

ETUC Press Release

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To: Veerle Solia

ETUC calls for EU external trade and investment agreements to advance human rights**European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]**

24 October 2012

Speaking at a meeting of social partners and Labour and Employment Ministers from Europe and Asia in Hanoi, Vietnam, Bernadette Ségol, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), called for EU trade and investment agreements to include binding commitments on trade union rights.

In the context of negotiations for free trade agreements, including the one launched recently between the European Union (EU) and Vietnam, the ETUC has insisted on the inclusion of Sustainable Development Chapters covering labour and environmental concerns. *"In regard to labour issues, we want to see binding commitments by all parties to ratify and fully implement International Labour Organisation standards, notably the core Conventions covering freedom of association and collective bargaining, non-discrimination and child labour. At the same time there should be monitoring structures including independent civil society representatives – notably from the social partners – to follow the implementation of those provisions",* said Bernadette Ségol.

Referring to Burma/Myanmar Ms Ségol said: *"We welcome recent developments - though we must remain cautious. We believe that the reinstatement of the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) should be linked to the adoption of business and human rights legislation and tangible progress in implementation. New business in Burma should support the long-term economic and social development of the nation. We believe that the EU should require corporations doing business there to apply the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises".*

The 3rd ASEM Social Partners' Forum is meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam, in advance of the 4th Conference of Labour and Employment Ministers in the context of the Asia – Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Bernadette Ségol's speaking notes are at: <http://www.etuc.org/a/10462>

The ETUC exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations.

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