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Onderwerp: 24 February 2010: General strike by the GSEE and massive demonstrations



24 FEBRUARY 2010: GENERAL STRIKE BY THE GSEE AND MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS

Europe's unions fully support the general strike in Greece and ask Eurozone Ministers to go for realistic and socially acceptable plans.

European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
 Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

Europe's trade unions follow with great concern the situation in Greece and in particular the pressure by the Commission, the Eurozone Ministers and the European Central Bank (ECB) on the Greek government for harsher austerity. The Labour movement in Europe stands in full solidarity with Greek workers in their struggle against job cuts, wage freezes, wage and pension cuts. Europe's message to the Greek people should be one of stability and social progress and not one of deprivation and social dumping.

"We do not support the Eurozone Ministers' pressure on Greece to dash into rash decisions that will affect the poor, the sick, the old and which will upset the social fabric of Greek society. We want to see plans that are well balanced and which are socially acceptable," stated European Trade Union Confederation's (ETUC) General Secretary John Monks in support of the hundred thousands of workers participating in the demonstrations 24 February 2010.

The government has announced a severe austerity package that involves radical cuts in wages and pensions, tax increases, large scale privatisation of public companies and cuts in health care and other public services as well as local government. Far from addressing the problem, these measures will only deepen the crisis since they will fuel unemployment, demolish welfare, squeeze household spending, and strangle economic activity. Yet Eurozone Finance Ministers and the ECB pressure Greece for a harsher package by a mid-March deadline.

"The Ministers are wrong to go for short-termism. We need realistic and long-term plans that are negotiated with the trade unions. The government, the unions and the employers have to find common solutions that build Greek society, not destroy it by irreversibly slashing jobs, workers' rights and privatizing public services and companies" adds Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU). She adds: *"The Ministers are once again caving in to the banks and financial speculators. Frankly speaking we have had enough of that. You will see more anger as banks and financial institutions continue to be protected and when speculators are not taxed for their reckless behaviour."*

The Greek trade unions are acutely aware of the country's grave situation. They emphasize, however, that once more burden falls unequally on the working people who have already seen the gradual erosion of their rights, pensions and income. Greek unions propose instead a radically different policy mix that will support investment, growth and employment, safeguard incomes, upgrade the State's regulatory role and sustain social cohesion and the environment. They demand fair and effective taxation and measures to combat the underground economy, tax fraud and contribution evasion. Fully supported by the European Labour movement, Greek workers are determined to resist measures that favour markets and banks to the detriment of society and the real economy.

ETUC argues for Eurobonds, a European rating agency and new tax revenues including a transaction tax.

- Intervention by John Monks ETUC General Secretary available on the 24/02/2010:

<http://www.etuc.org/r/1264>

The Greek union confederations GSEE and Adedy are members of ETUC. EPSU is a member of the ETUC, organizing workers in public services across Europe.

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See also ETUC positions on the economic, financial and social crisis:
<http://www.etuc.org/r/1378>

Or EPSU: <http://www.epsu.org/r/447>

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