

Obituary

It was with immense pain that ITUC-Africa announced to the trade union fraternity on October 21, 2010 the death of Comrade Kurreeman Cassam, former President of Mauritius Labour Congress (MLC). His death occurred on October 20, 2010 while he was taking part in a forum which preceded the 4th meeting of the General Council of ITUC-Africa which was held in Lome, Togo.

In the letter that the General Secretary of ITUC-Africa, Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, sent to all affiliates, sub-regional organisations, Global Union Federations and ITUC informing them about the death of Kurreeman, he described him as a committed activist who was playing a very important role in the search for a solution to the problems of trade union proliferation in Mauritius. Brother Kwasi stressed that "his life was at the service of the Mauritian working class in particular and the African working class in general."

Brother Kwasi implored God's mercy upon Kurreeman, saying "May the Almighty and Merciful God grant him grace and eternal protection."

ALEN IN ACTION

Education in our Unions can be seen to have a very weak structure. This can be attributed to factors such as:

- lack of educators
- lack of dedication and commitment from available educators
- Insufficient funds for development of materials etc...
- Education not reaching the right people

For reasons mainly such as these, a Network of Educators was foreseen as essential. This Network was envisioned to target primarily, workers at the grass root level and bring Trade Union Education to them.

At the end of 2004, this Network was born. It was known as the APADEP Educators Network (AEN). This Network comprised mainly countries from Southern Africa which included Malawi, Zimbabwe, etc...

However, some countries outside Southern Africa such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and some francophone countries expressed their interest in joining the Network. It was thus expanded to accommodate these new countries. This saw the birth of the ALEN (The African Labor Educators Network) in 2007.

The Network however faced certain challenges after its conception amongst which were:

1. Coordination (components of coordination)
 - Political space and support for the ALEN programme both at the regional and national levels
 - Practical organization including finance; Delay in transfers, release and approval of funds
 - Management of responsibilities and resources
 - Absence of shared vision
 - Accountability to the political leadership and project partners
 - Project designs and reports
 - Duplication or parallel programmes
 - Ineffective communication;
 - Inadequate time frame for delivery
 - Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
 - Criteria for selection of right candidates for ALEN programme
 - Donor dependency; Donor funding for national educational and its sustainability
 - Commitment of educators to get things done
 - The mission and vision of the national programme undermines the concept of solidarity

However, as pointed out, the positive aspects of ALEN far outweighed the emerging challenges, which were believed, could be rectified.

In view of this, it was therefore concluded that the programme should be launched and continued.

- The notion of a “network” had to be revitalised. It was decided that it should be clear that there can only be one type of members which are national trade union centres that are committed to undertake ALEN activities. It should be a network whose members are regularly informed about ALEN developments in other countries. In addition, it ought to be a network which frequently exchanges information amongst its members and extends support to those members in need. Such a network should not depend on expensive continental gatherings that yield impressive minutes only. If there are dedicated members, such a network can be maintained using modern information technology.
- A genuine culture of communication needs to be resuscitated. Participating national centres should contribute to such a revamped culture by providing information in time about their own progress and achievements.
- Whereas the ten-session package was highly commended, its availability left a lot to be desired. If grass roots education was to be taken seriously, every effort should be undertaken by ALEN to make this package available in every country of the network in more than sufficient quantities.

- It was also suggested that the continental coordination is placed under ITUC-AFRICA, which should ensure that the technical skills required for such a coordinating role are available (e.g. on a part-time basis). A fair estimation of HR inputs will have to be made for which the experiences of Workers' College could be used.

With all these in place, the ALEN program was ready to take off on a new dimension.

Hence, in November, last year, a meeting was held in Accra – Ghana to:

- critically assess the Evaluation Report of ALEN by the external evaluators
- carry the African Labor Educators' Network (ALEN) forward

Participants from ITUC-AFRICA, Workers' College, GTUC, MCTU, ZCTU, SATUCC, SASK and FNV were present.

It was at this meeting that coordinators brainstormed to set the strategic mission and vision for the relaunch of the programme.

What was concluded, upon thorough consideration of work done by the Coordinators was:

Vision

Strong, democratic, independent and progressive trade union movement.

Mission

To provide education that empowers workers and mobilizes them to respond to challenges at the workplace and community.

In that meeting, roles of overall and National Coordinators were also set at this meeting and the decision to hand over the overall coordination to ITUC- Africa.

At the end of February, the members of the ALEN network convened at Workers College, Durban to conclude on a proposal for the next 3 years.

The overall coordination of the program was formally handed over from Workers College to ITUC-AFRICA.

Activities were drawn up by National, as well as Overall Coordinators, for the year.

A proposal is underway to be finalized and sent to FNV by June this year.

The ALEN Network is looking forward to a successful year ahead with the accomplishment of all its set activities.

KENYA

Solidarity Letter to the Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU-K)

The General Secretary of ITUC-Africa, Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, wrote to the Secretary General of COTU, Francis Atwoli, on March 10, 2011 following an arrest warrant issued by a judge in Kenya against the latter for purportedly not turning up in court after a notice for same had been issued.

In his solidarity letter, Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah said that he was aware that Brother Atwoli through his lawyer informed the court that he would be away on an international assignment at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) during the time of the court hearing.

“ITUC-Africa knows that you are one active member of the ILO Governing Body; it’s a meeting that you had been billed to attend and it commenced on Monday March 7, 2011”, Brother Kwasi acknowledged in the letter.

On behalf of ITUC-Africa, the General Secretary praised the contributions of COTU-Kenya in the struggle for a just and equitable Kenyan society and urged the entire leadership of COTU-K to remain firm and focused.

Interview with Brother Francis Atwoli, S.G of COTU-Kenya

In this interview:

- The recent warrant of arrest issued against Francis Atwoli
- The harmonisation of labour laws in East Africa
- The charges leveled against six Kenyan citizens in connection with post-election violence

Good morning Brother Francis Awoli. You are the Secretary-General of COTU-Kenya and you are participating in the meeting of the General Council of ITUC-Africa in Accra, Ghana.

Brother Francis Awoli, we have recently been informed that the Kenyan police nearly prevented you from attending an ILO Governing Body meeting. Can you explain to us what actually happened?

What happened is that the union that I lead, that is the giant General Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union went on strike last year in October and the employer went to court while we were on strike and obtained a court order enjoining us to stop the strike. After almost one month of strike, the employer went back to court compelling the court to issue a contempt of court, complaining that we did not respect the court

order that enjoined us to stop the strike. So I went to court with my lawyers and the lawyers spoke on our behalf. Then, the judge fixed March 7 as the date when the case would be heard. But on that date, I was supposed to be in Geneva. So I asked my lawyer to represent me and the union while I am away.

The judge of the High Court could not believe that. She went ahead and issued a warrant of arrest. When I was in Geneva, the ITUC wrote to my President complaining, because as workers' leaders, we belong to all the workers of the world and hence we are covered by some international conventions like the ILO Convention Number 87. And our own domestic statutes recognise that a strike is a legal tool for a union.

When I came back from Geneva, I went to court and the judge agreed with my lawyer that as a member of the ILO Governing Body, I should attend that meeting. I want to assure you that the judge of the High Court was soft. I knew she was soft because of the interventions of the ITUC and ITUC-Africa. Up to now, the case is going on but the judge has allowed me to travel and to be represented by my lawyer without necessarily going to the High Court. So that was what happened. I want to take this opportunity to thank Sister Sharan Burrow who did write to my President, and also ITUC-Africa through our Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah.

Brother Francis Atwoli, we know that the labour laws and practices are being harmonised in East Africa. What role is COTU-Kenya playing in this process?

Thank you very much my Brother. COTU-Kenya, i.e. the Central Organisation of Trade Unions of Kenya chairs the East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC) which is based in Arusha, Tanzania. With the current Executive Secretary Brother Emmanuel Nzunda and our brothers from Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya, we have done a commendable job in the area of harmonisation of labour laws within the region. Also, we are reflected in the Charter that covers the East African region because of the skillful participation of the East African Trade Union Confederation which has done a commendable job in this area. We made sure that we are reflected in the protocol and the Charter. The protocol allows free movement of persons and goods and the provision of services within the region.

The other area that EATUC is working on is social security and we are almost through. If you are working under the National Social Security Fund of Uganda and then you are transferred to Kenya or get a job in Tanzania, you should be able to prove and your dues will be transferred to the Social Security Fund of Tanzania or Kenya. This is a remarkable achievement. Also, in the area of employment, any worker of the region can work in any of the member countries without any problem. From July last year, it became official that no application for work permit is required for East African workers in the member countries. We the Central Organisation of Trade Unions were the first organisation to put this provision in practice by hiring Brother Moses Kachime from Tanzania who is now the principal of Tom Mboya Labour College. This was an achievement championed by the workers of the East African region and COTU-Kenya. The East African Community Secretariat respects the efforts that are being made by workers in this particular area. It has appointed a director to handle industrial and labour relations and issues. The director is based in Arusha.

Thank you Brother Atwoli. Quite recently, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has leveled accusations against six Kenyan citizens in connection with the post-election violence in Kenya and they have appeared before the Court in The Hague. Can you please tell us what is happening exactly?

They were in The Hague from 4th to 8th April. They arrived in Kenya on Monday this week. What I want to tell you is that the Central Organisation of Trade Unions asked the Kenya Government, politicians and Parliament early last year to put a mechanism in place in order to have a local tribunal of international repute in Kenya, which would try post-election violence perpetrators. But some members of Parliament including ministers opposed this and said if anything let them go to The Hague. Now they have gone to The Hague and have come back home inciting the public against The Hague and against some politicians in the country. We workers are saying that we want peace after the 2012 elections. And we would not hesitate to appeal to the International Criminal Court to issue warrants of arrest against those who are still inciting Kenyans against one another, agitating, politicking and creating political alignments and exclusion, preaching disunity, using hate speech, so that they can be arrested and taken to The Hague. We don't want what happened in 2008 to be repeated. We don't want to be in the situation where Côte d'Ivoire is now. We don't

want to be in the situation where Libya is. We don't want to be in a situation of chaos and confusion. We want the ICC to assist us in getting the perpetrators of the post-election violence. Six thousand people died, according to what the Government reported outside. The figure of one thousand five hundred people was also mentioned. Workers counted six thousand dead bodies. COTU did this in January 2008. We don't want to go back to that incident.

Thank you very much Brother Francis Atwoli

Thank you my brother

This interview was conducted in Accra, Ghana, in April 2011

SWAZILAND -

ITUC-Africa's Protest against the Harassment and Intimidation of Trade Unionists and Citizens of Swaziland by the Swaziland Royal Police Service

On April 22, 2011, the General Secretary of ITUC-Africa sent a letter to the Swazi Commissioner of Police protesting against the harassment and intimidation of trade unionists and citizens of Swaziland by the Royal Police Service.

Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah indicated in the letter that according to the report received by ITUC-Africa, the police stormed the house of comrade Simon Mvubu, 1st Vice-president of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU), on the pretence of searching for arms and explosives.

Brother Kwasi also noted that neighbours and citizens in that community like in similar others have been visited in the past and have been traumatised and left unsecured from a police service that is supposedly engaged to protect them.

Furthermore, Brother Kwasi said that "We want to also put you on notice that the international community and trade union organisations are watching activities in Swaziland ...Accordingly, we will continue to demand that continental organisations like the African Union Commission, the Southern African Development Commission (SADC), the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations take appropriate steps and measures to address these violations and abuses perpetrated by the Swazi police on innocent and defenceless citizens."

The letter recalled the case of comrade Siphon Jele who died in suspicious circumstances in police custody and for which ITUC-Africa was still demanding

accountability and justice. The struggles of the Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) led by trade union organisations and other progressive forces, including the Swaziland United Democratic Front (SUDF), are regarded as legitimate and deserving our support, the letter indicates.

Gender Equality: ITUC-Africa builds the capacity of its affiliates

ITUC-Africa organised in April a workshop to train unionists to carry out gender audits. The gender audit became necessary because women were not adequately represented at leadership and decision-making positions within trade union organisations.

The objective of the workshop, which brought together about forty francophone trade unionists, was to develop the participants' capacity in gender audit and avail to them the basic knowledge to do the work.

Sister Rabiadou Diallo, General Secretary of CNTG, Guinea, and Chairperson of the Women's Committee, explained that "a participatory gender audit is both a tool and a process. Its aim is to promote concrete and effective mainstreaming of gender equality at the levels of individuals, workplaces and organisations as a whole".

The audit will provide an opportunity to revisit gender policies and their implementation within trade union organisations. Though gender policies exist, they are often "maladjusted, misunderstood or not implemented".

The exercise is going to be jointly patronised by ITUC-Africa and ILO which was represented at the workshop by Ms Fatime Christiane Ndiaye, Technical Specialist for French-speaking African countries at ILO ROAF, Addis-Ababa.

ITUC AFRICA WORK ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT (OSHE)

The realization of the Decent Work Agenda depends on the degree at which ITUC Africa affiliates can promote and protect occupational safety, health and environment (OSHE) at workplace and national levels. Hence capacity building in this area is critical to achievement of decent work for all workers.

For the past three years (June 1999 – June 2011) ITUC Africa has carried out several capacity building programmes in the area of OSHE with special focus on General OSH issues, HIV and AIDS, Chemical Safety, Nanotechnology and nano-manufactured materials and Climate Change. These capacity building programmes were mostly executed through sub-regional and regional training programmes.

Apart from capacity building programmes, ITUC Africa attended regional and international conferences where it lobbied for inclusion of workers' views and concerns in the area of OSHE.

Several capacity building programmes including the following were organised:

-International Training Course on Occupational Safety and Health, HIV / AIDS and Environment, 27th September – 8th October 2010, Turin Centre, Italy. This course brought together the members of the ITUC-Africa Regional network on general occupational safety and health, chemical safety and climate change. The training also discussed the domestication of ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS and the World of work. About 10 countries and 15 affiliated trade union centres were represented.

-Tripartite workshops for domestication of ILO recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work in December 2010. These workshops were held in Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia in order to identify and bridge the gaps between the national legislations, policies and decent work country programmes and provisions of Recommendation 200.

-A regional workshop organised in Arusha, Tanzania, on ILO Recommendation 200 and resource mobilisation in May 2011.

ITUC-Africa was also represented at regional and international conferences where African trade union issues and concerns were expressed during various debates on climate change, environmental protection, occupational safety and health, etc. These international conferences include the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the Conference of Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Labour Conference (ILC), the Conference of Parties to Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) in the Trade of Hazardous Substances, the Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Chemicals, the UNEP Governing Council and the UNEP Major Groups Forum.

The OSHE department has observed the following positive trend in the region. First, is the emergence of a strong OSHE regional network that is capable of addressing various issues at national, sub regional, regional and international levels. The network participated effectively in the R 200 negotiations where it reviewed various

reports. It also participated in the development of the concept of Just Transition which was later adopted in Cancun during COP 16 of UNFCCC. The network participated in the global campaign (G8 campaign) which aimed at convincing the G8 to uphold commitments on Universal Access to Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support.

Other notable successes include the development of Regional Plans of Action on Environmental Protection and Chemical Safety, Regional Model Collective Bargaining Agreement and Regional Plan of Action for Domestication of ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work.

Though much has been achieved, there is a need to address several challenges including promotion of gender equality in programs and national delegations, securing additional funds particularly from the Global Fund for HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis, inclusion of Portuguese speaking countries in programs, review of old training OSHE manuals and securing seats in Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs).

UGTT Calls for Consultations over a Transition Government during the Revolution

The Tunisian people started a revolution on December 17, 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a vegetable seller, set himself on fire, causing a popular uprising that led to the ousting of long time ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on January 14, 2011. Trade unions took part in the protests which were precipitated by high unemployment, the inflation of food prices, corruption, a lack of freedom of speech, poor living conditions and other social and political ills.

Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year old man, had been the sole income earner in his extended family of eight. He operated a purportedly unlicensed vegetable cart for seven years in Sidi Bouzid, 190 miles (300 km) south of Tunis. On 17 December 2010, a policewoman confiscated his cart and produce. Bouazizi tried to pay the 10-dinar fine (equivalent to 7USD). In response, the policewoman slapped him and spat in his face.

A humiliated Bouazizi then went to the provincial headquarters in an attempt to complain to the local municipality officials. He was refused an audience. Without alerting his family, at 11:30 am and within an hour of the initial confrontation, Bouazizi returned to the headquarters, doused himself with a flammable liquid and set himself on fire. Public outrage quickly grew over the incident, leading to protests. This immolation and the subsequent heavy-handed response by the police to peaceful marchers caused riots all over the country for several weeks.

After Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, the RCD (Rally for Constitutional Democracy) Government and the secret police were dissolved and it was announced that elections to a Constitutional Assembly would be held on July 24, 2011.

In the midst of what was called the Jasmine Revolution which triggered the Arab Spring, UGTT's Commission on Administration under the chairmanship of Brother Abdesslem Jerad issued a statement on January 27, 2011, in which it expressed its views on the socio-political situation in the country.

The statement deplored the ransacking of UGTT offices by RCD mercenaries in several regions and denounced the media houses used by some politicians to blame UGTT for its initiatives during the revolution. It called for the formation of a transition government in consultation with UGTT, which would uphold democracy and the respect for human rights. It further called on all trade unionists to preserve and safeguard all companies and workplaces. UGTT also advocated for legal amendments in order to ban temporary labour agencies and called for permanent employment contracts for all workers recruited through temporary labour agencies. Reforms in the health and education sectors were also demanded by UGTT.

ARREST AND DETENTION OF BASILE MAHAN GAHE, GENERAL SECRETARY OF DIGNITE (Côte d'Ivoire)

ITUC-Africa was informed about the arrest and detention of Brother Basile Mahan Gahé, General Secretary of DIGNITE, one of its affiliates in Côte d'Ivoire, in May.

Following this arrest, the General Secretary wrote to President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire enquiring about Brother Mahe's conditions of detention and requesting a formal communication on the charges brought against the trade union leader.

In his letter, Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah said that official information on the situation of Brother Basile Mahan Gahé should be provided to him in the shortest possible time. In case he is in detention, the charges preferred against him should be communicated to him and he should be given the possibility to choose a lawyer to defend him. In case there are no charges against him, he should be released without delay.

Furthermore, Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah has urged President Alassane Ouattara not to ignore freedom of association in the process of national reconciliation. Since then, ITUC-Africa together with ITUC have petitioned ILO to press for the release of Basile.

COSATU

DENOSA celebrates International Nurses Day (IND)

The Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa, an affiliate of COSATU, joined the world in celebrating International Nurses Day on May 12, 2011.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) in 1974 proclaimed 12 May International Nurses Day (IND). Since then nurses across the globe gather to celebrate IND in commemoration of Florence Nightingale's birth who is known to be the creator of contemporary nursing.

Nurses converge every year on 12 May to reflect on the valuable contributions that they have made to society. IND also seeks to honour the dedication and tireless efforts that nurses bring to the health care community, being the main drivers for service delivery of health care at all levels.

As DENOSA we advocate for patients, it is largely for this reason that we are excited by this year's IND theme "*Closing the Gap: Increasing Access and Equity*".

DENOSA has been encouraged by recent events that have taken place where nurses have been brought together to discuss strategies on how to improve the quality of care given to people. These include the South African Nurses Conference organized by DENOSA and the National Nursing Summit organized by the Department of Health. Both these events have agreed that in line with addressing the conditions of service for nurses, there is a strong need to improve the quality of care and its accessibility.

DENOSA says that they are wary of the persisting challenges that include gross-staff shortages, increasing workload and lack of resources which are making it difficult for nurses to execute their duties. Hence they find it necessary for the Department of Health and all other stakeholders to work together with them to address the challenges facing nurses in dealing with accessibility and equity in service delivery to their communities.

DENOSA continues and will continue to pursue one of its founding principles- that of unifying nurses and ensuring that their voice is heard!

DENOSA acknowledges the increased burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes, TB, cancer and HIV and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. They recognize the need to then equip and empower their nurses with relevant information and skills. They achieve this through the TB and HIV/AIDS training programmes and the DENOSA Professional Institute (DPI) that provides education, training and professional development to nurses.

DPI mainly focuses towards transforming nursing education, leadership development and research productivity amongst nurses in South Africa. DPI also aims to maintain ethical and professional conduct in nursing and provide quality care to society, through its courses and programmes.

BOTSWANA

Public Sector Strike in Botswana

In Botswana, public sector workers have gone on strike since April following the government's refusal to grant them a 16% salary increase. Four weeks after the beginning of the strike, there was no solution in sight to end the deadlock.

Workers are complaining that inflation is running high in the country and that they are finding it difficult to make ends meet. They have already endured a challenging three-year wage freeze. They could not accept the meager 5% salary increase proposed by the government and vowed to continue the strike.

At the Morula Square where workers assemble everyday, the doctors, the nurses and the cleaners are there defying any court orders and any threats of dismissals. The government started to battle it out in the courts. The Industrial Court ruled that essential services workers (which now include even gardeners) had to go back to work. Immediately, the unions appealed the decision, which means the ruling had to be set aside until the appeal is heard and during that period essential services workers could legally participate in the strike. In a strange twist, government lawyers appealed the appeal and asked the court to give them permission to force workers back to work. Ironically, a judge who was appointed to hear the unions' case was from the same law firm that was representing government! Consequently, unions asked for him to be removed but this was rejected.

Workers stated that nobody would go back to work and they would not let government divide them. Their determination grew firm also because the President rejected any dialogue with the unions and allegedly stormed out of a cabinet meeting several days ago where cabinet had recommended a 12% pay rise to end the strike. Later that day the president stated in the state TV channel that workers could strike the next three years and would not get more salary.

Many dismissals might be on the agenda as the strike might lose its legal backing. The public certainly supports the strike. Tribal leaders who were instructed not to hear complaints of workers at their customary assemblies defied instructions and listened to the workers. However, state power makes solidarity action difficult. Police denied permission for workers to march to parliament. They banned a solidarity march planned by all three major opposition parties on a Saturday and even banned routine opposition rallies.

The workers are extraordinarily brave and the union federation BOFEPUSU has done a good job to stand in for workers rights and dignity. We hope that the government will finally grant the striking workers the salary increase that they have demanded to end the negative impact of the strike on the national economy and to promote industrial peace and harmony in the country.

Practise Economic Democracy, says Hyman

In an interesting article published in the Global Labour Column on April 11, 2011, Richard Hyman defends the idea of economic democracy saying that the machinery

of codetermination (i.e. works councils and employee board-level representation) no longer provides an effective mechanism for asserting and defending workers' interests. To address this erosion of effectiveness, 'industrial democracy' must be extended to encompass corporate strategy as a whole: in other words, it must be enlarged into 'economic democracy'.

The global economic crisis has proved again that the existing economic order was historically contingent and founded on a fundamental inequality between workers and employers, affirms Hyman in the article. He also notes that there were two intersecting contradictions of union action across Europe:

- Was the aim to negotiate with those wielding political and economic power for damage limitation, and perhaps a tighter regulatory architecture for *financialised* capitalism; or to lead an oppositional movement for an alternative socio-economic order? The analysis of the crisis is not complicated: neo-liberalism cannot deliver. But the difficulty is that today it is not enough to say that we need to change the balance of forces. That does not tell us how to proceed.

- The second contradiction was between a global economic crisis and trade union action which is essentially national or indeed sub-national in character. The international trade union organisations produced powerful analyses and progressive demands, but their impact on day-to-day trade union practice on the ground was non-existent. Indeed the dominant response has been to defend and enhance competitiveness, intensifying the downward pressure on wages and conditions. Social democracy abandoned the struggle for a new social order in the face of economic adversity, engaging in concession bargaining with multinational capital and the international financial institutions.

Furthermore, Hyman indicates that in the past two years, there has been much discussion of the deficiencies in the existing systems of corporate governance, particularly as the liberalisation of global financial transactions has made 'shareholder value' the overriding corporate goal. However, what is required is democratic control of capital.

Systems of 'codetermination' are institutionalised in much of Europe. These forms of worker representation are provisions enabling workers to insist that companies are not merely the private property of shareholders because employees are themselves 'stakeholders' with a legitimate interest in shaping corporate goals and policies. However, Hyman notes that though formally intact, the machinery of codetermination no longer provides an effective mechanism for defending workers' interests. To address this erosion of effectiveness, 'industrial democracy' must be extended to encompass corporate strategy as a whole. In other words, it must be enlarged into economic democracy. Elements of such a strategy can be found in the ideas developed by Fritz Naphtali for the German trade unions in the 1920s. Socialisation of the economy was an essential goal, but it should be achieved, not necessarily and not exclusively through state ownership but through more diverse forms of popular

control. For example, the establishment of collective employee ownership of part of the profits of corporate success, in the form of shares held in a fund under trade union control should be promoted.

The ultimate question is: 'can economic democracy and capitalism coexist'? Hyman says that the answer is no. To capture hearts and minds, the labour movement has to commence a campaign against global casino capitalism and propose a credible set of alternatives for socially accountable economic life.

IMF and World Bank in Africa – Should Unions Engage or Resist them?

Studies on the impact of IMF conditionalities on employment and wages needed, says Dr Baah

During the Annual New Year School organised by the ITUC-Africa in January 2011, presentations were made on IMF and World Bank programmes in Africa, and the socio-economic situation of African countries after several years of implementation of these programmes was depicted.

In a paper entitled World Bank Report on Africa: Main Issues for African Unions, Dr Anthony Yaw Baah of Ghana TUC informed the school that the World Bank was established in 1944. Its mission has evolved from facilitator of post-war reconstruction and development to the present day mandate of worldwide poverty alleviation, said Dr Baah quoting a World Bank source: "*At today's World Bank, poverty reduction through an inclusive and sustainable globalization remains the overarching goal of our work*". About the IMF, Dr Baah said that it was created in 1945 in response to the Great Depression of the 1930s. IMF was created to oversee the international monetary system – the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries and their citizens to buy goods and services from each other.

Dr Baah explained that the Bank says it provides low-interest loans, interest-free credits and grants to developing countries for a wide array of purposes including investments in education, health, public administration, infrastructure, financial and private sector development. As far as the IMF is concerned, the presenter cautioned that it was not conceived as a development institution. It was created to ensure exchange rate stability and encourage its member countries to eliminate exchange restrictions that hindered trade. It does so in three ways: keeping track of the global economy and the economies of member countries, lending to countries with balance of payments difficulties, and giving practical help to members.

Furthermore, Dr Baah explained that the WB and the IMF loans are tied to conditions and for countries in crisis, IMF loans only provide a small portion of the resources needed to finance their balance of payments. IMF loans also signal that a country's economic policies are on the right track, which reassures investors and the official

financial community, helping countries find additional financing from other sources. This means that without IMF and WB approval, it is difficult for a poor African country to borrow from other sources.

One of the issues which became painful during the implementation of IMF and WB programmes was their excessive emphasis on economic austerity measures, stringent financial discipline, privatisation and liberalisation at the expense of social expenditure and human development initiatives. In some African countries, one third of export earnings is spent on debt servicing and reimbursement. Dr Baah said that this marked a break with the previous decade 1960-1970 when African governments used to invest a lot in infrastructures and social services.

In another paper - *African development initiatives* – presented during the New Year School, Dr Baah recalled the conditions under which African governments knocked at the door of the IMF and WB applying for loans.

“By 1970, many African states had been seriously weakened. There was political instability across Africa. This was a massive beginning of the economic decline in Africa. The situation was worsened by the oil price shock of 1973 which left African countries crushing under huge foreign debt”.

From the 1980s, IMF introduced in Africa structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which recommended massive lay-offs, cuts in education and health budgets, reduction in the budgets of several ministries including ministries of rural development, health, transport, education, etc. As Stiglitz (2002) rightly pointed out “the problem was that many of these policies became ends in themselves, rather than means to more equitable and sustainable growth. In doing so, these policies were pushed too far, too fast, and to the exclusion of other policies that were needed”.

Dr Baah noted that “for the ordinary African masses, structural adjustment brought more unemployment, inflation, low wages, poverty, destitution, misery, inequality, high taxes, poor quality of education and a huge external debt”.

Today, after so many years of adjustment, it is estimated that over half of Africans still live with less than 1 US dollar a day and more than one out of every ten children die before their fifth birthday.

To tackle the social problems that became obvious following the implementation of the SAPs, the IMF and the World Bank came up with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the Assistance Strategy for Africa (ASAF) and many others but these initiatives are yet to change the situation on the ground.

Against this background of poverty and huge external debt, Dr Baah asked whether unions should engage IMF or resist its operations in Africa, given its track record on the continent.

Some Unions have, in the past, been involved in the Article IV Consultations, but has there been any positive change due to the consultations? In his conclusion, Dr Baah indicated that an evaluation would be useful at the country level. Unions can commission studies to assess the impact of IMF conditionalities on employment and wages in Africa as basis for further engagement or resistance.

ITUC-Africa's Statement on the Situation in Libya

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) is deeply concerned about the deepening political crisis in Libya and also worried about the violent attacks on civilians and protesters. Reports reaching us suggest that security agents, pro-government supporters, militias and mercenaries have carried out violent and repressive attacks on street protesters calling for a democratic transition. These ceaseless attacks have led to the death of more than six hundred people and more than one thousand two hundred injured. ITUC-Africa strongly condemns these attacks and calls for an immediate end to these.

ITUC-Africa notes that these attacks increased in pace, scope and severity immediately after an inciting television broadcast in which President Moammar Kadhafi expressed willingness and readiness to “fight till the last blood” rather than accede to the demands of the protesters to commit to legitimate and genuine democratic transition. ITUC-Africa regrets that such tone and words from the Libyan President are not in the interest of peace and peaceful resolution to the present political crisis. Rather, they are inciting, an act of provocation and largely un-conciliatory expression capable of escalating the crisis. It is not surprising therefore to see that pro-government supports have rightly, but unfortunately, interpreted the broadcast as approval for further unleashing of repressive and violent attacks on peaceful and defenceless workers, citizens and protesters.

Similarly, hundreds of migrant and foreign workers, including Libyans are daily fleeing the country to safety. Scores of persons have been internally displaced and many more are hapless as their security cannot be guaranteed. The situation is worse for citizens given that it is presently very cold in the country and region at this time of the year. There is a gradual development of humanitarian crises from these violent reactions to a supposedly peaceful protest. Reports suggest that over three hundred

migrants have fled to Italy, Tunisia and Egypt causing worrying concerns by the governments of these countries.

ITUC-Africa strongly supports the universal rights of Libyans and all people to enjoy the freedoms of peaceful assembly, free speech and the ability to determine their own destiny. These are inalienable rights that are the bulwark of civil liberty and democracy. We call on the Libyan government to respect these rights, including the right to life and protection of safe and property.

ITUC-Africa further demands that persons responsible for these violent attacks should be investigated, identified, prosecuted and sanctioned accordingly. ITUC-Africa also calls on the international community to take immediate actions that will halt the attacks, secure adequate medical attention for the injured and contribute to the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Finally, ITUC-Africa urges the Libyan government to immediately take steps to address the legitimate demands of the population, including through national dialogue.

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ITUC-Africa

EGYPT –

Class Struggle Calling Out from Cairo

By Servais Akpaca

After the Egyptian Revolution which forced President Mubarak to step down, a new era of political and trade union freedom is emerging in the country. Working class consciousness is becoming apparent throughout the world of work in Egypt. The revolutionary energy of the popular uprising is turning to the struggle for bread and dignity at work.

In Cairo, on May 1, some 3,000 doctors spilled out of the Doctors' Union, intensely debating whether to call for a national strike over pay and health funding. The total budget of the Ministry of Health is only 3.5 percent of the government budget.

Muhammad Shafiq is president of the Manshiyet al-Bakri hospital workers' union. "Afterwards at the hospital people were asking how we would take things forward. We decided to set up one trade union for our hospital. Within two weeks we held

elections. We arranged the hospital and the budget. Our manager refused to implement these changes. Hospital managers are small dictators—Mubaraks. So we told him to go and not come back. The union council ran the hospital but there were problems—cheques need to be signed and we have to work with government and local officials. So we elected a manager”.

Health workers are aware that to win changes, they have to take this matter up in every hospital in Egypt.

The trajectory of the workers’ movement is on the rise, although there are legal and other obstacles.

Ali Fattouh is a bus driver and a leading activist. He was summoned for trial at the State Council on 7 May. The case was then postponed until 4 June. His charges are highly symbolic of the continuity between the old regime and the new military rulers.

Ali faces the sack under a charge brought through pre-revolutionary legislation of what we would call “bringing the company into disrepute”. He could also be jailed for incitement to strike under new laws brought in since the revolution (Email messages of support for Ali Fattouh to menasolidarity@gmail.com)

Bus drivers were organising before the revolution – and once Mubarak was gone, they turned networks of activists into an independent union.

Elected committees represent each bus garage. They can make their own decisions about strikes. Members can easily call their officials to account and recall them if necessary. The Egyptian state sees the bus workers as a real threat

The problems related to workers’ organisation in present day Egyptian society do not prevent workers from exercising freedom of association.

The railways have been a tough place to work in Egypt. Rates of pay were grossly unjust and bosses saw training, safety and maintenance as luxuries.

The breakthrough came when workers in one station hung up a banner proclaiming that they were going to organise a new union for their area. They set 4 May as the date for its founding conference. They were inundated with contacts from other train lines and even members of the public. By 1 May, over 50 percent of the workforce had pledged to join the new union. The 4 May conference became the launch of a national organisation.

Teachers are also out demanding an improvement in their working and living conditions.

Resources for education in Egypt are scant. Some 63 percent of schools have class sizes of at least 45, rising to 90 in urban pockets.

One teacher in Giza said that some of his classes held as many as 120. He described his job as more like a prison guard than a teacher. Teachers in their first year earn only around £30 a month. Today, thousands of teachers have formed new

trade unions. The Union for Education Professionals (SEP), the only teaching union recognised before the revolution, is seen by many as closely allied to the Mubarak regime. It has around one million members.

An officer of the newly formed Independent School Teachers Trade Union (ISTTU) said that it has around 40,000 members. Another union, the General Union of Egyptian Teachers (GUET), has also emerged. It is smaller than the ISTTU.

These unions are campaigning for a decent minimum wage, an end to private tuition as a means of subsistence, greater professional development and class sizes of no more than 30.

There is a strong battle in the universities. On 9 May, the “March 9 Movement” for academic freedom will stage campus protests calling for the removal of the rectors of all Egypt’s universities.

To achieve their legitimate demands, Egyptian workers are campaigning for a minimum wage and exploring various organising methods. Some are demanding the implementation of a national minimum wage of 1.200 Egyptian pounds per month.

University lecturers and students are organising a national campaign of strikes to democratise universities by enforcing elections for college heads and deans of faculties.

This gives them greater opportunities to coordinate and build networks that can turn spontaneous protests into organised collective action.

However, the independent unions are largely organised at a workplace level, and do not yet represent mass organisations on a national scale. The forces of the left are also small, despite gains being made through initiatives like the founding of the Democratic Workers Party.

The activists on whom this struggle for bread and dignity depends are vulnerable to repression. Groups of workers are being targeted under the anti-strike laws. International solidarity is needed to help change the labour laws in Egypt in the spirit of ILO Conventions. International solidarity can also help establish structural – horizontal and vertical - links between the burgeoning trade union organisations across professions, sectors and industries at local and national levels.

One serious obstacle is the relatively small weight of organised workers in a political landscape that contains groups such as the Muslim brotherhood.

The Brotherhood held its own workers’ demonstration on May Day. Staged outside the headquarters of the unions, it called for a higher minimum wage and other improvements.

The Muslim Brotherhood was the focus of much of the visible opposition under Mubarak’s regime. Now it is under serious strain. It is cooperating with the military government but its base includes poorer people. Many of these admire the

Brotherhood's sacrifices before the revolution, but—as social issues move centre stage and sharp political questions remain—they want a pro-poor politics now.

Meanwhile the Salafist movement, Islamist activists who stress strict adherence to Islam and focus on how individuals behave, has organised political mobilisations recently.

In the past, the Salafists have criticised the Brotherhood for contesting elections and engaging in mass politics. They have also strongly denounced the left and the unions.

ZIMBABWE

General Secretary's Protest Letter to Police Commissioner General

Against Intimidation and Harassment of Zimbabwean Workers on the Occasion of the Commemoration of International Women's Day

On March 9, 2011, the General Secretary of ITUC-Africa sent a letter to the Zimbabwe Police Commissioner General protesting against the intimidation and harassment of women workers on International Women's Day. The women had planned to march and obtained a permit from the court. Unfortunately, they were prevented by the police.

In the letter, the General Secretary, Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, said that "March 8 is the International Women's Day dedicated to highlighting issues affecting women in relation to equality and justice. However, we note with sadness that while women and workers in various parts of the world commemorated this event in different ways in full freedom, Zimbabwean women and workers were prevented from doing so in the manner they had planned to organize and mark it".

Furthermore, Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah condemned the arrest and detention in Bulawayo of 16 women and trade union activists who were released after legal representation. He urged the police to stop forthwith these tactics of harassment and intimidation and demanded that those who were responsible for the violation of women and workers' rights be made accountable for their action.