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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

Building Workers' Power: ITUC May Day statement 2013

Brussels, 29 April 2013 (ITUC OnLine): Working people are facing sustained and often brutal attacks on their rights in every region of the world. Inequality and unemployment are hitting record levels, as governments continue to follow the failed and destructive policy of austerity-at-any-cost, and the onslaught against collective bargaining continues. The future of an entire generation of young people is at serious risk.

Corporate greed runs unchecked, costing the lives of thousands of workers, most recently in Bangladesh and Pakistan as factories burn and collapse. Trade unionists in Colombia, Guatemala and elsewhere are paying the ultimate price for their commitment to social justice, while Turkish workers face the heavy hand of judicial repression for standing up for their rights.

The promise of transformation in the Arab world is being betrayed by the replacement of one form of autocracy by another. Decades of social progress in European countries are being wiped out by the untrammelled power of global finance, while people across Africa continue to suffer under neocolonial plunder and corruption.

Discrimination against women at work is still pervasive, while migrant workers are exploited, abused and treated as slaves, even in some of the richest countries of the world.

The spirit of solidarity that inspired the first May Day marches, and has sustained trade unionism ever since, remains strong. It is more needed than at any time in decades. Our movement must grow, to foster and harness that spirit to counter the false promise of neoliberalism.

We must build workers' power.

Workers everywhere are showing their resilience in the face of model of globalisation designed to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. Through their unions they are winning new gains for working people. Hundreds thousands of informal workers in India are building their unions, domestic workers across the globe are gaining labour rights for the first time in history, and unions are leading political and community action for development, sustainability and social justice in every part of the world.

Where governments turn their backs on working people, unions must organise. Where company bosses pit worker against worker, unions must organise. We must grow in number and in strength, taking inspiration from those who stand today, and have stood in years gone by, steadfast against repression and the avarice of the few at the expense of the many.

This May Day 2013, we must rededicate ourselves to the enduring vision of the foremothers and forefathers of the greatest democratic power on the planet – the power of working people, united and determined to make the world a better place.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 156 countries and territories and has 315 national affiliates.

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