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REALISING RIGHTS



Framework for Action

Realising rights

Big business, big finance and their political allies have intensified their campaign to undermine and resist efforts by unions to defend and expand workers' fundamental rights. They are now using the global economic crisis they precipitated as a rationale for an intensified campaign to sweep away existing rights, leaving workers even more vulnerable to exploitation.

The neoliberal model of capitalism is driving inequality, creating social unrest and undermining the very basis of democracy.

Workers' rights are not negotiable, yet decent work deficits exist in varying degrees in most nations, throughout global supply chains and for the majority of women and migrants.

People feel abandoned by their governments as decision makers prioritise business interests over workers' interests. Just 13 per cent of people believe their government focuses on the interests of working families over those of business.

Facts: Forty-seven countries have not ratified one or more international conventions on fundamental workers' rights.

Thirty-three countries, representing over half of the world's population, have not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87), including China, India, the US and Brazil.

Union members in 28 per cent of nations have reported physical violence to the ITUC. In the past 27 years, 2,942 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia. In Guatemala, 73 trade unionists have been murdered since 2007.

Union members in 53 per cent of nations have told the ITUC they suffer anti-union discrimination without effective recourse to justice.

In one in four countries employers refuse to bargain, despite extensive collective bargaining laws.

20.9 million people are working in forced labour conditions. So, three out of every 1,000 people are 'modern slaves', with migrants and indigenous people particularly vulnerable.

One in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence.

A gender pay gap exists in every nation, ranging from 8 to 48 per cent.

Yearly, almost 360,000 workers die in occupational accidents, and two million because of work-related diseases.

Despite often suffering discrimination and exploitation, the world's 232 million migrants (half of whom are economically active) make a huge contribution to economic growth. By 2016 they are expected to remit \$700 billion to their countries of origin, while still spending 87 per cent of their income locally.

Countries at risk

The ITUC Countries at Risk strategy comprises nations where democracy and rights are under attack. They are experiencing liberation struggles, conflict, struggles against discrimination and oppression, or a profound failure to guarantee laws that ensure fundamental rights for all workers.

This strategy is comprised of a WATCH LIST for coordinated action. In any one year, where conditions allow, up to ten countries will be targeted for intensive campaign support.

Congress identifies the following countries for consideration:

Watch list			Targeted
Afghanistan	Guinea	Palestine	Bahrain
Algeria	Haiti	Paraguay	Bangladesh
Belarus	Honduras	Philippines	Burma/Myanmar
Cambodia	Iran	Qatar	Fiji
Central African Republic	Iraq	Somalia	Georgia
Colombia	Korea	Syria	Guatemala
DRC	Mali	United States of America	Swaziland
Egypt	Mexico		Turkey
Greece	Pakistan		Zimbabwe

The IOE (International Organisation of Employers) attack on rights, including freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike, is a global agenda. This must be overturned, along with the corporate defence by employer organisations such as the American Chamber of Commerce of exploitative global trade and supply chains.

The Bangladesh Accord (2013) achieved by IndustriALL and UNI is a model to be built upon.

Urgently securing safe workplaces is a fundamental task for trade unions, which are fighting to prevent employees losing their life or health at work. In many countries today there is a massive attempt to weaken already insufficient OHS regulations and enforcement. It is our role as trade unions to stop this trend, which requires raising OHS not only as a technical issue, but as part of the broader 'Realising Rights' agenda.

Jyrki Raina, General Secretary, IndustriALL Global Union: **“The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh is the only credible programme that brands can sign. The requirements of this programme are straightforward, commonsense measures which will have a vital impact on worker safety in factories in Bangladesh. It is now time for all other brands to commit to sustainable safety in Bangladesh.”**

Philip Jennings, General Secretary, UNI Global Union: **“The Accord is a call for justice and provides a sustainable solution to factory safety which cannot now be ignored. These global retailers must change their behaviour. We have seen the terrible consequences in Bangladesh of the business-as-usual mentality. Companies must sign up and show they are finally willing to take on their responsibilities to these factory workers who are ultimately part of their global workforce.”**



Women's rights are central to workplace justice

Women's concentration in informal and precarious working arrangements with low pay, high job insecurity, poor health and safety, and a lack of social dialogue and social protection makes them additionally vulnerable to gender-based violence at work. Forty to sixty per cent of working women have experienced sexual harassment or other forms of gender-based violence.



Myrtle Witbooi, leader of SADDAWU and President of the International Domestic Workers Network: **“...we were treated with no respect, no value for the work we do! I asked myself on that day (1966) why: why were we treated differently, why do we work long hours and do not say no to the master, clapping our hands while being very poorly paid ? That was my aha moment, and if I can make a difference, we can all do it...”**

The trade union movement is committed to organising migrant workers to defend their rights to equal treatment and legal protection. Only 47 states have ratified the UN Migrant Workers Convention. No destination state in Western Europe or North America or Australia, the Gulf, India or South Africa have ratified the Convention. Governments must take responsibility for a rights-based approach to migration governance on a global, regional and national level.

The slave states where forced labour is growing are key targets for coordinated global campaigning. Millions of migrant workers are tricked and trapped into forced labour around the world and particularly in the Gulf States.



“It took two years for Bhupendra, determined to fight and relying on handouts from friends, to get any compensation after his right leg was crushed in an accident working in Qatar.”

The ITUC is committed to a strong protocol attached to Convention 29 to increase prevention of forced labour and improve protection and compensation for victims.

The rise in precarious work around the world is the result of employment practices meant to maximise short-term profitability and flexibility at the expense of workers. The use of precarious work strikes at the core of trade union rights, as workers in such employment relationships (e.g., short-term contracts, subcontracting or misclassification as self-employed) find it difficult if not impossible to organise with fellow workers to form or join a union and bargain collectively.

Incheon airport organiser Gil-Suk Min after a hair shaving ceremony during 11 November strike for direct employment contracts, decent conditions and union rights.

Indigenous people, who account for roughly 5 per cent of the world population – or 370 million people, continue to suffer marginalisation in society and in the workplace and see their rights routinely violated.



Action points

Rights are non-negotiable and unions everywhere are committed to a national and global struggle to build a just world.

This requires:

- Affiliates' contribution to the ITUC survey to ensure it is the most authoritative resource on violations of trade union rights;
- Campaign for the ratification of ILO conventions, including core and priority conventions as well as those related to domestic work and migrant work, among others;
- Organising to secure and defend freedom of association, including the right to strike, and collective bargaining for all workers, including through ILO standards;
- Promote quality and equality in public services, like education and health, and forwarding the right to education for all;
- Skills and targeted strategies for the effective use of the ILO supervisory mechanisms and regional and national tribunals;
- Targeted campaign and organisational support for workers facing attacks on rights and labour legislation;
- With GUFs and national centres, identifying corporate and national targets for organising, bargaining, litigation and legislative action to reduce precarious work;
- Intensify efforts to combat precarious work worldwide through legislation, corporate campaigns and elevating the issue on the agenda of the ILO, including standard setting on precarious forms of employment;
- Engagement with human rights and migrants groups, indigenous peoples' organisations and other allies;
- Research, support and making space for non-traditional organising strategies to build power and representation among marginalised workers, including those who are migrants and/or working in the informal sector;
- Fighting discrimination at work by, for example, encouraging national centres to: defend LGBTI workers from discrimination at work and fight criminalisation generally; defend the rights of indigenous peoples and to organise indigenous workers into trade unions; and demand gender equality in the workplace and in society.
- Raising awareness of gender-based violence as a workplace issue, including lobbying and campaigning for an international labour standard to address gender-based violence; and
- Promoting national and local OHS actions by trade unions, and contributing to integrating occupational health and safety into the broader trade union agenda, including: sharing best union practice on OHS risks, including emerging issues; promoting a global asbestos ban and the ratification; and ratification and implementation of ILO OHS standards. See http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ohs_action_points.pdf