

## **eBulletin No. 1 - 7 January 2005**

### **Dear Colleagues**

#### **Tsunami Disaster**

Clearly the most important item of world news as we enter the New year is the Tsunami which has devastated countries in the Indian Ocean. On behalf of the ITF Executive Board and all affiliates, I have sent a message of sympathy and solidarity to all ITF affiliates in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and to the Seafarers' Union of Burma which is based in exile in Thailand. A massive relief operation is now under way, and many ITF affiliates have already been in touch with us asking how they can help. We have been gathering information from ITF affiliates in the countries affected about the direct effects of the disaster on their members and on the union itself. We are also scheduled to hold a discussion within the Global Unions partnership on how we can jointly help to rebuild and strengthen the unions concerned. This is in addition to the immediate humanitarian assistance on which relief organisations worldwide, many of them directly connected with national trade union bodies, are actively involved.

The ITF has established a section of its website [www.itf.org.uk/tsunami](http://www.itf.org.uk/tsunami) where unions can obtain information and express their concerns about the disaster. We will also be in touch with you again shortly about the activities of Global Unions. At the same time, however, we must not forget that this sudden disaster has not eliminated the serious problems, including the HIV/AIDS epidemic, being suffered by workers in many regions of the world. It is therefore vital that assistance, both long and short term, to those affected by the Tsunami should be in addition to, not a substitute for, other assistance programs. You can also obtain further information on what the world trade union movement is doing from the website of Labourstart which is a useful resource for those interested in global labour [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org).

#### **Global Unions**

I mentioned several times above the term Global Unions. Since this term sometimes causes confusion, I should explain what it means. There have also been important developments around it of which you should be aware. Global Unions is a general term to describe a partnership which comprises the ITF and the nine other sectorally based Global Union Federations (GUFs) representing other industries or occupations; together with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) representing national trade union centres, and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD, a body representing union centres in OECD countries. This group has worked together for over 50 years but is increasingly seeking ways to make its cooperation more effective. This was one of the objectives in decisions taken by the 18th World Congress of the ICFTU held in Miyazaki Japan last December, at which the ITF was represented by myself, the

President and our regional representatives but at which many ITF affiliates were also represented through their national trade union centres.

The ICFTU Congress also took a historic decision in favour of greater unity within the world trade union movement. For over 50 years, a minority of national union centres, mostly having a 'Christian' ideological base, have belonged to a separate body the World Confederation of Labour (WCL). This fragmentation, which is reproduced also at sectoral level in some countries, has weakened the global trade union movement in its relations with governments, international organisations and employers. The ICFTU Congress voted to begin negotiations with the WCL on the creation of a new single global trade union organisation, probably by 2006. The WCL has already taken a similar decision. While this unification process will have no direct effect on the ITF, which is a fully autonomous body with its own Constitution and governing structure, it will encourage greater unity in every sector including transport. This issue was discussed by the ITF Executive Board, which has extended an invitation to the WCL's transport structure, FIOST, for an open dialogue on future relations.

The GUF Conference, due to take place on 11-12 January will be discussing how to take this process of strengthening Global Unions, and the implications of the ICFTU/WCL discussions. It is expected that the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which currently includes member national centres both from the ICFTU, and from the WCL, will also be a part of these discussions.

The Congress also elected the first woman President in the history of the ICFTU, Sharan Burrows President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. It re-elected Guy Ryder as General Secretary.

Further information about Global Unions can be obtained from the following website [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org).

### **World Social Forum/World Economic Forum**

The beginning of the year also sees the organisation of what have to some people have become two rival gatherings both of which are concerned with the process of globalisation. In accordance with previous Congress decisions, the ITF will participate in both. The World Social Forum will be a large gathering in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre from 27 - 30 January 2005. In 2004, it was held in Mumbai with the assistance of the ITF Delhi office, and enabled the trade union movement to make a major impact on the many different bodies from the wider world social movement which were there. This year the ITF will be represented by Vice President Alicia Castro, Assistant General Secretary Stuart Howard, Americas Regional Secretary Antonio Fritz and Education Officer Alana Dave as well as staff from the ITF Rio office. In conjunction with its Global Unions partners and a number of labour friendly Non Governmental Organisations, the ITF is involved in a series of events under the common heading 'The Social Dimension of Globalisation'. There will be an ITF stall present with materials and literature and the ITF will be organisation coordination meetings for all those present at

the WSF who may have a connection with an ITF affiliated union, whether or not they are there as union representatives. If you know of anyone who will be in Porto Alegre who might wish to be informed about ITF activities there, please send their names, hotel details, telephone numbers as well as events they are involved in to [howard\\_stuart@itf.org.uk](mailto:howard_stuart@itf.org.uk).

Meanwhile in Davos, Switzerland there will be a session of the World Economic Forum where 'world leaders' gather to network with each other. Faced with the increasing strength of the 'anti globalisation' movement, the organisers of the WEF have increasingly been inviting labour leaders as well as representatives of critical NGOs to their gatherings. I will be attending, together with leaders of other Global Unions partner bodies and some of the key national trade union centres worldwide. Last year, I participated in a session of the 'Governors' Meeting' for transport and logistics where the Chief Executives of the major corporations of the world get together and was involved in discussing a document on "Principles of Corporate Citizenship" which had been adopted by a number of key transport and logistics companies. We are now discussing implementation machinery for these principles with its authors. Among the principles adopted is one with which ITF affiliates would have no problem provided it is respected in practice:

#### **Principle 4: Employees - social justice in the workplace**

"We are committed to providing healthy, safe and decent working conditions for all of our employees and expect our suppliers to do the same. We actively encourage diversity and opportunity. We also respect the rights of employees to join lawful trade unions or to form workers' associations. We respect the right to collective bargaining. As a minimum, we will fully comply with all relevant national laws and regulations with regard to working hours and conditions, rates of pay and terms of employment. We provide training to our employees on how to manage challenges arising from the implementation of these Principles."

This year I have been invited to participate in the Governors' Meeting for travel, aviation and tourism dealing with the impact of security measures. This will provide a good opportunity to highlight the lessons of the ITF's year long 'Safety & Security' Campaign. Information about the progress of the trade union input to the WSF and the WEF will be available on the Global Unions website [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)

#### **Globalisation**

Future issues of this Bulletin will deal with issues and sources of information which may be of use to union officials and union members concerned with the growing globalisation of the world economy and trade union strategies to deal with it.

An important resource for trade unionists concerned about the impact of globalisation is a guide produced by the ICFTU in close cooperation with the Global Union Federations. Copies of this guide can be downloaded from the ICFTU web site at

[www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation/globguide.html](http://www.icftu.org/pubs/globalisation/globguide.html) or are available on request from the ITF in English French and Spanish.

There are also a number of trade union forums which act as places on the Internet where trade unionists can share information and experiences about different aspects of the globalisation process. These can normally be subscribed to by sending an email to the general address asking to be included on the mailing list. They are, however, all in English. Some of the most important are:

**International Financial Institutions.** This is a forum run by the Global Unions Washington office, a body funded jointly by the ICFTU and a number of GUFs including the ITF to deal with union relations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Email to [ifi-1@forum.icftu.org](mailto:ifi-1@forum.icftu.org)

**Trade and International Labour Standards** This is a forum run by the ICFTU Secretariat in Brussels which links together issues surrounding the World Trade Organisation, labour standards, trade in services etc.

Email to [tils-1@forum.icftu.org](mailto:tils-1@forum.icftu.org)

**Workers' Capital**

This is a forum run by the CLC in Canada dealing with issues related to corporate social responsibility and the involvement of unions/pension funds etc. in influencing company shareholders, investment managers etc in favour of union objectives.

Email to [workers-capital-1@workerscapital.org](mailto:workers-capital-1@workerscapital.org)

You may also like to visit the Global union Research Network website which is operated by the Workers' Activities Department (ACTRAV) of the ILO in Geneva.

One of the most significant developments which has occurred this year was the publication of the report of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. This was a group of world leaders, including employers and unions, chaired by the Presidents of Finland and Tanzania which worked for over a year on a report identifying the social problems of globalisation and how to deal with them. Copies of the full report in Adobe pdf format are available from the website of the ILO in English French Spanish German Chinese Arabic and Russian at [www.ilo.org/public/english/fairglobalization/report/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/fairglobalization/report/index.htm).

## **ITF Congress**

Finally can I just give you initial notice of the 41st ITF Congress which will be held in Durban, South Africa from 2 - 9 August 2006. This will be the first ITF Congress to be held on the continent of Africa. The Executive Board is currently discussing the Congress theme, and we will shortly send all affiliates further details including the provisional programme. Kindly record these dates in your diaries now.

Any comments/suggestions/ideas in relation to the E Bulletin can be sent to me at [ebulletin@itf.org.uk](mailto:ebulletin@itf.org.uk) or by mail or fax to the ITF regular addresses.

Best wishes for the New Year

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ITF General Secretary