
World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization

Fourth Meeting of the Commission (CM 4)

Geneva, 16-18 February 2003

Synthesis Report on Dialogue with the International Trade Union Movement (Brussels 26 November 2002)

This meeting was attended by Commissioners Pitsuwan, Somavia, Sweeney, Tou, Traoré, Vavi and Weizsäcker. The trade union movement was represented by the ICFTU Steering Committee which is composed of the leaders from many of the largest national trade union centres in the world plus seven representatives from the World Confederation of Labour. Also attending were leaders of the Global Union Federations and the elected officials of the ICFTU.

Summary of Main Policy Recommendations

Most of the precise policy recommendations emerging from this meeting focused on steps that should be taken to help strengthen existing national systems of labour relations and establish a global labour relations system. The development of labour relations institutions and regulations at the global level was seen as one important mechanism to correct the widening inequalities caused by globalisation. Participants urged the Commission to adopt recommendations calling on the ILO to:

1. intensify activities conducive to the organisation of workers and undertake activities designed to explain the benefits of an organised workforce to employers;
2. promote the establishment of global works councils;
3. use its programme of Sectoral Meetings and related activities to accelerate the expansion of Framework Agreements between multinational companies and the Global Union Federations;
4. undertake social audits of companies;
5. use its technical cooperation activities to strengthen labour ministries and systems of labour inspection and labour courts;
6. promote the removal of all legal and non-legal barriers to cross-border industrial action by workers;
7. develop mechanisms to monitor and verify the implementation of framework agreements and codes of conduct adopted by multinational companies.

It was also suggested that the Commission recommend that the ILO systematically examine the employment and social implications of decisions and policies advocated by the IFIs and WTO.

A number of policy areas to which the Commission should address its attention were highlighted - e.g.: the problems of workers in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), in particular women workers; the need to ensure greater coherence and cohesion between the organizations of the multilateral system; the need to promote a better balance between state regulation and corporate voluntary social initiatives; the implications of international debt and privatization; and the corporate governance crisis. A call was made for the establishment of a social fund to tackle poverty based on contributions from multinational enterprises.