



## **DECLARATION**

### **World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) XII th World Congress of Trade Unions of Public Service Employees and Allied (TUI-PSEA)**

#### **Social Functions of the State — in the service of the workers and people In defense of rights of the Public Service Employees**

The workers and peoples of the world have been confronted with the profound consequences of the worsening of the crisis of the capitalist system, which in the recent past has had its greatest expression since the 1930s, as a result of the intensification of exploitation and growing financialization of the economy. Processes that are the direct and intrinsic result of the development of capitalism, along with intensification of tendency in the decline of profit rates and concentration of capital.

The worsening of the crisis of the capitalist system laid bare once again its irremediable contradictions, and its now confronted with long periods of economic stagnation, fall in investment in production and deceleration of prices. The rapid growth in unemployment, reaching historic levels in various regions of the world, is reflected in a mass of unemployed workers, the majority of which without social protection. A situation that serves the interests of capital, that uses the threat of unemployment to blackmail workers, lower wages, withdraw labor rights, and weaken negotiating power in collective bargaining.

Faced with unprecedented levels of unemployment — mostly in the capitalist poles —, economic retrocession, and increases in public and private debt, capital and the government in its service have found a new opportunity to deepen the offensive against workers and the popular masses, imposing a social and civilizational retrocession with successive attacks on rights, collective contracts and the class based trade-union movement, enlarging the already the substantial sectors of the population who live in the risk of poverty and worsening misery and social exclusion.

#### **The reconfiguration of the State and the destruction of public services**

The reconfiguration of the State, increasingly placing it in the service of big capital, is clearly one of the great objectives of capitalist governments. The so-called "social State", created after World War II as a response to the progressive advances in the Soviet Union towards building socialism, and which guaranteed important advances in the social and economic development in the countries where it was installed, rapidly became a target to kill after the fall of the USSR.

The social functions of the State — including Education, Health and Social Security —, and the principles of universality, solidarity and non-payment, are the result of the will, demands and struggle of workers and populations and are therefore their inalienable right. These principles allowed widening access of basic and non basic education to the popular



masses, and the access to the highest levels of education to the children of workers; allowed universal access of the population to quality health care in case of disease, but also improvement in its prevention, in public health, and in the development of health sectors that potentiate the general improvement of living conditions; the replacement of wages in case of their loss due to disease, maternity, unemployment and old age, guaranteeing that no one who found himself in a situation of total or partial loss of wages were left to live in misery. To the social functions of the State one can also attribute the responsibility of disseminating and democratizing culture, art, improving mobility, aid in housing, aid in childhood, old age and the handicapped with public equipment, although with some insufficiencies given the population in need. Globally, the social functions of the State allowed important social and economic developments, representing a key role in decreasing the existing social inequalities, and its destruction has implied a civilizational set backwards and worsening the living conditions of workers and peoples.

The destruction of these worker's and people's conquests, despite being framed in a process that has been occurring for more than two decades, has had new qualitative and quantitative advances in the last years, using as arguments the sustainability of the social security systems, budget consolidation and the reduction of sovereign debts. In the case of the European Union countries, the approval of treaties and directives that are deeply against the interests and aspirations of peoples has served to crush their rights and conquests in benefit of big companies, with their respective governments handing over national sovereignty on a platter to an antidemocratic and neoliberal directorate.

The privatization packages have been horizontal to all countries in retrogression. First, with the privatizations of strategic sectors of the economy and development, like the energy sector (electricity, gas, fuels), the communication sector, including the postal service and telecommunications, the transport sector (air, rail, maritime and road transportation , as well as their respective infrastructures). The privatization of these public services meant that State monopolies were transferred to private monopolies (or almost monopolies), guaranteeing the accumulation of colossal profits to their shareholders, frequently foreign. The total dependence of populations upon the goods and services rendered — electricity, gas, telecommunications, etc. —, and the enormous investments already made by the states (and paid by taxes) in order to install and, more recently, modernize their distribution networks (with levels of coverage of the populations that can vary from country to country), in addition to having guaranteed profit, also allows that capital freely decide rate increases, reduction in coverage of services and decay in their quality, and to reserve services to those who can pay high bills.

But capital did not want to merely possess the strategic sectors of the sovereign economies. Therefore, governments opened the doors to the social functions of the State: health, education and Social Security.

The governments of capitalist countries have sought to deteriorate these social functions through progressive and substantial cuts in their budgets, by closing infrastructures (schools, hospitals, health centers, offices) and proximity services, with serious losses to populations, specially those far from the great urban centers. Children now travel dozens of kilometers to attend public school; the sick take more than an hour to reach the nearest emergency services. Social benefits have suffered significant reductions, and increased bureaucracy is used as an obstacle to access benefits: note the low the coverage of



unemployment benefits given the high number of workers without a job.

In Europe, particularly in countries that suffered the intervention of the Troika (IMF, ECB and European Commission), the essential public services have begun to rupture as the result of constant budget cuts, and lack of human and material resources. The emaciation of public services also occurs through profound attacks upon the Public Administration workers. The decrease in the number of workers, either by lay-offs, either by not renewing retired workers; the withdrawal of rights, with wage cuts, frozen career progressions, blocks to collective bargaining and contracts, and limitations on the right to strike (considering that in many countries the right to strike is totally denied to public employees); in increase in working hours and work overload; the precariousness of thousands of workers with temporary contracts while performing permanent functions are some of the offensives of governments. Simultaneously, the aim to demonize work in public careers, passing responsibility of poor service onto the workers, in order to divide the working class and the people — when in reality the public employees and public companies are doubly penalized with the monthly pillage of their wages and will less, worse and more expensive public services.

There is no doubt that the decay of the social functions of the State is singularly aimed towards its privatization. The governments that crush the financial, human and material resources in health and education, that crush social benefits, are the same that then say that public services are unsustainable and incapable of responding to the needs of the population, in order to then hand them over to private companies — leaving the more disfavored at the mercy of charity and assistentialism.

The transformation of the State into a minimal state for the workers and peoples and maximum state for capital, a state always ready to financially sustain big banks and multinationals, with either direct injections of cash or with multiple tax benefits that allow them to be exempt from any taxation. The reinforcement of the instruments and mechanisms of repression — the remanescence function of the neoliberal State —, the large packages of privatizations (expunging the State of its instruments for economic intervention), the gradual but accelerated process of loss of sovereignty and national independence, the vast body of legal norms that penalize the working class; call rights, guarantees and liberties into question; and aim to satisfy the insatiable hunger for more exploitation and more profit.

### **The role of the class trade union movement in defense of public services**

The class trade union movement, deeply committed with the struggle of workers in defense of their rights and public services, plays an irreplaceable role against the advance of capital. The bosses, using all the instruments at their disposal, will deepen the exploitation of workers, attacking conquests, liberties and guarantees of the peoples in order to maintain their dominance and fatten their pockets.

The reinforcement of the unity and cohesion of workers in their mass and class trade unions in the work place, as well as in their regional and international structures within the WFTU, is therefore fundamental to the development of demands, struggles and the



consciousness of the working class, and in particular the workers in the public services and companies. This reinforcement also presupposes the unity in action of all workers and the struggle against reformism and bourgeoisie ideology.

Regarding demands, the actions of trade-union organizations affiliated in the TIU-Public Services, should involve, while respecting the particularities of each country:

1. The demand of modern, efficient, quality, universal and free public services that answer the real needs of workers and the populations, against their externalization or privatization, recusing their use towards the accumulation of profits by an oligarchy;
2. The demand to recall all the norms damaging the rights of public administration workers in the countries where they were imposed;
3. The demand for improvement in the working and living conditions of the public administration workers, namely by improving their wages and work schedule, making them compatible with their personal and family life;
4. The end to precariousness of work contracts and for guarantees of stability in public jobs that guarantee its independence relative to capitalist governments, either in the central, regional and local administration, within the state business sectors;
5. For the rights to exercise trade-union freedom (of association, reunion, demonstration, participation, etc.) in all the workplaces and the right to collective bargaining and contracts;
6. For the implementation of social policies that respond to the interests of peoples and workers for a more just distribution of wealth, with the rejection of social assistentialism;
7. For the rejection of all neoliberal and austerity policies that in several parts of the world aim to destroy labor and social rights of workers and peoples;
8. For the struggle towards peace and internationalist solidarity, against war, militarism, aggressions, interferences and blockades that attack the interests of workers and peoples — in defense of national sovereignty, so that peoples freely decide their destiny.

The newly elected leadership of the TUI must meet and put forward a plan of action of solidarity and support of the struggle of public service workers all over the world, that will be based on the guidelines of this document voted by the XII Congress of the TUI of Public Service Workers and Allied.

Kathmandu, February 2015