accidents and diseases. Scientific studies show that respect for labour standards has positive effects on economic growth, efficiency and the distribution of income.

The feminisation of poverty and scourges such as the increasing trafficking in women and children are the dark sides of the new world economy. Family, labour and social legislation must contribute to combating poverty. A well-regulated labour market should have adequate minimum pay levels, strictly applied equal pay laws and comprehensive social protection for women. Especially important are women-specific training and further training programmes, the promotion of programmes for the acquisition of qualifications by women, measures to facilitate the return to occupational activity, independent income security for women in their old age, free-of-charge access to education, and the opening up of new occupational opportunities. Tax systems should provide for more justice not only between social classes but also between women and men.

Child labour has enormous social and economic costs. It is often directly linked to violations of other core labour standards. Where adult workers are denied the right to organise and to bargain collectively for decent wages and conditions, their children are more likely to be found at work as well.

Child labour persists on a very large scale and is a worldwide problem with some 246 million children undertaking child labour, of whom approximately 179 million are working in the worst forms of child labour.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic adds a new and tragic dimension to the problem of child labour in many countries around the world. Millions of children have been orphaned by the death of one or both parents from HIV/AIDS. Millions more will be.

Employers, driven by the demands of an increasingly competitive global market, must be made aware of the long-term negative impact that this detrimental cycle has on economic development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the UN's goals and targets for combating world poverty. The eight goals to be achieved by 2015 under the broad banner of "Make poverty history": halve extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education (by 2005); gender equality in education and parliamentary representation; reduce child (under-five) mortality; reduce maternal (child-birth) mortality; reverse the spread of diseases, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria; environmental sustainability, including drinking water and sanitation; a global deal on aid, debt relief and trade.

Not among the MDGs is the reduction of the number of unemployed and under-employed (working poor), although the promotion of decent work is essential for sustained progress against poverty. The ILO's World Employment Conference, already in 1976, requested countries to set targets "to reduce progressively unemployment and underemployment". The MDG strategy does now include the target of decent and productive work for youth. Young people aged 15 to 24 represent nearly half the world's unemployed, and growth in the number of young people far exceeds the current capacity of economies to provide them with jobs. If this decency gap is to be narrowed, policies must focus on maximising economic growth and employment based on sustainable development.

Migration for employment is expected to increase rapidly in coming decades, as one of the biggest failures of the global economy is its inability to create enough jobs where people live. The working conditions of many migrants are exploitative. Regardless of their legal status, migrant workers must be protected against discrimination in their terms and conditions of employment. There is a need for more bilateral and multilateral dialogue between countries of origin and destination, including joint measures to promote decent employment in the countries of origin. The ILO should initiate an inter-agency effort towards a multilateral framework for the national laws and practices governing the cross-border movement of workers. That framework must be based on core labour standards and other human rights.

Economic restructuring needs to be related to the creation of decent jobs. Policies should comprise a wide variety of measures designed to enhance competitiveness and employability, including technological upgrading and skills' acquisition. Management methods must evolve so that managers are able to implement such measures and fulfil their social responsibilities. It is not acceptable to offer only a subsistence income to workers whose jobs are destroyed. Countries with policies to manage employment changes efficiently and fairly are in a better position to reap the potential benefits of globalisation and other structural changes. In meeting the ever-changing demands of the global economy, governments have a key role to play in creating an institu-

tional framework to reconcile the need of enterprises for flexibility with that of workers for security. Everybody who is employed should have the protection of a legal status or contract.

Social protection and social services are needed to ensure that all members of society have security in terms of income, and access to education and health services. Social security is an internationally recognised human right, but it is not enjoyed by 80% of the world's population. Where universal systems do exist, they are strained by ageing populations, spiralling health costs, and constant economic restructuring brought about by privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation.

The decent work agenda must be based, foremost, on the promotion of remunerative employment. But a fair globalisation also needs global mechanisms to spread the benefits of growth to the least advantaged. The idea of social solidarity stretching over national boundaries may need time to take root. The ILO has estimated that about 2% of the global Gross National Income (GNI) would be needed to give all the world's poor a minimum of income security, and access to basic educational services and basic health care. As a first step, contributions from people and governments in developing countries could be combined with voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations in rich countries.

Social dialogue is both an end in itself and a means to achieve the other objectives - a flexible tool that enables governments and the social partners to manage change and achieve economic and social development within countries and internationally. The diverse challenges faced by modern society have led to intensive activities by many other groups: global civil society, think tanks, consumer groups, women's associations, environmentalists. They are helping to shape and expand dialogue. Trade unions need to find appropriate relations with them, as well as new relations with their traditional partners (employers and governments) and promote the role and place of women in those arrangements for social dialogue.

## Action Plan

**UNI is committed to promoting the decent work agenda everywhere in the world by campaigning, together with the other Global Unions:**

- for an international economic and political system that is favourable to the fulfilment of the decent work agenda;
- for a greater presence of the ILO in the multilateral system and an enhancement of its capacity to assist countries in designing and implementing integrated decent work strategies;
- for the ratification and implementation of key ILO instruments in the fields of basic labour rights, labour inspection, vocational training, employment, working conditions, health and safety, and social security;
- for a multilateral framework for national laws and practices governing migration for employment, based on core labour standards and other human rights;