

Chair's report of HTUR Committee meeting to 8th General Council

The ITUC's HTUR committee held its second meeting on 1 February 2011.

The meeting was well attended, which confirms the decision of our Congress to give high priority to the defense of Human and Trade Union Rights in our work.

The current events in Egypt, Tunisia and other countries in the Arab world show once again the importance of these rights.

We see people in the streets risking their safety, even their lives, to defend these rights. It puts a serious responsibility on us to do whatever we can to support them.

Our discussions were based on the clear and concrete report that the Human and trade union rights department made and which I recommend you all to read.

We were aware that a lot of work needs to be done and that it only can be done if we all participate in it.

We cannot "subcontract" this to the secretariat.

We need the engagement of the affiliates. And during the meeting several affiliates indicated that they were willing to be an active part of it.

A written report of the meeting will follow later, but I would like to share with you now some of the conclusions of the Human and Trade union rights committee.

Regarding the Annual Survey on violations of trade union rights, it is our "knowledge base" as Sharan said in her introduction.

We acknowledged the improvements but still thought that the survey can be made more visible and can be better used by ourselves and by others.

For this we would like to strengthen our alliances and relations with others. We want Human Rights and other legal organisations to use our information in their human rights defense.

We suggest that the Survey be made more interactive and updated using the internet. It can also be used to make our letter-writing and protests more effective. The secretariat prepared a list of affiliates who had joined the ITUC letter-writing campaign. By far not enough! The Committee recommended to the HTUR department to prepare a strategy for improvement.

An important innovation of the past period is the establishment of the Regional and sub-regional Networks. We found the Networks well established with workplans that are tailored to the specific regional situations.

The Committee thought however that the effectiveness of the networks could be improved with more involvement of the leadership of our movement and more political support from the General Council.

It is not just the leadership that needs to be more engaged, as we are still far away from the hundreds of thousands that Sharan would like to see active in a secondary network of activists.

We also spoke about the ILO. Several suggestions were made to improve our effective participation in the ILO. We can make better use of the supervisory mechanisms as was discussed by the General Council .

An important discussion on 'countries at risk' took place. Support for trade unions in these countries is a crucial part of our HTUR work. We listed some countries that we felt required our priority attention.

Not just that of the secretariat, but also of the affiliates and the GUF's. The Committee focused strongly on the contributions that each of us can give to the defense of HTUR in these countries.

We discussed 2 countries per continent on average, but this does not mean of course that we will not defend trade union rights in other countries when needed.

For the priority countries a strategic plan will be developed and affiliates invited to get involved in various actions.

We also agreed to make a model campaign guideline, a matrix with an overview of potential actions to be used depending on different situations. This template can then be used to design plans for other countries as well.

The integration of the workplan of the Hong Kong liaison office (IHLO) in the HTUR work was welcomed.

On Child labour and forced labour we have ongoing thematic campaigns.

To conclude, I am please to inform you that the Committee endorsed the workplan and with energy and commitment already started to develop it further.

As Chair, I look forward to the work we will carry out together during the coming period.