



Theses **and** Priorities



WORLD TRADE UNION CONGRESS





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Introduction

The 18th WFTU Congress is being held in particularly difficult and unprecedented conditions for workers around the world, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that broke out at the beginning of 2020 having caused 6.127.981 million deaths and 481.756.671 million infections until today, with countries such as the USA, Brazil, India, Russia and others having the most victims.

The start of the new deep international economic crisis and the obvious inability of the health systems to cope with the pandemic in countries such as the USA, Italy, etc., have revealed the great contradictions of the present exploitative system.

While on the one hand there are enormous modern scientific possibilities to protect the health of the popular forces, to meet their needs, the pandemic has caused the death of millions of people, the vast majority of whom are working people and poor people. At the same time, unemployment, the degree of exploitation of workers, impoverishment and the restriction of democratic freedoms increased.

On the ground of the new international crisis, competition between imperialist alliances, but also between states within the alliances, for control of markets, energy resources and transportation routes is intensifying, creating risks of war conflicts from the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, South-East Asia to the Arctic and Europe.

Over the years, it has become clear that there is an accumulation of popular dissatisfaction, often expressed in outbursts of popular anger and indignation, such as the strikes and mobilizations against Macron's policies in France, the protests against the assassination of Floyd in the USA, and the major rallies and strikes in Kazakhstan. But when there is no class-oriented trade union movement, disorientation and the assimilation into antagonisms of sections of the bourgeoisie prevail. The change of government and the election of Joe Biden in the USA has not



provided a solution to the acute problems experienced by both the American people and the peoples of the world because of the policies of all US governments, Republican and Democrat, over time. The Biden administration has supported new bombing in Syria and Israel's bombing of the Gaza Strip. It maintains the criminal US embargo against Cuba and the approximately 250 additional sanctions imposed by Trump against the Cuban people.

Nevertheless, in this complex and unstable situation, the popular mobilizations in a number of countries are important and show possibilities for the future development of the workers' - people's movement. It confirms that hope for workers lies in social struggles.

The new international economic crisis

In 2020 a new international economic crisis broke out, which is much deeper than the previous one of 2008-2009, the deepest of the post war period.

Bourgeois analyses put forward as its main cause the measures taken to tackle the coronavirus pandemic (general or limited lock-down measures), which indeed led to a sharp reduction in economic activity. The pandemic certainly played a role in the timing and depth of the crisis, but it was not its cause. It acted as a catalyst, an additional handbrake on the already decelerating international economy.

The slowdown that emerged already in 2019, revealed the large over-accumulated capital, which could not be recapitalized and invested, thus not ensuring a satisfactory rate of profit. In the decade that followed the previous international economic crisis of 2008–2009, only a few capitalist economies reached a higher level of growth than the one in the pre-crisis period.

This particular tackling of the pandemic, despite individual differences amongst the capitalist states, reflects its universal class character. The tragic situation of the public healthcare systems (due to



the lack of state primary care, staff and ICUs shortage, issues of infrastructure, etc. in public hospitals), the major problems concerning the preventive measures to protect the health and safety of workers and the low degree of protection of the healthcare staff are not inevitable phenomena, but a result of the bourgeois policy supporting capitalist profitability. The strengthening of the commercialization of health services and medicines is typical of the capitalist states.

At the same time, the competition between groups and imperialist centers concerning the global market of vaccines and medicines is sharpening, also within the framework of geopolitical confrontations. (e.g. Pfizer's vaccine profits reached USD 36 billion in 2021).

Exacerbation of the competitions

The uneven outbreak of the crisis and its consequences affects the changes in the correlation of forces and sharpens the contradictions, intensifying the struggle for the control of markets, energy resources and maritime transport routes for commodities goods from the Eastern Mediterranean to the South China Sea. The risk of a generalized imperialist war is increasing and expanding.

The developments show that the ability of China to threaten the US supremacy in the following years is objectively growing. This dynamic is also reflected in the retreat of the US share and the significant increase in China's share in the 2000–2020 Gross World Product.

The trend for changes in the correlation of forces to the detriment of the USA is also reflected in the dramatic increase in the US trade deficit in the bilateral trade with China (during the period 1985–2019). On this basis, the US–China trade war escalated in 2018–2019, with the US imposing increased tariffs on Chinese commodities worth of \$200 billion, and China imposing tariffs on American commodities worth of \$60 billion. The USA is placing particular emphasis on maintaining its supremacy in new technologies and, at the same time, on limiting China's expansion to this sector, since such an expansion could also lead



to the strengthening of its political influence (e.g. the growing efforts to exclude China from 5G networks in Europe). At the same time, the US government, utilizing the massive tax reduction for the capital, called on the US monopolies in new technologies operating in China to abandon it or to return to the US, while making efforts to prevent China's expansion through the "New Silk Road" (also known as China's Belt and Road Initiative), and its investments in others states.

Even if the west governments appeared to be united against Russia, the relations between the USA and Germany are deteriorating, through trade sanctions imposed by both sides and an intensification of disagreements on a wide spectrum of issues, e.g. energy cooperation between Germany and Russia, Germany's limited participation in NATO's military expenditure, Germany's stance against Iran, Russia, etc.). Overall, the EU is in sharpening competition with the USA and the UK.

In September 2021, the US - UK - Australia announced the AUKUS agreement, said to have been made to mutually reinforce their military "capabilities" for "Indo-Pacific security". However, the agreement was made in the context of the US-China rivalry for supremacy in the international imperialist system, with both sides seeking to strengthen their alliances in the Indo-Pacific region.

The first move by AUKUS was the launch of a program to equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines whose characteristics are suited for operations and patrols in the open ocean and throughout the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, a day after the announcement of the formation of AUKUS, the US and Australia announced that Australia would acquire long-range cruise missiles and they also announced an increase in the number of US military forces stationed in the country.

The recent war and developments in Ukraine showed that Europe is not safe. Those who believed that wars and imperialist conflicts would have been waged outside Europe have been proven wrong. Both the war of NATO against Yugoslavia and the current war in Ukraine confirm the above argument. The causes of wars lie in the overthrows of the



international correlation of forces that were formed in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR and of socialism in the countries of Eastern Europe. Since then, NATO, the US and the EU, have been out of control. They encouraged the fascist forces in Ukraine to encircle Russia. Ukraine is being used as a pawn in the strategic plans of the US, which aim to weaken Russia, to exclude it from the routes of Energy. This tangle of inter-imperialist antagonisms puts peace at risk globally and brings back to the fore the necessity of the abolition of nuclear weapons and dismantling of NATO.

The USA is using the Ukraine crisis to strengthen its image as the 'protectors' of Europe and at the same time to become the privileged suppliers of energy to the countries of Europe.

The antagonisms of the imperialist centers are also present in Kazakhstan, where large popular mobilizations took place in January 2022 against the acute economic, social and political problems faced by the people. These mobilizations were met with violence and repression that led to thousands of arrests and the deaths of hundreds of protesters. Kazakhstan is a country rich in natural resources and with a critical geostrategic position. The country's wealth is being plundered by local and foreign monopolies while the people live in misery, with an ever-increasing cost of living and unemployment.

Governments' management of the economic crisis and the consequences on workers

The bourgeois staff in the USA, EU, and Japan has proceeded with great state intervention to support the recovery of the capitalist economy, by utilizing Keynesian proposals. They follow an expansionary fiscal policy, i.e. an increase in government spending, mainly for the direct strengthening of business groups, but also as an effort to temporarily mitigate the acute consequences of the crisis on the people. This policy is related to tolerance towards the increase in state debt, that is to say, it is accompanied by a loose monetary policy.



From the viewpoint of the social democracy, the need for a steady return to suggestions of Keynesian management is stressed, which is promoted as a progressive and pro-people answer to neoliberalism, which, according to them, is responsible for the outbreak of the crisis.

The truth is that on the one hand various crises manifested themselves during the second half of the 20th century in the framework of a Keynesian type of management, but on the other hand various expansionary Keynesian proposals and directions of loose monetary policy were still present from the previous mix of bourgeois management. After the international crisis of 2008–2009, the European Central Bank and the American Federal Reserve in particular followed a *quantitative easing* monetary policy to support the banking groups. The governments of the EU member states were given the opportunity to issue bonds purchased by banking groups, technically absorbing borrowed capital from the ECB at favourable rates. The various management proposals, such as those of Keynesian type of management, can only postpone the time of the crisis and intervene temporarily in the degree of depreciation of capital, leading to a deeper crisis in the future.

Afterwards, the Green New Deal was introduced. Initially, it was submitted to the US Congress by the “left wing” of the Democrats in 2019. At the same time, the European Green Deal was promoted by the European Commission on the grounds of environmental protection and public health, aiming to form a temporary profitable way out of investments for the over-accumulated capital. In essence, this proposal, along with great state intervention, on the one hand provides incentives through the financing of new investments in the sectors of energy, transport, manufacturing and agriculture in conjunction with the strengthening of the digitalization of the economy, and on the other hand it ensures the controlled depreciation of capital, e.g. the closure of lignite stations, the withdrawal of conventional vehicles, the change of energy networks.

The burden is placed on workers

The expansionary fiscal policy and the greater state intervention place a heavy burden on the people once again, but this time differently. The people are called upon to pay for the new loans and shoulder the burden of loss-making private enterprises in the event of their temporary or partial nationalization and vice versa, of their privatization or restriction of state participation, by burdening the Public sector.

They promote the policy of cheaper labour force on the grounds of “employment protection”, by turning the Labour Agreements from full-time employment to part-time or rotating employment and by cutting the working hours enforcing their further flexibility and reducing remuneration, bringing about the intensification of labour and an increase in the degree of exploitation.

In the same context, the possibility of unilaterally imposing teleworking, which in many cases effectively abolishes the distinction between free time and working time, is being extended.

The new anti-labour measures, which practically reduce wages, further facilitate dismissals and crush social security rights, initially are introduced as emergency measures but become permanent afterwards. Thus, the policy for a contribution-based pension and strengthening of the private pillar in the social security system is established.

A policy of adaptation to the new productivity level without any improvement in labour wages and of management of extreme poverty, i.e. containing unemployment rates and preventing the basic consumption level of the masses from crumbling, is not a progressive proposal for ensuring the “just distribution of wealth”, as claimed by many social democrats. It is a necessary condition for the safeguarding and recovery of capitalist profitability.

At the same time, the number of long-term unemployed is growing in sectors affected by the green transition, e.g. the closure of

lignite power stations, and the popular families shoulder the burden of the workers' retraining.

The so-called new paradise of green growth includes expensive electricity, flexible labour relations and cheap labour force, new burdens on the popular families' shoulders for purchasing green vehicles and appliances, green indirect taxes and the overall drain of the people, in order for the state to support the new green investments of business groups. At the same time, the investments of the so-called green growth lead to the environmental degradation of protected areas, and of the mountains throughout the country, by aggravating the local economies and the life of the working class and popular forces.

In conclusion, various forms are promoted for the increase in the degree of exploitation of the working class, to provide incentives and possibilities for new and profitable capitalist investments under the pretence of climate change.

The international militarist image

We see that global military expenditure in 2019 was estimated at US \$ 1,917 trillion, at 2.2% of global GDP, with an increase of 3.6% compared to 2018 and 7.2% compared to 2010, for the third consecutive year, mainly due to US and China's military expenditure and operations. International arms sales increased by 7.8% in the period 2014–2018, or by 20% compared to the period 2005–2009. In 2020 it is estimated at US \$ 1,98 trillion and in 2021 at US \$ 1,982 trillion (an increase of 2, 6% compared to 2019).

As regards military expenditure, the USA takes first place (US \$ 732 billion), followed by China (\$ 261 billion), India (\$ 71.1 billion), Russia (\$ 65.1 billion), Saudi Arabia (\$ 61.9 billion), France (\$ 50.1 billion), Germany (\$ 49.3 billion), UK (\$ 48.7 billion), Japan (\$ 47.6 billion), and South Korea (\$ 43.9 billion). In 2019, total military spending of all 29 NATO member states was \$ 1,035 trillion.

In the period 2015–2019, the US remained first in arms exports, accounting for 36%, followed by Russia, France, Germany and China.

Nuclear forces continue to modernize their nuclear arsenal, replacing old warheads. The 9 nuclear powers (USA—owing 5,800 nuclear warheads, Russia—6,375, UK—215, France —290, China—320, India—150, Pakistan—160, Israel—90, etc.), possess a total of 13,400 nuclear weapons, 90% of which belong to the US and Russia.

The US and Russia are announcing changes in their nuclear military doctrine, while both sides issue statements about new types of superweapons, such as automatic laser weapon systems, and new fields of application, such as space.

The United States intends to include China in a nuclear control and containment agreement, considering it a dangerous competitor, while the main nuclear armament issue under consideration is the “first strike” capability.

In this framework of antagonisms, the US decided to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan last August, so as to face new challenges coming from the antagonisms with Russia and China. They handed the governance to the obscurantist Taliban, while they kept control of important sectors of the economy, so that they can put pressure and promote their own interests against e.g. the interests of Chinese companies. While the people of Afghanistan have been suffering in a devastated state and many people leave the country, the US, the EU and other countries deal with the Taliban, “legitimizing” them, in order to guarantee their plans in Afghanistan that has a crucial geostrategic position.

Military bases outside the borders are an important tool for the military planning of major powers. The USA appears to have over 700 bases for different uses all over the world. UK, France, Russia, Italy, Turkey, China, Japan and India also have bases abroad.

An important new element of the period, which is indicative of the intensity of competition and military preparation, is the changes in the

defense doctrines of a number of capitalist states (characteristic examples are Germany a few years ago and more recently Japan). At the same time, NATO is approaching states that for decades have been described as “neutral”, a characteristic example being Sweden.

The above data show as well that capitalist countries, instead of funding public health system, education and the needs of the workers, they give trillions to military expenditure in the framework of the competition for the interest of their monopolies.

International and regional unions, organizations and agreements

The relations of uneven interdependence, which govern the relations of all capitalist states, are also formed through a number of international and regional unions, organizations and agreements that also indirectly reflect the correlation of power, while often become a field of competition. In the past 30 years, in addition to the most well-known organizations (e.g. UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, WTO, G7, G20), most of which are led by the US, new ones have emerged, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, led by China, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, led by Russia.

Most international interstate organizations have become a cloak for advancing the interests of the USA, NATO and other imperialist powers. Within these organizations, confrontations and temporary compromises are taking place among the powerful imperialist powers. When compromises cannot be reached, bargains, threats, and even withdrawals from various agreements follow.

The trend for changes in the correlation of forces, the US withdrawal from a series of agreements aiming at the realignment of imperialist alliances in its favour, as well as the pursuit of shifting the basic US aims to the Asian region against China, is erroneously



interpreted by a series of forces as a “US withdrawal” and a “power vacuum” in the world. The reality is clearly different.

The US seeks to realign the web of international organizations and agreements, which always reflect the uneven interdependence of capitalist states, to its own interests. Thus, the US leadership considers that the present composition of the Group of Seven most powerful capitalist countries (USA, Japan, Canada, France, UK, Italy, and Germany) is outdated and that Australia, South Korea and India should be invited, in an effort to forge a new anti-Chinese alliance. Particular emphasis is given to the Indo–Pacific region and the effort to link India to US plans, in an environment of sharpening of China–India relations.

September 1st: International Action Day of trade unions for Peace

On September 1st 1939 the Nazi Germany invades Poland, starting the World War II, a destructive war for the Peoples and for world peace.

Nowadays the struggle of trade unions for peace, friendship and international cooperation among the Peoples becomes an important priority. This struggle needs duration and stability. Trade unions must be in the frontline claiming the reduction of the exorbitant military expenses and to give these funds for social expenses. They must demand the dissolution of aggressive military coalitions as NATO and the exclusive use of nuclear power only for pacific purposes.

For all the above goals The WFTU Secretariat every year has to plan and organize activities in every corner of the planet. Therefore we suggest September 1st to be announced and confirmed by our Congress as the International Action Day of trade unions for Peace.



International Organizations

The nature and operation of International Organizations:

The main factor that determines the character, limits and constraints of International Organizations is the correlation of forces that determines the membership and objectives of International Organizations. The decisions and action of International Organizations reflect the set of socio-economic contradictions with the main one being the basic opposition between the working class and the bourgeoisie but also many other main and secondary contradictions such as those between developed and developing countries, powerful imperialist exploiting states and less powerful exploited states, etc. The negative effects of the counter-revolutionary overthrows of the 1990s affected the international correlation of forces against the working class and tipped the scales in favour of the representatives of capital and the imperialist countries within the international organizations.

Main problems in the operation of the International Organizations, as a result of the above characteristics, are their bureaucratic functioning and the lack of effective mechanisms to enforce/ensure the ratification and implementation of decisions, even those decisions that are considered binding and obligatory for their members. The lack of democratic functioning creates discrimination and restrictions on the representation of workers and peoples. Moreover, even when positions in favour of popular interests are adopted there are loopholes and plenty of ways to evade them. In any case, the lack of effective mechanisms for enforcing decisions makes the decisions of the International Organizations of minor importance.

A striking example of the lack of democracy in the International Organizations is both the composition of the ILO tripartite bodies and the blatant lack of representation of workers. For example, the governing body which is the tripartite executive body of the ILO consists of 56 titular members: 28 government representatives, 14 workers'



representatives and 14 employers' representatives (Titular Members: 28 G, 14 E, 14 W). It also has 66 Deputy Members (28 G, 19 E, 19 W). This means that workers and the popular strata, who constitute the vast majority of society, have equal representation with the employers who, according to the ILO and the World Bank's own data, account for only 2.7% of employment worldwide (Employers, total (% of total employment): ILOSTAT database, WB databank, 29 January 2021). At the same time governments (overwhelmingly bourgeois governments of imperialist states) hold 50% of the titular members of the governing body. The situation is similar in the other ILO bodies.

However, the under-representation of workers' interests is not limited to the non-representative composition of the ILO, but extends to the clear falsification even of this disproportionate representation of workers. This can be seen from the fact that the workers' representatives of each country who will participate in each ILO body must be approved by their governments, which is a clear mechanism for violating the right of workers to decide for themselves freely and without interference how they will be represented.

At the same time, another outstanding example of undemocratic functioning and falsification of workers' representation is the monopolization of the ILO by the yellow trade unions. The blatant, unacceptable and undemocratic discrimination against the WFTU must end immediately. The WFTU demands that the election system in the ILO Governing Body be changed to provide proportional representation for all trends in the international trade union movement. It also demands that the current functioning of the ILO be replaced with a truly democratic functioning and transparency in its international and regional offices, without discriminations. The Director-General's formal response that "elections are being held" is totally unsatisfactory, as we all know how these elections take place.

However, even in such circumstances, even under the blatantly undemocratic and disproportionate composition in the structure and functioning of international organizations, which is "tailor-made" for



employers and bourgeois governments, the last and most essential "safety net" for capital is the absence of an enforcement mechanism. That is, even when the pressure of the workers' movement and the struggle of the peoples force the International Organizations to keep up appearances and adopt conventions and decisions which, in terms of wording, are in favour of the popular strata, there is no effective way of enforcing their ratification or implementation. Whether they are conventions adopted in previous decades with a more favourable correlation of forces for the working class, such as the ILO C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention adopted in 1948 with a decisive role and contribution of the WFTU, or they are resolutions of the UN General Assembly in favour of the peoples, their implementation depends on the degree of their identification with the interests of capital and the imperialist states-unions (USA, EU, NATO). For example, despite dozens of UN resolutions to end the occupation and imperialist interventions in various countries (Palestine, Cuba, Cyprus) nothing changes. On the contrary, resolutions linked to imperialist plans, including military interventions, are implemented the very next morning. The UN resolution in relation to Libya is an illustrative example.

In view of all the above, the international class-oriented trade union movement has no illusions and fights against the creation of unrealistic expectations about effectiveness of the interventions of International Organizations regarding the real living and working conditions of the working and popular strata. At the same time, however, it neither underestimates nor depreciates the relative autonomy and the limited but real possibility of intervention and utilization of the International Organizations in defense of workers' needs and interests.

General Characteristics:

International Organizations are organizations of transnational range, action or participation that are established and operate under



international law and have international legal personality. International organizations are mainly divided into:

A) International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), i.e. non-governmental organizations operating internationally, for example the Red Cross, Red Crescent and so on.

B) Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOS) which are mainly composed of member states or other international organizations and entities.

Usually the term “international organizations” refers to intergovernmental organizations (IGOS). Since its foundation in 1945, the World Federation of Trade Unions has had permanent representation in four International Organizations: the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Both the ILO founded in 1919 and the FAO, UNESCO founded in 1945 are under the auspices of the UN and are today 3 of the UN specialized agencies, i.e. they are autonomous international organizations working with the UN. The UN was also established in 1945.

The development, consolidation and spreading of a correct analysis of the nature, purposes, limitations and capacities of the international organizations - both in general and specific to the four organizations in which the WFTU participates - is an important factor in the optimal tactics of intervention and use of these organizations in order to promote and implement the objectives and positions of the WFTU for the benefit of the working class.



The 4 International Organizations in which the WFTU participates:

United Nations (UN):

Year of establishment: 1945 (24 October)

Establishment details: Successor of League of Nations after the Second World War.

Headquarters: New York City, USA.

Membership: 195 member states and 2 observer states.

Declared purpose: cooperation in international law, security, economic development and political equality and the preventing another such conflict as the second world war.

UN structure: General Assembly, Security Council, Secretariat, International Court of Justice, Economic and Social Council, Specialized agencies

WFTU status: The World Federation of Trade Unions maintains a General Consultative Status in Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN since 1946

ILO:

Year of establishment: 1919 (29 October)

Declared purpose: The ILO aims to promote of rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

Membership: 187 member states.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Year of establishment: 1945 (16 October).

Declared purpose: FAO goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

Headquarters: Rome, Italy.

Membership: 194 member states.

United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Year of establishment: 1946 (4 November).

Declared purpose: The contribution to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

Headquarters: Paris, France.

Membership: 195 member states.



The WFTU within the International Organizations:

The position of the WFTU as defined by the platform of action adopted at the 17th Congress indicates that the permanent WFTU representatives within the International Organizations must adequately fulfill their role, to promote the positions of the international class-oriented trade union movement, to propose actions and initiatives that the WFTU must undertake for the improvement of the living conditions of workers and the operation of trade union organizations at international level.

Without undermining or neglecting its decisive work of ideological and organizational regrouping of the international trade union movement, the WFTU seeks to make the class-oriented voice and workers' interests be heard within the international organizations; to reveal their role, to remove illusions, to ensure the adoption of the maximum possible pro-workers positions. It is important that decisions and conventions (e.g. the 189 ILO conventions and recommendations) be used by the working class and trade unions in order to put pressure on governments and employers in cases of violations. At the same time, the examples of deviation and violations of the agreements should also be utilized. These examples show to workers that both their bargaining power (e.g. in collective bargaining) and the implementation of any agreement achieved by the labour movement depends primarily on the readiness, strength, dynamism and direction of the daily class struggle.

As WFTU we demand transparency and changes in the way the Governing Body is elected. The two international trade union organizations must be represented proportionally and on the basis of the strength and support they have. That is democracy based on the founding principles of the ILO and the UN. We demand objectivity and fairness at all levels and in all areas of the ILO and condemn the monopolization of the ILO by the ITUC.

On the basis of its foundation and operation, the ILO is supposed to be obliged to treat all trade unions equally and democratically, regardless of political, ideological, religious and racial differences.



Where is the equal treatment of class-oriented analysis and revolutionary ideology in the ILO's positions, structures, seminars and bodies? The international organizations advocate "de-ideologization" and "political neutrality" while in fact consolidating the ideological hegemony of capital and reformism.

We demand the immediate implementation of all ILO conventions and resolutions in defense of trade union freedoms, of the right to associate, to strike and to collective bargaining; to ensure decent work and living conditions, health and safety in all workplaces; to abolish discrimination in work and salary, to abolish forced and child labour.

We demand immediate respect for the United Nations Charter and resolutions on the equality of nations, the end of foreign interference in the internal affairs of other countries. We demand the end of sanctions, blockades and occupation of states and territories.

We fight for the practical implementation of the goals and positions of FAO, UNESCO and UN for full food and energy sufficiency, universal access to basic public utilities, the end of gender, racial and ethnic discrimination and the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, refugees and migrants. We demand protection of human rights and the right to water, land, air, fisheries and all essential goods.

The Pandemic

Its consequences on the working class and the trade union movement:

Workers throughout the capitalist world were left unprotected to the pandemic and its consequences by a system that neither wants nor can provide the necessary means for a dignified life, for health and education, for the right to work and for work with rights. The new economic crisis, which was foreseen before the pandemic and accelerated by it, marked a new attack on the gains of workers. The attack on the eight-hour working day, the further deregulation of labour relations, the institutionalization of flexible working, the revision and abolition of labour laws, the efforts to circumvent the sacred right to strike, the abolition of the Sunday day-off, the blatant violations of even the most fundamental trade union and democratic freedoms are being carried out under the pretext of the pandemic throughout the world.

According to the ILO, it is estimated that the loss of working hours in 2020 amounts to 8.8% of total working hours and is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs. Of the lost working hours, half are due to the displacement of an additional 114 million workers from the workforce compared to 2019 and the remaining half are due to a reduction in working hours for those who have kept their jobs.

The losses were particularly high in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern Europe and South Asia. The loss of working hours in 2020 was about 4 times higher than during the 2009 crisis. 75 million job losses in 2021 and 52 million job losses in 2022 are estimated.

The decrease of total working hours has a huge impact on workers' incomes. If government subsidies are excluded, total worker incomes have declined by \$3.7 trillion or 8.3% from where they would have been without the pandemic. These new reductions in workers' income are in addition to the huge losses from the previous economic

crisis that were not recovered during the recent period of weak economic growth.

The global unemployment rate is estimated at 5.9% in 2022, with some 207 million unemployed worldwide, a number that will continue to be higher than the pre-pandemic number of 187 million unemployed in 2019.

Also, compared to 2019, 108 million more workers and their families are now in extreme poverty.

This crisis, like the previous one, has confirmed that the most vulnerable sections of the working class are more severely affected by the consequences of the crisis:

- Informal workers were 3 times more likely to lose their jobs than formal workers and 1.6 times more likely than self-employed workers, while at the same time they were much more likely to be excluded from a government financial support package. So billions of informal workers found themselves without income and the lack of social security made it even more difficult for them to access health services.
- Women's employment declined more than men's. At the same time, 9 out of 10 women who lost their jobs were also displaced from the labour force (i.e. they are not even included in the unemployed), which will translate into more time out of work.
- Young people are also heavily affected in terms of labour relations and the forced exclusion of millions of young people from the educational process is a critical issue. By 2020, around 70% of countries (with available data) will record an increase in the number of young people who are neither in work, nor in education or in an education/training programme. Global youth employment fell by 8.7% in 2020 compared to 3.7% for adults, while the sharpest decline took place in middle-income countries.
- With the outbreak of the pandemic many migrants immediately lost their jobs and income and were trapped in their countries of residence

without being able to return to their countries of origin due to the lockdowns.

Regarding COVID-19 vaccines, 63% of the global population has received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Only 12,9% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose. The example of India, the largest vaccine-producing country for the international drug monopolies, where only 56% of the population has so far been vaccinated, is typical. The WFTU demand for free, safe vaccines for all, without monopoly patents, as well as for medicines and vaccines that are social goods and not commodities, remains urgent and timely two years after the outbreak of the pandemic.

Regarding education, according to UNICEF data in March 2021, schools for more than 168 million children worldwide were completely closed for almost a full year due to the lockdowns. As FISE pointed out from the very beginning, children from poor families had no access to distance education due to lack of internet connection, tablets, etc., resulting in them missing a full year of education and many children being forced to drop out of school. At least one in three students or 463 million children worldwide were unable to access distance learning when their schools closed according to official estimates, with the actual number being much higher.

According to UNESCO, School closures, regardless of their duration, have dramatic consequences, especially for middle and low-income countries. In this category, the percentage of children affected by poor learning, which was 53% before the pandemic, may reach 70%. In some regions of Brazil, Pakistan, rural India, South Africa and even Mexico, among others, significant losses in learning mathematics and reading are recorded. Looking ahead to 2030, 'no region of the world is projected to succeed in providing secondary education for all children', 'teachers estimate that only one third of students will have basic skills in mathematics' and '33% of students will not be able to read a sentence by the end of primary school'.



At the same time, the pandemic around the world has triggered a new wave of attacks on labour gains and trade union freedoms. According to an ILO survey, violations of international labour standards, labour laws and trade union freedoms have been reported on all continents of the world. Most violations were recorded in the countries of the Arab world (67% of countries) followed by Asia-Pacific (35% of countries), Europe and Central Asia (29% of countries), Africa (21% of countries), Americas (20% of countries).

The violations concern, among others:

- Violation of international labour standards
- Non-compliance with labour laws regarding dismissals, working hours and payment of wages.
- Failure to implement health and safety requirements in the workplace.

At the same time, under the pretext of the pandemic, specific restrictions were decided in many countries, with the aim of further preventing trade union action. Strikes and demonstrations were violently suppressed; trade unionists were and continue to be prosecuted on false charges and even court decisions are being used to ban trade union meetings and activities.



RECENT IMPORTANT STRUGGLES

We were present!

A little more than five years have passed since the 17th WFTU Congress in Durban, South Africa in October 2016 and, during that time, many important struggles were organized by workers and militant trade unions around the world. All of them, regardless of whether they were big or small, victorious or without an immediate positive result, are important for the workers, as they highlight their problems and demands, make them realize their strength, help them gain experience and consequently help them improve in their daily struggles.

When these struggles are class-oriented they yield results which, even if they are not immediately visible, create a context for continuing the action. Class-oriented struggles are the ones in which demands are formulated on the basis of the contemporary needs of workers and peoples. They are the ones through which the workers realize that they have to fight for the interests of their own class, and not expect the representatives of the bourgeoisie and the capital to solve their problems.

What follows is a list of some important struggles that took place around the world, in which member organisations and friends of WFTU played an important role. We ask for your understanding for any omissions or errors, which we will have the opportunity to address at the Congress:

February 2022, SPAIN

The class-oriented trade union movement and the workers, fight against labour reforms with demonstrations in Madrid and other parts of the Spanish state. At the same time, mobilisations are organized by pensioners' organizations to defend pensions.



January 2022, KAZAKHSTAN

Large-scale strikes and general uprisings break out in Kazakhstan following a rise in the price of natural gas leading to a rise in the price of all basic necessities. The demonstrations are being met with violent repression leading to the deaths of dozens of protesters and thousands of arrests, while the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) intervenes to stop the protests.

December 2021, TURKEY

Workers in Turkey hold a mass rally demanding higher wages and protesting against high prices affecting the country's working class and popular strata.

October 2021, UNITED STATES

Labour struggles increase across the United States, with strikes in many industries. Among them, 12,000 carpenters, 10,000 employees of John Deere, a manufacturer of agricultural and heavy machinery, 31,000 health workers at Kaiser Permanente, 60,000 Hollywood TV, theatre and movie workers, 1,100 Alabama miners and 1,400 workers at Kellogg's cereal factory, demanding better wages and working conditions. These struggles take place in the context of the "pandemic economy", as 4.3 million workers left their jobs in August 2021 alone, intensifying what the media calls "labour shortages". Meanwhile, companies and owners' profits soar. John Deere's profits increased by 61% in recent years and its CEO's salary was increased by 160% during the pandemic.

CYPRUS

During these five years in Cyprus, PEO, in coordination with the Turkish Cypriot trade unions-members of WFTU, intensified their struggle for a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem. WFTU has always been and always will be in solidarity with them.



October 2021, ITALY

Under the slogan: “Out with the Draghi government! No deal, no social peace!”, 100,000 workers gather in more than thirty squares all over Italy, with the total participation in the strike exceeding one million workers, despite the terror spread by the media of the possibility for violent provokers infiltrating the marches.

July 2021, CUBA

The people of Cuba organise large rallies in support of the Revolution in Havana and other cities, showing their determination to cancel US-funded and US-instigated imperialist destabilization plans.

July 2021, SRI LANKA

200,000 teachers go on strike in Sri Lanka, demanding salary increases and the withdrawal of a bill that undermines public education.

June 2021, GREECE

The class-oriented forces in Greece organise strikes against the law that abolishes the 8-hour workday and attacks trade unions rights, among them being the right to strike.

April 2021, COLOMBIA

The workers, the youth and the people of Colombia organise massive mobilisations against the tax reform promoted by the government of Iván Duque, also denouncing the killing of militants by the deep state, widespread corruption and the manipulative management of the pandemic. Dozens of protesters are killed while thousands are injured and arrested. WFTU and its member organisations around the world denounce the repression and the killings, insisting that the just demands of the Colombian people be accepted. Under the pressure of the reactions, the tax reform has been temporarily postponed.



January 2021, INDIA

Indian farmers and workers stage a new strike against the agricultural reform promoted by the Modi government, which aims at the liberalization of the agricultural market. For more than 50 days, hundreds of thousands of farmers and labourers, organized and backed by trade unions, storm New Delhi to repeal the three laws that impoverish farmers and encourage intensive monoculture.

December 2, 2020, INDIA

250,000,000 workers, farmers and employees from all sectors go on strike in India condemning government anti-labour policies.

November 2020, THAILAND

Thousands of protesters in Thailand mobilise demanding democratic and trade union freedoms and asking for an end to the authoritarian rule in their country.

October 2020, GREECE

The trial of the criminal neo-Nazi organization Golden Dawn in Greece concludes with the conviction of its members for murder and fatal attacks against trade union militants and immigrants. The workers of Athens in a mass demonstration welcome the decision.

August 2020, ZIMBABWE

The workers and people of Zimbabwe rise up for basic social and economic rights. They demand a decent standard of living, wage increases, access to health, education and work.

August 2020, SOUTH AFRICA

NEHAWU South Africa goes on strike for improved working conditions and to demand adequate protection measures against the front-line health workers during the pandemic.



June-July 2020, UNITED STATES

Major mobilisations are organized in the US against racist violence and police killings following the assassination of George Floyd, demanding an end to racism and racial discriminations which plague the United States. At the same time the protesters also demand a better public health system in the midst of tens of thousands of deaths due to the pandemic.

May Day 2020

In the middle of the pandemic, with restrictions on circulation and gatherings in most countries in Europe and other continents, several strikes, mass rallies and other actions are organized around the world by class-oriented trade unions to celebrate Labour Day.

March 22, 2020, CUBA

52 Cuban doctors and health workers of the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade arrive in Italy to treat patients.

March 2020, ITALY

USB Italy stages a general strike over the tragic shortages in the public health sector that result in millions of workers dying from the pandemic.

January 2020, INDONESIA

Large demonstrations take place in Indonesia against the Omnibus Labour Act, which imposes flexible forms of work and low wages, constituting an attack on workers' labour rights and freedoms.

January 2020, FRANCE

Massive demonstration organized in Marseille as part of a general strike in France. This is the largest demonstration since the start of the mobilisations on December 5 against the pension reform plan.



December 2019, FRANCE

Large strike by CGT France.

November 31, 2019, PALESTINE

WFTU International Delegation arrives in Palestine to express solidarity in the context of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian Struggle.

November 2019, MEXICO

Mass mobilisations organized by class-oriented agricultural organisations, against the anti-popular proposed budget.

November 2019, IRAN

Workers in Iran stage protests against the privatisation of strategically important sectors, while also demanding wage increases.

November 2019, BOLIVIA

COB, the workers and the people of Bolivia resist the coup attempt against President Evo Morales.

October 2019, ECUADOR

In Ecuador, the workers and people of the country react to the anti-popular tranche of measures by the Lenín Moreno government, which tries to crack down on the people's resistance.

October 2019, CHILE

Large-scale popular mobilisations and strikes break out in Chile, where workers and militant unions demand the satisfaction of their contemporary needs and fight for their rights in education and health, against the repression of the Sebastián Piñera bourgeois government.



October 2019, LEBANON

Mass popular protests are organized in Lebanon condemning poverty, unemployment, shortages in basic services such as electricity and water, and the overall dramatic situation workers and Lebanese people find themselves in, which was further deteriorated after the big explosion in August 2020 in the port of Beirut.

October 2019, FRANCE

Report by WFTU to the European Parliament against the plans to close the lignite power plant Central de Garden in France. Workers protested and went on strike for almost a year, in an attempt to thwart anti-labour plans to close the factory and protect the jobs of hundreds of workers and their families.

September 8, 2019, SYRIA

The 3rd International Solidarity Forum with the Workers and People of Syria in Damascus kicks off, hosted by GFTU Syria in collaboration with WFTU and IKATOU.

August 2019, COSTA RICA

Strike by Social Security workers to defend adequate funding and to protest against the privatisation of health services.

July 2019, ECUADOR

On 16 and 17 July, FEI (Confederation of Indigenous Peasants and Organizations of Ecuador) and other organisations and social movements, protest against the neoliberal economic model implemented by the government against the people, which causes an increase in unemployment and poverty in Ecuador. The protesters demand, among other things, access to land and production and adequate food for the people.



June 7, 2019, MONACO

Workers in Monaco demonstrate for an increase in their wages so that their basic needs can be met, all the while asking for improved social protection.

January 2019, VENEZUELA

WFTU, its members and the workers in Venezuela and across the world, reject the attempted coup against the legally elected government of the country, organized by the US government, NATO and the EU and implemented by the representatives of monopolies within Venezuela.

January 2019, BANGLADESH

A strike by textile and clothing workers is organized in Bangladesh against their barbaric exploitation by industry monopolies which leads to numerous fatal workplace accidents.

December 2018, FRANCE

Workers fight against EU and IMF anti-labour policies.

November 2018, ITALY

Intervention by WFTU and USB in Italy at the European Parliament on the situation of migrant workers in Foggia in southern Italy, calling for an immediate improvement in their working and living conditions.

November 2018, MEXICO

Massive mobilisation in the city of Mexico by producers of the plain, where over 150,000 members of Frente Authentic del Campo (FAC) consisting of CIOAC, CODUC, MST and UNTA celebrated the 107th anniversary of the Ayiala project.

September 2018, RUSSIA

Workers mobilise against raising retirement limits.



September 27, 2018, COSTA RICA

Following 17 days of strike, the workers and people of Costa Rica continue their struggle against the repressive fiscal plan that the government insists on imposing. The main streets of San José witness the largest march in the history of the country. Despite the military repression of the government, one million people participate in the march.

August 2018, PARAGUAY

A mass march against the reform of the pension system takes place in Paraguay, where the flags of WFTU accompany the mass mobilisation of the working class and the people of Paraguay.

August 2018, PARAGUAY

Paraguay decides the release of militant farmers who were imprisoned for 6 years because they fought for their land and against the occupation of large estates and lands by usurper oligarchs. However, Rubén Villalba, the leader of the peasants, remains imprisoned for another reason also linked to the fight for the farmers' land, which is why the struggle for his release and for the release of all the political prisoners in Paraguay continues.

August 2018, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Oil workers wage a major struggle against the government's plans to sell the assets of the Trinidad and Tobago Oil Company and against the dismissal of thousands of workers.

August 2018, PALESTINE

The young Palestinian fighter Ahed Tamimi sends a thank you message WFTU for its international solidarity campaign in more than 85 countries in five continents, for the release of herself and her mother from Israeli prisons, and for the defence of the Palestinian people in their struggle for an independent country with East Jerusalem as its capital.



July 2018, PHILIPPINES

Anti-imperialist demonstrations and activities are organized by workers and students who denounce US-Philippines joint military exercises and the so-called "defence" agreements.

July 2018, BANGLADESH

Teachers and employees of private educational institutions in Bangladesh, fight for inclusion in the government's monthly payment order system (MPO). Teachers and private school workers have been protesting since June 10, 2018, and have been on a hunger strike since early July in front of the Dhaka National Press Club, until their demands are met. Nearly 80,000 teachers at 5,000 non-governmental schools are now outside the scope of the MPO system, although last January the Bangladeshi government promised to comply with their request.

June 2018, SOUTH AFRICA

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in South Africa decides to completely shut down the electricity company Eskom, since the company's negotiating team does not actually negotiate, follows orders by the management and refuses the requests of the employees represented by NUM.

May 2018, BRAZIL

Brazilian oil workers go on a 72-hour warning strike across the country. The industry, which employs more than 60,000 people, is protesting against the neo-liberal measures of the illegitimate government of Michel Temer who, since taking over the presidency, has implemented its Petrobras privatisation agenda, cutting back on investments and exercising extortion in pricing policies.

May 14, 2018, PALESTINE

Massacre of dozens of Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli forces. Dozens of unarmed Palestinians are killed, wounded and threatened by Israeli forces as they protest the relocation of the US embassy from Tel



Aviv to Jerusalem and demand the right to return to their land which has been occupied since May 15, 1948. At least 14 Palestinians were killed and more than 2,000 injured in Gaza on May 14, bringing the death toll to 100 Palestinians since protests began on March 30. The Israeli army continues to fire in cold blood on our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

April 2018, GREECE

WFTU participates in the demonstration in Athens on April 13 against war preparations and imperialist plans in the South-eastern Mediterranean and Syria.

March 2018, PORTUGAL

Several-day strike by teachers and civil servants against the freezing of their wages for many years.

March 2018, INDIA

A large march of farmers starts on March 6 with the farmers marching from Nasik to Mumbai. During the 200-kilometer march, mass solidarity rallies take place in many areas. The impressive march was a success, forcing the state government to accept the farmers' demands in writing.

December 2017, ARGENTINA

The people of Argentina fight against the pension reform introduced by the Argentine government. The law violates the rights gained by pensioners and workers in the country, being blatantly in favour of big business and the Argentine bourgeoisie.

December 2017, GREECE

Greek workers organise protests against attempts by the government to limit the right to strike.

November 2017, TURKEY

REAL Market employees in Turkey continue their militant mobilisations, protesting the loss of jobs and demanding compensation



from Metro Group AG for the dismissed Real Market workers. Following the acquisition of Real Hypermarkets by Metro Group AG, an international monopoly in Germany operating in various countries around the world, Real Hyper markets went bankrupt and more than 1,700 employees were laid off. For the last 4 months, the employees of Real Hypermarkets have been asking for their compensation through demonstrations in Istanbul and other cities.

November 2017, INDIA

A huge, nationwide 3-day mass action against the anti-labour, anti-popular policies of the government started outside the Parliament in Delhi, India. The protest is organized by the Common Platform of the Central Trade Unions, which includes central trade unions and all major workers' federations. The joint trade union platform represents workers from all major sectors of industry and services such as coal, steel, transport, telecommunications, oil, electricity, ports and docks, engineers, construction workers, etc. as well as central and state government officials in the railways, banks, insurance and defence production sectors.

November 7, 2017, ITALY

USB, along with other Italian Confederations, organises a general strike and mobilisation to oppose the anti-labour policy pursued by the government and the European Union. They demand an increase in salaries and pensions and fight against precariousness, the privatisation of public enterprises, xenophobia and racism and measures that serve the interests of the monopolies in their country.

October 2017, FRANCE

Workers in France stage a general strike against the labour code reform, job cuts and the attack on their social and vested rights.

September 27, 2017, SOUTH AFRICA

A general KOSATU general strike is organized in South Africa for workers' rights and emancipation.



September 21, FRANCE

Thousands of striking workers across France protest against the mandates of the capitalist government.

September 12, 2017, FRANCE

FNIK CGT organizes a strike in the oil sector against the anti-labour policies of new and old governments.

June 2017, GREECE

2-day, anti-imperialist mobilisation of PAME in Thessaloniki, Greece, under the slogan: "With the workers of all countries, for a world without exploitation, wars and refugees."

May 2017, ISRAEL

A demonstration for peace is held in Israel under the slogan "Two states, One hope" with thousands of participants responding to the call, expressing their disagreement with the situation in Palestine.

April 2017, PALESTINE

The Palestinian fighter Marwan Barghouti goes on hunger strike with 1600 other detainees. The strikers demand that the human rights of the detainees and the entire Palestinian people be respected.

March 2017, BRAZIL

The Teachers' Confederation of Brazil goes on a 10-day strike, starting on March 15, against the Social Security reform planned by the reactionary government of Michel Temer. Teachers collect 1 million signatures against the reform, and ask other sectors to join them in demanding the withdrawal of the bill, which increases retirement limits for all workers, men and women, and abolishes special provisions for teachers and farmers.

At the same time, teachers in Argentina are also on a multi-day strike. Teachers are reacting to the Mauricio Macri government and local governments that do not comply with their demands.



February 2017, PERU

Big protests and national mobilisations organised by the heroic CGTP in Peru, against corruption.

December 2016, BANGLADESH

1,500 clothing workers are laid off in Bangladesh following a week of protests. The workers started a demonstration against the dismissal of 121 workers and demanded a monthly minimum wage of 16,000 taka (£165/\$203). It is currently 5,300 taka (£55 / \$67).

November 2016, SOUTH KOREA

Railway and subway workers go on strike for six weeks against the government's performance-based pay system and in favour of stable employment with decent wages and salaries.

REST OF THE WORLD

In many more countries, such as Egypt, where workers reacted in 2021 against the closure of large factories and the privatisation of strategic sectors of the economy, Iraq, Algeria and other African countries, Austria, Sweden and elsewhere, the struggles of pioneer workers and trade unionists also took place.

With even more fervour, we will CONTINUE our militant struggles so that our contemporary needs can be satisfied!



PRIORITIES - WFTU: WHAT IS AND WHAT IT WANTS

Going through the third decade of the 21st century and as we are about to celebrate WFTU's 80 years of life and action, our common goals are:

1. The preservation and continuous strengthening of the unity of WFTU lines, which is fundamental so that our organization can continue playing its role as the most consistent and steadfast defender of workers' rights.
2. The safeguarding of the unity of the working class as a single, global, social class, in the struggle for social liberation from capitalist exploitation. In this struggle to overthrow capitalist slavery, the working class develops its broad social alliances with the peasants, the progressive intelligentsia and the self-employed.
3. The strengthening and deepening of the principles on which WFTU was founded upon, as a trade union organization that accepts and moves forward based on the principles of class struggle, democratic and trade union freedoms, for the defense of the right to organize and the right to strike. The WFTU follows and applies the values of democracy and direct contact with the workers, while respecting the operating principles of base trade unions.

The Right to strike

The WFTU recognizes the Right to Strike as a fundamental human right and is an essential part of freedom of association. The capitalist class at national, regional and international levels has taken an aggressive approach to not only violate this fundamental right but are actively



trying to strip workers and trade unions of this right. The WFTU will stand vehemently against these attacks and will defend the right to strike at all costs.

4. Internationalism and solidarity among all workers regardless of color, religion, gender, language and political preferences. In that, no employee and no sector can be left alone in its struggles and demands.

5. Since its foundation, WFTU has always been an anti-imperialist trade union movement, defending the right of every people to decide for itself, freely and democratically, on its present and future. WFTU condemns imperialist wars and imperialist interventions. It stands against racism, fascism and xenophobia.

6. We promote in practice the equal participation of women and youth in the activities and operation of trade unions. We make sure they assume important positions of responsibility and we trust their role. We educate our members and officials to fight together, women and men, against social exploitation.

7. We want class-oriented, democratic, mass unions that will function as schools for social struggles for the emancipation of the working class. We want them to work collectively, always turning towards the base and the common worker. We want them to have a long-lasting and unwavering front against bureaucracy, elitism, careerism and corruption.

8. WFTU intervenes in international organizations in which it participates, promoting the positions of the class-oriented trade union movement and revealing the anti-labor character of organizations that violate their very own principles and reasons on which they were founded.

9. The entire WFTU structure is dedicated on a daily basis to a constant action for improving the living standards of all employees,



pertaining to wages, employment, social insurance, culture and intellect. The satisfaction of the workers' CONTEMPORARY NEEDS is an ongoing goal for every country, sector, region and trade union.

Today, with all the technological progress and accumulated wealth, the bar for contemporary needs must always be set high. New technologies and digitization must be utilized for the improvement of the workers' life and not for the increase of profits. These contemporary needs, according to the way the class-oriented trade union movement understands them, unquestionably include the right to free health, decent housing, access to clean water, the right to safe, reliable and cheap public transport, and free public education for all children.

The contemporary struggle of a class for itself

The capitalist mode of production, while deteriorating with its own contradictions, permanently seeks ways to maintain its hegemony. Given that the essence of its survival is marked by the appropriation of the wealth produced by the working class, the responsibility always falls on the working class when the system enters into crisis.

Therefore, apart from its recurrent drops in profit rates, especially from the 1970s onwards and the crises that followed, especially that of 2008/2009, the system accelerated a set of changes in the way, how and where to produce. Outsourcing, an intense technological and business increase, accompanied by a new division of labor marked by the dispersion of productive units, characterize the new era in the world of work.

In addition, seeking to weaken political resistance to this anti-workers attack, they are making labor legislation more flexible and deregulating the role of trade union representation. Overall, despite the large mobilizations, the result of this current stage is the precariousness of work and the awareness of a considerable part of our class.



The World Federation of Trade Unions and its Unions should not underestimate this new situation; on the contrary, they must be studying and confronting it with tactics and appropriate means, in particular, with the strengthening of political training and union work at the base.

Income - Wages - Remuneration

We support and demand the signing of Collective Agreements for full-time, stable work, with dignified wages. Collective Agreements should govern every country and every sector, meeting the demands of the workers. For example and as a minimum requirement, the workers' income in every country must be at least twice as much as the poverty threshold.

Social security

We demand public social security and pension for everyone, so that all workers in all sectors can enjoy full rights and insurance coverage. Undeclared and uninsured work constitutes a "casus belli" for the class-oriented trade union movement.

High prices - Unemployment - Privatizations

These are also the results of capitalist barbarity and the "enemies" of the trade union movement and the workers. High prices affect poor people, unemployment is "the fifth column" within trade unions, and privatizations present monopolies and multinational companies the opportunity to lay off workers and attack their vested rights. Privatizations lead to the selloff of public wealth and give a great opportunity to the monopolies and multinational companies to lay off



workers, to attack their rights and gains and to deprive workers of free and universal access to social goods. The fight against high prices, unemployment and privatizations must be high on the agenda of WFTU's daily struggles.

Immigrants - Refugees

Imperialist wars create refugees and immigrants. The exploitation of the wealth of the Third World breeds poverty and immigration. One of the main priorities of the international militant trade union movement has always been the write-off of the foreign debt of Third World countries. At the same time, we defend the lives and rights of immigrants and refugees. We collide with racist and neo-fascist phenomena. For WFTU, the working class is united.

Child labor – Working during Pregnancy

Children should be at school, playing with their peers. Child labor should be banned in practice – not just in words. For pregnant women, the international rules governing maternity leave, lighter work and banning lay-offs, should be implemented.

10. Health and safety at the workplace are matters of great importance for WFTU, as the workers must return to their homes and families safe and sound. We focus on the establishment and operation of health and safety committees in the workplace. Addressing the environmental crisis is also of great importance to WFTU, as we believe that it is caused by the ruthless speculative action of monopolies and multinational cartels. Poor people are drowning, burned and killed because of the consequences of this crisis: floods, cold weather, fires, and earthquakes.



11. We are constantly fighting for a reduction in working time and a simultaneous improve in wages. WFTU's position is for a 35-hour, 5-day week which is immediately necessary and realistic. The next step should be a 7-hour, 4-day week of full-time employment, without reducing wages. This is the only way in which the working class and all workers in general will receive a fraction even, of the profits yielding from the explosive development of technology and science in the production process. WFTU strongly opposes part-time or undeclared work, labor slavery and lay-offs. With the implementation of tele-work, flexible forms of employment are further promoted, working hours are increased and stable and permanent work with rights is being challenged. We propose to develop a broad campaign for a 35-hour working day with no reduction in salary and launch it next October 03, 2022.

12. WFTU opposes the waste of resources and money for military purposes. It also opposes the use of nuclear energy for military purposes and calls for an immediate dissolution of NATO.

13. We do not agree with the exclusions, discriminations, embargoes and sanctions imposed by the US, NATO and the EU against various countries, as they negatively impact the standard of living of low-income families, workers and poor, small farmers.

International Committee for the protection of trade union and democratic freedoms

The monopolies, multinational companies and governments of the capitalist world utilize new technologies to restrict trade union, democratic and individual freedoms of workers in society and inside the workplaces.

Nowadays new practices of surveillance and restriction of the free trade union and social action are added to the old anti-trade union and



anti-democratic methods of employers' violence, state authoritarianism that even take the form of murders of pioneer trade-unionists.

The International Committee for the protection of trade union and democratic freedoms will gather evidence and present memorandums to International Organizations and will support the relevant initiatives of the leading bodies of the WFTU. It will also cooperate with the WFTU Legal Committee.

On the other hand, most employers do not apply all the necessary health and safety measures in the workplaces since they consider the health and safety of workers as a cost and that leads to occupational "accidents". The ILO estimates that some 2.3 million women and men around the world succumb to work-related accidents or diseases every year; this corresponds to over 6000 deaths every single day. Worldwide, there are around 340 million occupational accidents and 160 million victims of work-related illnesses annually. The protection of workers inside the workplaces will also be among the tasks of the International Committee.

Dear Friends, brothers and sisters,
Fellow militants and comrades,

The 18th World Trade Union Congress is on the final stretch of its holding in a period of great intensification of the inter-imperialist antagonisms. The Russia-West war conflict taking place in Ukraine has left thousands of dead, millions of refugees and enormous material damages. The conflict is still ongoing, the risks of a generalized war and the use of nuclear weapons are on the table by the USA, NATO, the EU and Russia. The risks for the Peoples are great. This war is the second war fought in Europe, the first being NATO's war against Yugoslavia in 1999. These wars, like the wars in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Georgia, Armenia and elsewhere, are based on the overthrows that took place in the period 1989-1991, resulting in



the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the overthrows in socialist countries in Eastern Europe.

Those who claimed at the time that that global overthrow of the global correlation would be in favour of peace and international security turned out to be either wrong in their assessments or lying.

In the midst of these developments and given that the consequences of this conflict will be negative for the Peoples, the question of what the role of the international trade union movement should be is once again coming to the fore in every corner of the world. A question of timeless and strategic importance.

The ITUC, as it has always done, supports NATO, the USA, the fascist forces and the Nazi paramilitary groups that are gathering from all over Europe and are being sent with modern military equipment to Ukraine to fight the Russians. We are not surprised by this attitude of the ITUC leadership. From 1949 as ICFTU and afterwards, when it was renamed to ITUC, it was and remains the trade union arm of the multinationals and the imperialists. It supports the strategies of the imperialists in every corner of the globe.

The WFTU in its statements and publications does not drag behind Russia or the US-NATO-EU. It demands an end to the conflict and an immediate peace agreement, the immediate dissolution of NATO and the maintaining of Ukraine's neutrality in relation to the military blocs. It believes that it is the right and responsibility of every People to decide freely and democratically on their present and future.

The firm and long-standing positions of the WFTU are positions that have been collectively adopted by the competent bodies of our organization and in the light of new global developments are reaffirmed by our 18th Congress.



WORLD TRADE UNION CONGRESS



The WFTU was founded in October 3rd, 1945 after the end of the World War II and under the impact of the defeat of fascism and the victory of the Red Army.

The foundation of WFTU was a mature outcome of the evolvement of the Labour Trade Union Movement in national level and expressed the necessity for an international coordination, the necessity for proletarian solidarity and common action of the International Working Class against the capitalist exploitation.

The WFTU is the organized, progressive section of the International Trade Union Movement and has as its main central objective the improvement of the living conditions of the International Working Class, the struggle for the demand of general trade union liberties, the simultaneous struggle for the overthrow of the barbaric capitalist system.

The long experience, positive and negative, the hard struggles of the Workers and the People from the era of Spartacus until today, confirm two basic timeless conclusions: Firstly, that as Karl Marx wrote: “the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle” and secondly that the International Working Class cannot defend its short and long term demands and its class oriented objective if it does not have except from a political vanguard, its own strong, well-organized and theoretically equipped Trade Union Organ.

Such an international Trade Union Organization, an international coordinating centre, which will have strong stable roots with the base, which will work for the base and will be empowered by the base. This is the role that the WFTU is obliged to play and is playing in the International Trade Union Arena.

We are proud for the course and the action of the WFTU from 1945 since today. It defended Socialism from the first moment of its foundation; it stood actively with moral, material and trade union



solidarity to all the people who fought in a peaceful manner or in an armed struggle for their independence and liberation, it facilitated the survival of dozens of thousands of militants of the trade union movement who were under persecution and threat in Africa, in Latin America, in Central America, in Asia, in Middle East, in Europe, in the Caribbean and elsewhere in every corner of the world.

We are proud because the most radical slogans of the trade union struggles and action were written for the first time at the banners and the documents of the WFTU. At this long and hard course, the WFTU was never afraid to recognize its mistakes, to make open self-criticism to the simple workers, to fight against its own weaknesses and delays.

For the international class-oriented movement, criticism, self-criticism and emulation were and continue to be vital forwarders.

The WFTU since the first moment of its foundations confronted the hostility of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. In 1949 with the initiative of the governments of the USA and Britain, the first frontal attack was carried against the WFTU with the dirty manners of the CIA, the Intelligent Service and their counterparts.

Their initial aim was the dissolution of the WFTU and when it failed, they withdraw from the WFTU and moved to the disruptive move to found the ICFTU. The second effort took place in 1956 initiator of which was the Ministry of State Security of Austria with use of provocative methods and an occupation by the police of the Central Offices of the WFTU in Vienna they seized all the archives.

This effort of capitalism also failed. In the years after the overthrows of the period 1989-1991, the WFTU was in a very difficult situation. It had to confront a fierce attack by Europeans and other opportunists from France, Italy, Spain etc. aiming for the dissolution and the integration of the WFTU to the ICFTU, i.e. the trade union organ of the USA, the European Union and the International Capital. The plots of



the opportunists failed and despite the great difficulties, the political persecutions and the anti- communism, the WFTU remained stable and maintained its historic course. There were forces that stood up and kept the WFTU alive.

After the 15th World Trade Union Congress that took place in La Havana, Cuba our organization started again to grow, to become stronger, to develop action and to regroup.

Today it has more than 105 million members in 133 countries of the world. It is present in all continents; it is present in all basic sectors of the production. In April 2011 we held in Athens, Greece, the 16th World Trade Union Congress. It was an open, democratic, class-oriented Congress which took important decisions and formed the new objectives for the International Class-Oriented Trade Union Movement in the contemporary conditions. In October 2016 the 17th World Trade Union Congress was successfully held in Durban, South Africa with useful resolutions for the continuation and strengthening of our struggles.

According to these decisions and resolutions, the WFTU objectives are:

- The enhancement of the class-oriented, the militant characteristics of the trade unions in all the levels, in all the sectors. To accomplish this, the line of the class collaboration must be defeated; we must conduct an open war against the trade union aristocracy, the trade union bureaucracy and careerism.
- The strengthening of the class-oriented unions in the work places, in the monopoly groups, in the multinationals, in the big industries. In traditional and modern sectors of production. The activation of the workers strengthens the unions.
- The strengthening of our ties with the base, with the ordinary workers and the enhancement of the democratic functioning of the trade unions.



With elected leaderships that will be accountable on the base, which will express the base and will be supported by the base. Leadership that will respect the collective decisions and will promote the collectivity.

- The enrichment of Internationalism and international solidarity which are the tool of all the workers, especially today that the local, regional, sectoral and trans-sectoral coordination of the labour struggles is so necessary. The active defense of the people who struggle for their rights. For the right in the self-determination of their present and future.
- The constant pursuit for the Unity of the working class independently of any differences. The unity of the working class is a precondition for our class to build its social alliances with the poor peasantry, the self-employed, the progressive intelligentsia.
- The faith in the role of the working women and the working youth which can give new blood, new dynamics, new life and action to the trade unions. Their election in leading positions and the constant renewal of the leading core of the trade union organizations is vital.
- The utilization of the rich experience, positive and negative, in the forms of struggle and the content of the class-oriented struggles, the combination of the economic with the political struggle, the pursuit of demands that unify the workers and are in harmony with the contemporary needs of the workers and the popular families. The combination of defense, offence and the reserves.
- The continuous care for the ideological support towards the trade union cadres, through trade union education, international exchange and trade union programs that will enhance their faith to the fair struggle of the working class and the necessity of the class struggle; that they will assist the realization of the need to defend and strengthen the class-oriented characteristics of the trade unions.



- The necessity for each union to gain its financial independence without dependence from the bourgeoisie, from the international institutes of opportunism and the international centers of corruption. The financial dependence of the trade union gives birth to other dependences. The healthy financial self-reliance is the one that is only based in the membership fees of the workers.
- The ability of each trade union to study the developments in its field, in its sector, and to utilize the developments for the promotion of the labour interests in all basic fronts of struggle, for the solution of all the labour demands, social security, salary demands and trade union demands.
- The understanding that the capitalist system has surpassed its historic limits, it is rotten and thus the solution and the real way-out for the liberation of the international working class cannot occur from the make-up and the modernization of the capitalism, but through its overthrow.
- The active participation to the struggles for peace, friendship and cooperation between the workers and the people, the struggle against the phenomena of racism, xenophobia, neo-fascism. The consistent struggle against the imperialists, against the imperialist wars and capitalism which is the economic base of imperialism.

The Secretariat

01.04.2022



World Trade Union Congress



United we Continue

For the satisfaction of our contemporary needs. Against imperialist-capitalist barbarity.



World Trade Union Congress
Rome, Italy 6-8 May 2022