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# BUILDING WORKERS' POWER

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE CONFEDERATION  
FOR THE PERIOD 2014 TO 2018

CHANGE  
THE  
RULES

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# INTRODUCTION OF REPORT ON ACTIVITIES TO 4TH ITUC WORLD CONGRESS

The Berlin Congress set an ambitious and comprehensive agenda for the ITUC with a strong focus on promoting union growth; delivering international solidarity especially to workers facing the worst oppression; driving economic and industrial transformation to tackle climate change and poverty; defending and advancing workers' rights nationally, regionally and internationally; and campaigning for democracy and peace. With our affiliates, Global Union Federations and TUAC, and working with allies in civil society, we've made major inroads in each of these areas.

This summary highlights the main achievements which are covered in more detail in the reports on the Frontlines and Priorities submitted to the General Council, in the reports of the Council meetings and the reports from the ITUC Regional Organisations and Structures <https://congress2018.ituc-csi.org/documents>.

Under the **Building Workers' Power** mandate from Berlin, the ITUC set a growth target of 20 million new members of the Confederation by the time of the 4th World Congress. The ITUC now has a declared membership of 207 million, exceeding that target with 30 million new members. The Global Organising Academy has trained, through Regional Organising Academies, some 500 strategic lead organisers, who in turn have already trained more than 2,000 organisers through 62 national activities across all the regions, in cooperation with our affiliates, Regional Organisations and GUFs. This is laying a solid foundation for union growth with a strong representation of women, with gender parity in the training events now the norm. One hundred and forty young organisers have been trained, with 45 affiliates joining the "Get Organised" youth platform. The Academy has developed curriculum materials, including on green jobs and Just Transition, and working with GUFs, has also supported organising campaigns in multinationals such as MTN in Africa and Samsung in Asia.

The values of peace, disarmament and democracy, set out in the ITUC's Founding Principles, have continued to guide our work. An annual "Freedom Report" details the work of affiliates dealing with conflict situations, natural disasters or extreme forms of oppression and exploitation. This involves post-conflict development, disaster relief, and support of refugees for safe haven and the right to work as well as the organising of workers underground in oppressive regimes. It also provides a basis for global advocacy on these issues. The ITUC took part in the International Peace Bureau World Congress in Berlin in 2016 and organised an intergenerational conference on peace, democracy and rights in Brussels in 2017. Preparations with affiliates for the development of ILO Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience helped ensure that this standard, adopted in 2017, incorporates the key concerns of the trade union movement, and follow-up activities with ACTRAV are helping to build capacity in these difficult environments. We have also maintained our voice for global nuclear disarmament and for decreasing military spending to release financing for social protection, vital public services and infrastructure investment.

Human and trade union rights are a top priority. Trade unions in every region are in the front line of defending democratic rights, and through direct solidarity and action at the ILO and in other institutions, the ITUC family has supported those facing attacks on fundamental rights through the Countries at Risk programme <https://www.ituc-csi.org/countries-at-risk-597>. This programme supports our brothers and sisters wherever they face assaults on democratic rights, as in Brazil, where we have stood shoulder to shoulder with the CUT to fight for the freedom of former President Lula, unjustly imprisoned to stop him standing again for election and in Palestine, where we have continued to demand an end to the occupation and to insist upon the realisation of a two-state solution.

Highest priority has been given to the countries in categories 4, 5 and 5+ in our Global Rights Index <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-rights-index-2018-20299>, which this year is five years old. It documents shrinking democratic space globally linked to the rise in authoritarianism and dictatorship as well as to unchecked corporate power. Overall, 128 trade union rights solidarity protests and appeals concerning 55 countries were launched, along with some 50 trade union rights solidarity missions to more than 20 countries. Direct support from the ITUC Solidarity Fund was provided to affiliates in 56 countries, primarily those facing attacks on fundamental rights, and in some cases in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Solidarity actions for unions under attack were promoted through the human and trade union rights mailing lists, ITUC OnLines and social media, in close cooperation with the Regional Organisations. The annual meetings of the Human and Trade Union Rights Committee facilitated both country-specific approaches and strategic discussion on key themes.

Twenty-six complaints were brought before the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, along with three under Article 24 of the ILO Constitution and three under Article 26. One hundred and eighty-seven Observations were sent to the ILO Committee of Experts, and submissions on five countries were lodged with Universal Periodic Reviews of the UN Human Rights Council along with six country submissions under the Council's Special Procedures. A complaint was lodged with the EU Ombudsman over the EU's failure to meet its human rights commitments under trade arrangements with Bangladesh. In addition, advice on labour law changes was provided to 28 affiliates.

Some high priority cases included the campaign to release imprisoned Korean trade unionists including former KCTU President Han Sang-gyun; defence of trade unions against ongoing attacks in Belarus, Cambodia, Swaziland, Turkey and Zimbabwe; and the successful campaign for ratification of ILO Convention 98 and for the elimination of corrupt "protection contracts" in Mexico.

The ITUC supported a successful case at the European Court of Human Rights for compensation for migrant workers in Greece who were shot by their employer while protesting about unpaid wages. Support was provided to affiliates in six countries in relation to mandatory due diligence requirements in supply chains, and the ITUC assisted TUAC in the development of OECD General Guidance on Due Diligence and specific guidance on the garment sector. We were also deeply involved in the preparation of a "zero draft" of the UN treaty on transnational corporations and human rights, published in July 2018.

We have defended the right to strike in the face of an aggressive and unprincipled campaign by the ILO Employers' Group, and strengthened our legal support to affiliates through legal advice and through six in-country legal clinics as well as with litigation and legal support such as on the labour law reform in Chile, which incorporated the decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights supporting trade union rights following successful intervention of the ITUC and TUCA.

Action at the ILO also involved intensive preparations, with the Regional Organisations, for the Committee on the Application of Standards, country briefings and cases brought to the Committee on Freedom of Association. The ITUC also provided briefings for the Workers' Group for the tripartite discussion items at the International Labour Conference, as well as coordination of Workers' Group inputs in the debates. We also provided support to the Worker Representatives on the ILO High Level Commission on the Future of Work, including through the ITUC Reference Group on this topic.

The ITUC Frontline on eliminating slavery <https://www.ituc-csi.org/eliminating-slavery> has been a high priority in the past four years with concerted action to tackle the kafala system in Gulf countries. The campaign on Qatar with its massive World Cup infrastructure programme has succeeded in generating major reforms, with the notorious exit permit system abolished for 1.5 million migrant workers, the introduction of a minimum wage which will be increased as part of the ILO Qatar programme, the establishment of a labour

tribunal system as well as workplace committees with workers electing their own representatives. Action to consolidate and advance the reforms in Qatar, including for domestic workers, took place alongside the first steps to extend campaign action to Saudi Arabia and the UAE where exploitation and abuse are rife. The Qatar campaign also provided momentum for the establishment of the independent Centre for Sports and Human Rights to prevent violations and ensure access to remedy in the sports industry including mega-sporting events. The ITUC, BWI, UNI, ILO, UN Human Rights Commission, NGOs, governments, employers, sports bodies, sponsors and broadcasters are involved in the governance and work of the Centre.

The adoption of the ILO Forced Labour Protocol in 2014 was a major step in the fight against modern slavery, with 26 countries now having ratified it, and national legislation for due diligence on slavery in supply chains introduced in a number of countries. The rise in the global focus on slavery in the past four years has also led to commitments from the G20 and other international and regional bodies to eradicate slavery. Analysis of relevant national legislation and investigations and interventions in several countries including Brazil, Mauritania, Myanmar and Paraguay have complemented the work in support of affiliates and the bringing of cases to the ILO.

Action under the ITUC Frontline on climate justice and industrial transformation <https://www.ituc-csi.org/climate-justice-and-industrial> led to a major breakthrough with the adoption of Just Transition in the Paris Climate agreement in 2015, as a result of the extensive engagement of affiliates and GUFs in the global strategy. This set a key benchmark for global climate policy, now reflected in national and international policies including at the ILO, OECD and other bodies. The ITUC Just Transition Centre <https://www.ituc-csi.org/just-transition-centre>, established in 2016, is working on supporting unions in dialogue concerning transformation strategies at national, city and state/provincial levels, conducting investor-related work in conjunction with the Committee on Workers' Capital, and facilitating constructive dialogue with business groups and individual businesses to ensure Just Transition within their operations. Through an ITUC

partnership with the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the London School of Economics and Harvard University, a Just Transition Guide developed for investors and pension funds has been adopted by 20 major investors with a combined worth of US\$ 3 trillion to date, with a target of 300 funds worth US\$ 30 trillion. We also coordinated trade union involvement in negotiations of the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, and organised the engagement of some 120 union representatives at the annual UNFCCC climate negotiations.

The release of the January 2016 “Hidden Workforce” report <https://www.ituc-csi.org/new-ituc-report-exposes-hidden>, revealing that 50 of the world's largest multinational companies employ only six per cent of their workforce directly, was a significant step in the ITUC Frontline campaign on Supply Chains <https://www.ituc-csi.org/supply-chains>. This was followed by the 2017 report “Exporting Greed through the Panama Canal” on the supply chains of 25 companies in Latin America and a video documentary “Exporting Greed Through the Panama Canal” <https://www.ituc-csi.org/scandal-exporting-greed-through> along with multimedia interviews with workers from Central America. Campaign action on Samsung, one of the most anti-union companies in the world, included a report “Modern Tech, Medieval Conditions” [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/samsung\\_web\\_en.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/samsung_web_en.pdf) and video [www.samsungexposed.org](http://www.samsungexposed.org) along with a series of public actions around deaths from the company's use of toxic chemicals, as well as social media actions including around the launch of Samsung Galaxy 8 in March 2017, with over 90,000 social media engagements. Campaigning by Korean trade unions and their allies contributed to the indictment of the company's chairperson and 27 other executives for anti-union activities in September 2018. Samsung accepted a binding arbitration process for workers poisoned by chemicals at its facilities, and also agreed in 2017 to directly hire 8,000 union members who were previously subcontractors. In Africa, campaigning on anti-union telecoms company MTN has been linked with targeted organising in Ghana and Nigeria, with 900 new union members already organised in three MTN subcontractors.

The campaigning on corporate supply chains has included minimum wage strategies in Africa, Asia and Central America developed with 18 targeted affiliates and then broadened to other interested affiliates. This has involved strategic campaign development and minimum wage and social protection technical forums held in 10 countries. Since the start of the minimum wages campaign, many affiliates can report success, including Nepal, which has already raised the minimum by 39 per cent, and Ethiopia and Rwanda are introducing minimum wages after decades of inaction. Affiliates in Senegal and Nigeria have taken industrial action to secure minimum wage negotiations, and lobbying of the African Union is also underway to make 2019 be the “African Union Year for Decent Wages and Development”. The ITUC also supported the ETUC Pay Rise Campaign, and participated in the ETUC Pay Rise event in Bratislava in September 2017, and work is also underway with PERC affiliates.

The campaign strategies around the ITUC Frontlines have been designed taking into account the results of the ITUC Global Poll <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-poll-2017>, which has revealed overwhelming public support for trade union demands on wages, occupational health and safety, climate action, workers’ rights including the right to strike, and a range of other work-related issues. Three-quarters of Global Poll respondents support a greater role for trade unions in society.

The public exposure of rights violations through these campaign actions have helped union mobilising and lobbying efforts to impact global decision-making under the ITUC Global Coherence priority <https://www.ituc-csi.org/global-coherence-and-development>, including at the G7, and at the G20, which in Germany in 2017 and Argentina in 2018 made important pledges on ending the suppression of labour standards as a tool of international competition, ensuring that businesses exercise supply chain due diligence and supporting implementation of labour, social and environmental standards. We advocated successfully for the ILO to hold a general discussion on global supply chains with a series of experts’ meetings to develop this work. Our ambition is an ILO Convention on supply chains. The ITUC is also involved in the

negotiations for the development of a UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights. With the ETUC we are advocating mandatory due diligence building on the French Vigilance law and other national initiatives.

Commitments from the G20 were also made on the integration of refugees into labour markets, on tax transparency, on the need to address falling labour share of income, on universal social protection, formalising informal work and on employment relations for online workers in platform businesses. The Asia-Europe Labour Forum was granted official status after 20 years of informal engagement, and addressed heads of government in the October 2018 Asia-Europe meeting.

The Global Coherence work also involved successful ITUC and GUF campaigning for the adoption of a labour safeguard in World Bank lending, operative from October 2018, including criteria on organising and collective bargaining rights in all World Bank-financed projects. Twelve cases were brought by the ITUC under existing labour safeguards of the International Finance Corporation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Following pressure over its policies on social protection, the International Monetary Fund agreed in January 2018 to revise its social protection framework, with the participation of the ITUC and TUCA. Under pressure from the international trade union movement and other civil society groups, the IMF began in 2015 to analyse the causes of inequality in its member countries and the distributional impact of its policy recommendations. More progress in this analysis has been made on gender equality than on tax and labour policies, and despite recognition by the IMF research department of the validity of trade union demands on collective bargaining and other issues, its lending conditions continued to negatively affect workers’ rights, incomes, job security and the public sector.

Throughout the period since the Berlin Congress, a strong emphasis has been maintained on calling for reform of regressive and anti-worker policies at the International Financial Institutions, including at the annual cycle of IMF and World Bank meetings. Strong support was given to affiliates in countries subjected to

lending conditionalities, including against destructive conditions the European Commission/IMF/European Central Bank “troika” imposed on Greece and other countries. The ITUC also continued our strong public criticism of the widely discredited World Bank “Doing Business” publication, with its ideological focus on attacking labour standards and equitable tax, pension and social security policies, and we coordinated union critiques in the drafting of the World Bank Development Report 2019.

Work on international trade included action to support affiliates on corporate-oriented trade deals such as TiSA and TTIP. Progress was made on labour provisions in trade agreements such as CETA and TPP and its successor the CPATPP, and while serious binding mechanisms are not in place, these provisions have provided an important focus for pressure on governments. Campaigning against Investor-State Dispute Settlement clauses put this topic on the international agenda, with the United Nations now engaged in an ISDS reform process. Activities were stepped up in particular in the past two years around proposed “e-commerce” agreements, which could have severe impacts on development, on the right of governments to regulate and on workers’ rights. We also coordinated with ITUC-Africa and the ETUC to press for the withdrawal of Economic Partnership Agreements and their replacement by a new Europe-Africa partnership based on solidarity and supporting African countries to defend themselves against predatory investment practices.

The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) <https://www.ituc-csi.org/development-cooperation>, involving more than 100 affiliates and solidarity support organisations, has made a significant impact on development policies.

The inclusion of decent work as a universal goal in the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, is a major achievement for trade unions. The 2030 Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the multilateral framework for development requiring national monitoring and reporting on implementation. Freedom of association and collective bargaining, social dialogue and social

protection are enshrined in the SDGs as pillars to fight poverty, inequality, climate change and to support democratic governance.

Trade unions are strongly involved in the SDG process at the global, regional and national levels. Monitoring of Agenda 2030 implementation is underway, through an independent trade union monitoring process, with strong engagement of the Regional Organisations <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda>. The monitoring includes a strong focus on centrality of social dialogue for implementation, for the accountability of national governments and businesses as well as in the context of private sector investment.

The Global Partnership for Effective Development has now recognised social dialogue as a means to realise sustainable development, and has endorsed key trade union demands. The new European Consensus on Development enshrines trade union demands to promote decent jobs and social dialogue. According to the Consensus, decent work should result in decent wages to generate revenues for public services and social protection, while sustainable value chains should respect human and labour rights, core ILO standards and due diligence requirements.

Results were also achieved in changing the rules of development cooperation at the OECD, with institutional aid flows now in line with the decent work agenda including social dialogue and capacity building for unions. This is helping to ensure the financial means to support trade union development cooperation priorities.

The TUDCN has also built stronger partnerships amongst trade unions, with more than 60 unions and solidarity support organisations now implementing the trade union development effectiveness principles endorsed by the ITUC [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/layout-tudcn\\_effectiveness\\_principles\\_-\\_web.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/layout-tudcn_effectiveness_principles_-_web.pdf).

The ITUC was critical of key aspects of the 2015 Addis Ababa Financing for Development Conference in particular due to its uncritical emphasis on the private sector; however, the Conference did endorse social protection and essential public services for all, as well

as job creation and decent work. The feasibility of funding universal protection was confirmed at a September 2018 Meeting of Experts on Social Protection <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-meeting-of-experts-con-firms> organised by the ITUC, involving 30 affiliates from all regions, and a further 70 specialists from academia, civil society and international institutions including the IMF. We have organised nine national seminars with unions and civil society, including from the informal sector, to assist them in developing national social protection strategies. The challenges of implementing ILO Recommendation 202 were evident in the ILO General Survey on Social Protection Floors, and we are working with the ILO to support implement of the Recommendation.

Along with its work on climate and Just Transition, the Committee on Workers' Capital (CWC) helped secure important wins for workers in a number of companies through corporate campaign action and coordination via its global network of fund trustees. The CWC network of more than 600 participants in over 30 countries includes 300 worker- and union-nominated pension fund trustees, with some 100 trustees and union campaigners participating in the annual CWC Workers' Capital Conference. CWC briefings, reports and guidance documents inform the decisions of pension trustees internationally, and include topics such as tax transparency, investment fees and the rights of construction workers in Qatar. In 2017, CWC Guidelines on workers' rights and labour standards were released, providing indicators used to advance workers' rights with key actors such as sustainability rating agencies and workforce disclosure initiatives.

"Count Us In!" <https://www.ituc-csi.org/count-us-in-600> covers the ITUC priority on gender equality, in the labour market and society and also within unions. With the average women's membership rate of 42 per cent in ITUC affiliates, women are still heavily under-represented in leadership positions; however, the high level of affiliate engagement in the ITUC programme has helped to drive improvement. Currently, the average representation rate of women in the highest union decision-making bodies is 28 per cent, with 7 per cent of top leadership held by women and 14.4 per cent of the top-two leadership positions, up from 12 per cent in

2012. While equality issues are mainstreamed across ITUC activities, there has been a specific focus on gender-based violence <https://www.ituc-csi.org/gender-based-violence> with the overwhelming majority of affiliates engaged on this issue, including in support of a strong ILO Convention on gender-based violence at work. Violence against women has been a major focus for the ITUC Women's Committee, and the campaign for domestic violence leave is gaining traction through both collective bargaining success and legislative entitlements. Campaigning and lobbying resources, including around the ILO Convention process, have been produced in several languages and as in other areas of our work, there is close cooperation with the Global Union Federations on this issue. We are confident we will achieve an ILO Convention at the ILO Centenary Conference in 2019.

Two major ITUC reports on investing in the care economy <https://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?page=recherche&recherche=care+economy&ok> have made an important impact in the international debate, demonstrating the social and economic value of investing in care, through increasing women's workforce participation and generating new jobs for women and for men. Work on the gender pay gap continued, and two policy briefings on the pay gap globally <https://www.ituc-csi.org/brief-wage-gap> and on gender gaps in social protection <https://www.ituc-csi.org/brief-gender-gaps> were produced in 2018. Two hundred women trade unionists from around the world took part in the 3rd ITUC Women's Conference/Organising Assembly in Costa Rica in October 2017.

Action on labour rights for domestic workers <https://www.ituc-csi.org/domestic-workers-601> helped achieve 25 ratifications of ILO Convention 189 as well as positive legal changes in more than 50 countries. The ITUC has supported organising with affiliates and the International Domestic Workers' Federation (IDWF), with at least 600,000 domestic workers now organised into unions worldwide.

The priority "Global Governance of Migration" <https://www.ituc-csi.org/global-governance-of-migration> involved strong and ongoing public advocacy for the rights of refugees and migrants, in particular their

integration into the workforce with respect for their fundamental rights at work. We coordinated pressure from trade unions and civil society to bring global migration policy into the ambit of the United Nations, and have driven the adoption of international policies, in particular at the ILO, on labour market access for refugees and on regulation of migrant recruitment agencies. We have coordinated with GUFs and affiliates to successfully <https://www.ituc-csi.org/global-compact-on-migration> press for the UN Global Compact on Migration to incorporate international labour standards and reflect the trade union approach to labour migration, and initiated regional migrant worker organising networks with Regional Organisations. The ITUC Migrant Recruitment Adviser website <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-launches-migrant-worker> provides advice and information in its first phase for workers from Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines on workers' rights in seven destination countries and is expanding its coverage to other countries. The website allows workers to give online ratings of thousands of recruitment companies listed on it, and on destination countries. It contains information drawn from our Global Rights Index on destination countries and enables workers to communicate regarding their circumstances. Since it was launched, the site has received 64,000 page views from 9,000 individual visitors, and more than 3,200 reviews have been collected for posting on the site.

Action on occupational health and safety included closer coordination with the GUFs on OHS priorities and preparations for the launch of campaigns to tackle cancer at work, including around the use of chemicals, and a campaign for a global ban on asbestos is underway. The annual April 28 International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers <https://www.ituc-csi.org/april-28-international-workers> encompassed activities from trade unions and allied organisations around the world, and is now officially recognised in a number of countries. The other main international mobilisation day, the 7 October World Day for Decent Work <https://www.ituc-csi.org/7-october-world-day-for-decent>, also attracted high levels of engagement from affiliates, GUFs and other groups promoting decent work.

Along with the high international media profile generated through ITUC campaign action, more than 580 ITUC OnLine releases were disseminated in English, French and Spanish since the last Congress, with the ITUC website receiving between 100,000-140,000 visits per month on average, and a peak audience of 240,000 in the month of February 2018. An average of 200 articles per year were published in English, French and Spanish by Equal Times [www.equaltimes.org](http://www.equaltimes.org) on topics relevant to the trade union movement, with the editorial team working with a global network of professional freelance journalists covering stories in more than 80 countries each year. Total readership for the year 2017 reached 1,886,000 visits to the website. The ITUC's social media accounts have a total engagement of more than 50,000 followers.

Delivering on the mandate of the Berlin Congress has only been possible through the active engagement of affiliates in the ITUC's work, our close cooperation with the Regional Organisations, Global Union Federations and TUAC, and the dedication and commitment of our staff in Brussels, in the Regions and in our offices in different countries. I would also like to recognise the important backing given by the Solidarity Support Organisations and by those organisations which have contributed to the Solidarity Fund to so much of the work that has been done. In acknowledging all those who have engaged in the work, I believe that as a global movement we can be proud of what we have achieved in these four years, and confident that we can meet the multiple challenges facing working people in the years to come.

**Sharan Burrow**, General Secretary

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