

ICFTU-WCL CEE&NIS Women's Network

Trade union women leaders of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), from 43 women's structures of trade union confederations in 24 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States, all together representing 25 million trade union women in the region,

Having participated in the Sixth International Trade Union Women's School on the International and European Gender and Social Standards, held in Ohrid (Macedonia) from 28th September to 1st October 2005,

Hereby adopt the following

DECLARATION ON THE GLOBALISATION AND FAIR TRANSITION FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The new neo-liberal globalised world is the result of the restructuring of capital leading to the increasing influence of multi- and trans- national corporations in international, domestic and local arenas and to the failure of the international community to develop mechanisms for their regulation and accountability. We face today the gigantic concentration of resources in the hands of a few whose decisions impact on practically all aspects of our lives.

Our countries in transition have shown to be incapable of suppressing poverty and achieving gender equality. The position of women in the labour market continues to worsen, a logical consequence of the socially irresponsible models of social reforms created in the laboratories of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We recall that these aggressive social reforms have instilled within our societies – and especially among working women and their families – a feeling of permanent insecurity and fear.

We, the women of the regional trade union movement, strive for stable societies where resources are sustainably used, equally shared between women and men and equitably distributed within and between States; where equal participation of all citizens, interest groups, stakeholders, creeds, and nations ensures global and gender justice and fair development; where women are active, creative and fully empowered ; where women's rights are human rights and where discrimination against women - especially in the labour markets – is absent, where women workers are free to make decisions and choices and express themselves without fear of violence; where women trade unionists participate equally in the definition of structures, systems and policies which determine the framework of their lives; and where their voice are heard.

We, the regional women trade unionists, see the emergence of a diverse movement for global justice, represented i.e. in the World Social Forum. We welcome the ongoing process of unification of the two main global trade union confederations – the ICFTU/international Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the WCL/World Confederation of Labour - as a sign

of hope, resistance and alternatives in this time of crisis. **Therefore, on the occasion of our Conference in Ohrid, we have decided to be the first to unite the two regional women's networks** linked to the two global organisations. Unification, build upon already established close cooperation in recent years, gives us more strength and power to fight for the kind of society we strive for, one without fear, social disintegration, exclusion and conflict.

We are convinced, and we know from experience, that there are alternatives to a system where the strongest enrich themselves at the expense of the weakest, and where economic and political power is monopolised by a few. We are convinced that it is possible to have a market where all activities are subject to democratically-agreed common social ethics based on the common good, on local needs and on gender justice, rather than on the self interest of the powerful and the greed of a wealthy minority.

A fair society requires a strong International Labour Organisation and effective implementation of international standards, as well as an economic policy clearly orientated towards the European Social Model based on the EU and Council of Europe gender and social standards. Our countries should make stronger commitment to social welfare providing the unconditional access of everyone - especially to those most vulnerable - to decent living resources. We are fully convinced that the minimum standards for social expenditure should be introduced and that public social security systems, particularly the pension and health systems should be maintained and improved; these should not be privatised. Public services in our countries should be strengthened and not be subordinated to the neo-liberal logic of unfettered competition.

We want to reiterate our firm conviction that today our social rights have been considerably reduced. Maternity leave and benefits in some countries have simply disappeared or profoundly cut. The right of our children to a healthy life and education has been endangered; we have lost the right of equal access to health care. The solidarity between generations has practically disappeared. Uniform and forced models of three-pillared pension system reforms have been imposed on us and it is already clear that several decades from now women will retire at the ages of 65 to 70 and receive symbolic pensions, insufficient to live on. The unemployed in most countries draw no or minimum unemployment benefits, while for many women unemployment have turned into a long-term condition. Among the ranks of the employed the number of women has gone down, and their share of the total unemployed has risen visibly. Women form the majority in a growing category of short-term employees, part-time, temporary, seasonal and most frequently unregistered workers.

Of our highest concern is the growing rate of women working in the informal (or shadow) economy, because those women have no rights; they are often prevented from unionising by their employers and, in some cases by the trade unions as well; they live in fear and are frequently victims of violence and sexually abuse. Among them, migrant, women represent an example of how inhumane the imposed model of reforms is. This is the model which was not written by the women!

Having regard to the above, we, women from transition countries, declare that:

- 1. We strongly support the process of unification of the two global trade union confederations the ICFTU and WCL, and within that framework the creation of the new trade union architecture for the European region, which would bring about an adequate global trade union response to globalisation and its negative impact on the societies in the CEE and NIS region; and which must become a new framework for the strengthening of the regional women's network and would make the voice of the trade union organised women in the region heard in the European and global trade union decision-making process.**
- 2. We profoundly oppose the persistence of the policies of eradication of social rights and demand our governments to restructure their social and welfare systems, to base pensions on solidarity between generations, to secure basic health care to all citizens and to develop programmes of employment and legalisation of unregistered labour. We urge them to adopt and implement international labour standards and take into consideration EU and Council of Europe gender and social standards. We invite them to create conditions for the friendly working place for women and for all workers with family responsibilities.**
- 3. We urge the International Labour Organisation to strengthen the focus through its regular activities of adoption and monitoring of international labour standards, as well as through its Commission on Globalisation, to reverting the disastrous free-fall of social rights and on curbing the spreading of social fear.**
- 4. We urge the European Union to undertake measures to preserve the European social model based on the guaranteed minimal standards, which has remained the only guiding model to transition countries that have or will become member states of the European Union.**
- 5. We resolve to continue and strengthen our regional campaigning on the informal economy which we launched two years ago, to address the issues of concerns of women working in informal economy who have no social protection whatsoever and who are victims of extreme exploitation. We commit ourselves to strongly encourage our trade unions and our leaders to initiate the necessary changes in the statutes, structures and policies to enable informal workers to be organised in our unions.**
- 6. We urge all women to unionise, and, together with the civil society organisations and socially responsible partners, to change the course of current reforms towards sustainable development with a human face and to create socially sensitive models of development that would be designed jointly by trade unions and other representatives of civil society as equal partners and;**

7. **We urge women to take part in the strengthening of social dialogue and negotiating at all levels of the labour market and society in the region, fully aware that women have right and responsibility to formulate their vision on the development of the sustainable and socially sensitive societies; that they have right to fight for their visions and have right to be visible and to take power in all decision-making bodies, especially in their own trade unions where are they still underrepresented and discriminated against.**

We have our vision and strength, in this region we are the voice of more than 25 million unionised women. On the basis of our experience and values, we advocate a new dimension of social thought and action founded on the trade union principles of democracy, respect for diversity, gender equality, peace and social justice.

We commit ourselves to translating into reality our vision for the world, our region and ourselves.

Ohrid, 1st October 2005