

ITUC CONGRESS

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SPEECH BY JOHN EVANS TRADE UNION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TUAC) TO THE OECD

This is indeed an historic day – we are debating the programme of action of the united global trade union movement – the ITUC.

I'd like to acknowledge the intelligent and determined leadership of Willie Thys and Guy Ryder in steering us towards a more effective and more united global trade union movement.

Unification of the international labour movement makes sense. Within TUAC, ICFTU, WCL and non-affiliated unions have already worked closely together for over thirty years – we are therefore proud to feature in the ITUC constitution as part of the structured partnership with the GUFs that will be brought together in the Council of Global Unions. We are determined to be an effective tool for the new international.

We are meeting at a time when our members are bearing the brunt of the inequities of market-driven globalisation as Juan Somavia has said there is a decent work deficit – wages are lagging behind productivity growth whilst the new super rich at the top of our companies – have disconnected themselves from the reality of the work of those that they profit from.

But we also know that unions are a key part of the solution – where unions exist and bargain there is less low pay, more secure work, less corruption often more efficient economies and certainly more just societies.

As Guy said yesterday the ITUC objective must be to provide effective representation for working people in the global economy and to this better than we do today.

We must ensure that there is no part of this world that is a no-go area for trade unions.

We have a duty to ensure that there is no multinational that can foolishly boast that it is “union free”.

And we have a duty to ensure that there is no worker in this global economy who cannot feed her or his family because of the lack of a decent job.

Trade unions in all countries now are giving priority to organising and strengthening the movement. This will succeed first and foremost because of the actions of our members and our potential members.

But these actions do not take place in a political, a social or an economic vacuum.

International organisations such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the OECD and the G8 clearly shape the environment in which all our unions operate.

Efforts to change the rules of the global economy are not therefore an add-on luxury to real trade union work of organising they are an absolutely central necessity and part of it. We have to also win the battle of ideas.

Work in TUAC over the last five years and that planned for the year ahead dovetails exactly with that of the Programme of the ITUC. The consultative mechanism that TUAC provides for unions with the OECD remains a precedent for us to have our voice heard at the international financial institutions and the WTO.

Together with affiliates we have forced governments to establish OECD rules that can be used as tools by us all in the ITUC:

- More than 60 times in the past five years our affiliates and GUFs have used the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises to

challenge corporate wrongdoing. That work must now extend to China.

- In Korea, the OECD continues to monitor the trade union rights abuses against the benchmark of ILO core standards we must ensure that any new members of the OECD have to respect core labour standards;
- Development aid policy is set by the donor countries in the OECD we have to make the provision of decent work and respect for labour rights an essential part of that;
- The revision of the OECD Jobs Strategy this year – whilst far from perfect now recognises that strong unions and coordinated bargaining as seen in some Northern European countries can produce good employment performance;

But we must do much more and we must do it better. In TUAC with the creation of the new organisation and the Global Unions Council we pledge to work even harder as part of a reinforced partnership with it to make a difference and to make sure that one day, no one` no one will be denied the right to join a union or to have a decent job.

I'm optimistic that together we can achieve this, we will achieve this.