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On Tuesday (7 September) the Commission's President Barroso delivered his first **speech on the state of the European Union** before the European Parliament. For us, this State of the Union address failed to deal with the actual problems that Europe is facing, like increasing poverty and lack of social cohesion, growing xenophobia, discrimination and racism, the gap between EU citizens and the institutions, and the lessons that we have learnt from the crisis.

Barroso was right to say that this is Europe's moment of truth, but there appear to be varying versions of the truth. Is the truth that Europeans will be less vulnerable if we strengthen the stability and growth pact and that people will get more jobs if we more focus on more single market integration? Is the truth that to achieve the policy priorities "modernising the social market economy", "supporting member states in modernising their social protection" and "quality framework for services of general interest" we should further develop the so-called automatic stabilisers or is it by investing in social infrastructure? Is the truth that the role of the Union on the international stage is more a question of "size that matters" or rather how the EU contributes through fair trade agreements to the development of the South and the achievement of the MDGs?

We know what our version of the truth is. Maybe it is time for a shadow report on the State of the Union address by civil society to put a finger on the social realities across Europe and worldwide?

Conny Reuter, Secretary General

## SOCIAL AFFAIRS

### **GROWING COALITION URGES EU FINANCE MINISTERS TO MOVE ON A FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX**

A broad coalition calling for an European-wide Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) staged an action outside the meeting of EU Finance Ministers on Tuesday (7 September) in Brussels. The group, made up of SOLIDAR and other NGOs, political organisations and trade unions, called on EU Ministers to recognise the merits of an FTT, particularly as austerity measures begin to be felt throughout the EU.

The coalition staged an action to represent what is at stake, pitting greedy bankers against actors representing the developing world, workers in Europe and the environment. Some 200 billion Euros could be raised from an EU-wide transaction tax, according to the Austrian Institute of Economic Research. Campaigners believe that part of this money should support public services at home, fight overseas poverty and fight climate change (read the [full media release](#)).

#### Next steps for the FTT

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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### **UPDATE ON FLOODS IN PAKISTAN**

Latest update from our members, Swiss Labour Assistance (SLA) and ISCOS, working in flood-affected Pakistan are that over 20 million people have been affected by the floods and 160,000 square kilometres of land - about 1/5 of the country land area - destroyed.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Baluchistan, Sind and Punjab have been the worst affected areas. Thousands of people have lost their homes and livelihoods. Crops have been destroyed, and roads and bridges damaged. In the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), these are the worst floods since 1929 and 25 districts are said to be hit. At least 15,402,090 people have been affected.

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