

# WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Class oriented - uniting - democratic - modern -- independent -- internationalist

Geneva Switzerland – June 10th 2014

## Speech of WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos at the 103<sup>rd</sup> ILC Plenary

Honorable members of the Presidium  
Ladies and gentlemen  
Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions that today represents more than 90 million workers in 120 countries we consider that on a global level the situation of the working class is constantly deteriorating.

The deep and prolonged crisis of the capitalist system generates poverty, unemployment and suffering for the workers and big profits for the capitalists. We are very worried about the rise of the neo-fascist political parties in Europe, about the strengthening of racism and xenophobia. It's the duty of all unions to isolate the fascists in every sector and in all workplaces.

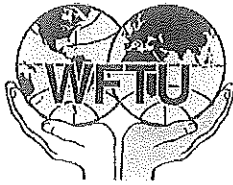
At the same time, the rivalries within the imperialist system generate wars, conflicts, imperialist interventions. We can see the results of these interventions in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and elsewhere.

The imperialists intervene in order to win spheres of influence, routes of energy transport, steal the natural and economic resources that belong to the peoples of the third world.

That is the situation today. Facing this situation, as WFTU we want to stress – from the floor of the 103rd ILC- the following 5 points:

Point no.1: We call for struggle against unemployment. The unemployment kills the dreams of young people. The unemployment is an enemy of the trade union movement and an ally of the capitalists. The WFTU has declared October 3rd 2014 an International Action Day against unemployment. We all must take part in this struggle, with a concrete program and initiatives.

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Point no. 2. : The right to strike is in danger. Governments and the bourgeoisie have their own lecture of Convention 87. Their aim is to abolish the right to strike and place conditions that make strikes impossible. It's the duty of all of us to defend the right to strike. Strike is a unique weapon in the class struggle and even more in our times, when the attacks against the rights and conquests of the workers are constant. It is a right, registered in the Convention 87 of 1948 and in national laws. It's wrong to send this issue to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Point no. 3 : About a month ago, on May 13th 2014 in the town of Soma in Turkey more than three hundred of our brothers lost their lives, because the mine they were working in didn't have the necessary health and safety measures. The employer's thirst for bigger profits killed more than three hundred workers.

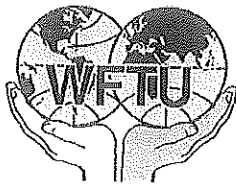
For the WFTU, the struggle for health and safety measures is a basic priority. For the international class oriented trade union movement, worker's Life is the most important principle. So, the struggle for health and safety measures is a first grade priority, along with the struggle for salaries, the struggle against unemployment.

Point no. 4. Today, while we are discussing here in Geneva at the 103rd ILC thousands of our brothers, our colleagues are imprisoned. In Colombia 9 thousand five hundred fighters are unjustly imprisoned. Among them, WFTU cadre Huber Ballesteros, unionist in agricultural sector. In Paraguay, Rubén Villalba, cadre of our affiliate MOAPA, is in jail. We have persecution of trade unionists in Malaysia, Kazakhstan, in Greece the strikers of Helliniki Halyvourgia were convicted in court. In Chile, lock out is still in force, unionists are laid off every day. In Peru, unionists from civil construction and other sectors are receiving threats, attacks and get murdered. A few days ago, the striking contract workers and their families at the Puttalam and Galle plants of the Holcim Company in Sri Lanka were attacked by hired thugs with swords and clubs for exercising their right to strike.

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We demand that the ILO intervene immediately for the release of Huber Ballesteros in Colombia, Ruben Villalba in Paraguay and of all imprisoned activists.

Point no. 5: Dear friends, the last point we would like to stress in front of you is the lack of representativeness in the ILO.

Today the WFTU has 90 million members. According to the proportional representation, it should have 5 seats, 5 Titular members at the Governing Body. These seats are occupied by others through antidemocratic and non-transparent procedures.

This is neither a good image for the trade union movement, nor for the ILO itself. We will continue to shout. We will continue the struggle for representativeness, transparency and democracy until the end. We have presented in written and verbally our concrete proposals to the Director General. We are open and ready for a real and just solution. We ask the support of everybody in this effort that during the next time period will pass through new forms.

Finally, from this tribune we send internationalist message to the heroic Palestinian People, the Cuban People, the peoples of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Lebanon and all the peoples and we say that we'll be by their side with a fraternal and internationalist spirit.

We assure the workers of Portugal and Greece that we'll continue to be by their side in their various struggles against austerity, against the Troika, the IMF, the EU.

Thank you.

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