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NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

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STATEMENT BY THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the GCTU issued a statement saying that women are playing a significant role in the development of the Newly Independent States. They constitute about half the working population.

Some positive changes have been achieved in solving women's problems in the CIS countries. National plans and programmes to improve the status of women have been adopted and are being implemented. Laws on equal rights and opportunities for men and women have been adopted in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Similar laws are being developed in Russia, Ukraine and Georgia. The CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly is presently considering a relevant model law submitted by the CIS trade unions.

Simultaneously, the GCTU noted that there was still a wide gap between the proclaimed principles and the actual state of affairs. Some of the national plans and programmes are of a de-

clarative character and lack adequate funding. Women are hard hit by the ill-conceived economic reforms. Female unemployment is still high and women's incomes are much lower than men's. The specific requirements for women's health and safety are not always met. In most CIS countries, the minimum wages do not match the subsistence minimum, which increases the number of poor and low-income families, and primarily the families where the mother brings up her children alone. Poverty forces women into informal business, particularly in the sex-services industry (where they often become victims of slave-trade) and drug trafficking. Dire straits compel women to become illegal migrant workers, with all the ensuing consequences. All this not only ruins women's lives, but also creates an unfavourable demographic situation in many CIS countries.

The General Confederation of Trade Unions appealed to all its affiliates to step up their fight against any forms of discrimination against women in the labour market, struggle for equal pay for equal work and genuine gender equality. It is also imperative to promote the development of women's organisations in trade union structures, advance the most active women to leading un-

ion positions, and seek a balanced representation of women and men in higher trade union bodies. In conjunction with women's non-governmental organisations trade unions were called upon to enhance the political role and social status of women, and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the sphere of labour.

GCTU AND ICFTU LEADERS MEET IN MOSCOW

An official meeting of the GCTU leaders with a delegation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions led by its General Secretary Guy Ryder took place 2 March 2005 in the Palace of Labour in Moscow.

The discussions included, *inter alia*, the possibilities to promote GCTU-ICFTU co-operation in the area of defending trade union rights and workers' interests in NIS countries. The parties informed each other of the activities carried out and today's objectives pursued by their respective organisations. An extensive exchange of opinions also took place on the current situation in the international trade union movement, particularly, in the wake of the decision by the ICFTU 18th World Congress to create a new trade union international based on the ICFTU and WCL. The evaluations and stands of both sides with regard to the burning issues facing the world trade union community today were found to be similar.

The GCTU was represented by its President Mikhail Shmakov, Vice-President Viktor Karnyushin, General Secretary Vladimir Scherbakov, Deputy General Secretary Albert Potapov, and the Head of the GCTU International Department, Valery Kravtsov.

The ICFTU delegation comprised, apart from Guy Ryder, the Acting Head of the

ICFTU Coordinating Unit for Central and Eastern Europe, Huber Cambier, the Director of the ICFTU Moscow Office, Vadim Borisov, and the Representative of the IMF Project Office for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Svetla Shekerdjieva, who is presently the Coordinator of the Global Union Federations' representations in the CIS countries.

ARMENIA: ILO ASSISTANCE EXPANDS

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia met with the Armenian delegation led by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, A.Vartanyan, during the 7th European Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organisation held from 14-18 February 2005 in Budapest, Hungary.

The minister informed that it was for the first time that the Republic took part in a European Regional Meeting of the ILO. In 2004, Armenia ratified nine labour conventions, and 15 more conventions are expected to be soon ratified. Armenia intends to accede to all eight ILO fundamental conventions relating to human rights in the near future.

Mr. Vartanian stressed the importance of the "Technical Cooperation Programme for 2004-2005" signed by the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Employers' Union, the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia and the International Labour Organisation.

The Parties touched upon some specific issues that Armenia hopes to resolve with ILO assistance. In particular, the issues included the reform of Armenia's pension system, the activity of the State Labour Inspection Service, as well as the implementation of the ratified ILO conventions.

Juan Somavia confirmed the ILO's intention to provide assistance to Armenia in all these domains.

BELARUS: TRADE UNIONS CRITICAL OF THEIR PARTNERS

The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, FTUB, reviewed the progress in fulfilling the General Agreement for 2004-2005.

During the discussions, it was noted that the employers did not fully meet their obligations stipulated in collective agreements and accords with regard to transferring membership dues to the accounts of trade union organizations. The agreement on providing the trade unions with free premises (with exemption from paying for communal services) as well as equipment, transport and communications facilities is not implemented in full either.

Not all the employers have raised wage rates for workers at least by 30% and provided extra leaves when switching them over to the contract system of employment, as required by the General Agreement. The Government does not always respect the General Agreement provision stipulating compulsory consultations with the FTUB when elaborating draft acts on standards affecting citizens' labour and socio-economic rights. Apart from that, the FTUB believes that the employers and authorities exert insufficient efforts to create safe working conditions, which is reflected in the growth of occupational injuries in the country.

BELARUS: FTUB RANKS GROW

Starting from October 2004, the FTUB focused on the protection of workers employed at non-unionised enterprises

According to the FTUB, 185 new grass-root trade union organisations have been set up as of 1 March 2005, thereby expanding the FTUB ranks by 9190 members. The Republican and regional trade union federations are working to establish unions at small and medium businesses. Particular emphasis is made on enterprises located in free export zones.

GEORGIA: TRADE UNIONS RESIST MASS LAY-OFFS

The social situation in Georgia is aggravated by mass lay-offs resulting from the processes of accelerated privatisation, reorganisation and liquidation of enterprises, establishments and organisations. The negotiations of the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation, GTUA, with the authorities aimed at settling and mitigating social problems for workers have yielded no results. The GTUA Board has decided to stage protest actions.

Warning protest actions that gathered several thousand people were held 2 February in Tbilisi and Batumi. Addressing a rally in Tbilisi, GTUA President Irakli Tugushi said that the country's authorities did not only ignore violations of laws in the course of the liquidation and reorganisation of enterprises but directly connived at such violations. To this end, the Georgian Parliament has introduced discriminating amendments in the Labour Code. The procedure for dismissing workers on the initiative of the employer has been considerably facilitated, and the severance pay has been suspended until 1 January 2006. The period of advance dismissal notices has been reduced from two months down to one month, redundant workers are not offered any employment guarantees and are turned

into the street without any prospects for getting a job.

The rally participants have warned the authorities that the actions will acquire a permanent nature unless the trade union demands are taken into account. The participants adopted an Appeal to the President, the Parliament and the Georgian Government demanding to cancel the amendments in the Labour Code and ensure participation by workers' collectives and trade unions in the privatisation process.

GEORGIA: TRADE UNIONS UNDER PRESSURE

The GTUA Executive has adopted a Statement underlining that during the past year the Government had tried to put pressure on the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation by resorting to groundless allegations and repressions and demanding that the trade union property be placed at its disposal. The Georgian Government is worried about the activities of the newly elected young trade union leaders and the protest actions that they organise to highlight workers' legitimate claims. Thus, the General Prosecutor's Office detained a GTUA Deputy President, Lasha Chichinadze, 19 February 2005 on a contrived charge of fraud and financial manipulations. During a search in his apartment, the authorities seized the GTUA's application to court defending its right to trade union property, and a list of facilities owned by the trade unions. This action is a gross provocation aimed at intimidating trade union leaders, the Statement says.

The trade union property is protected by the Constitution and the Georgian Law "On Trade Unions", the Statement points out. The Executive has de-

manded an end to blackmail and unconstitutional actions against the trade union centre and its leaders.

GCTU STATEMENT ON EVENTS IN GEORGIA

The General Confederation of Trade unions voiced a strong protest 21 February 2005 following the attempts to deprive the trade unions of their legitimate property and the arrest of Lasha Chichinadze. The GCTU stressed that the actions by the Georgian authorities grossly violated the universally accepted international laws and the trade union rights protected by the Constitution. The Confederation demanded that the trade union leader be freed and that all the problems involving the relations between the authorities and the trade unions be resolved on a strictly legal basis.

GEORGIA: GTUA COUNCIL'S DECISION

At its extraordinary meeting held 25 February 2005, the Council of the Georgian Trade Union Amalgamation decided to hand over voluntarily 90 per cent of its property to the State. As was noted by GTUA President Irakli Tugushi, the State will receive 51 trade union facilities, including rest homes, sanatoria, hotels and holiday hotels located in various national resort areas.

KAZAKHSTAN: TRADE UNION STRUGGLE YIELDS RESULTS

The Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan, FTURK, appraised positively President Nazarbaev's decree concerning amendments and additions to the law "On Labour in the Republic of Kazakhstan".

The event was preceded by a four-year struggle waged by the trade unions to eliminate discrimination of employees. The standards that enabled the employers to arbitrarily impose the so called short-term contracts upon workers thereby depriving them of all social guarantees have been cancelled. Now, individual labour contracts for up to one year can be concluded only in case of a short-term nature of work or conditions of its fulfilment, or a temporary substitution for a missing worker. From now onwards, the employer is not allowed to stop the functioning of an organisation (announce a lock-out) and dismiss workers for their participation in a strike that has been found by the court to be illegal. The rights and guarantees for working women and young people as well as trade union rights have been broadened. The employer can no longer change the working conditions or dismiss union members in some cases without a prior agreement by the trade union committee.

KAZAKHSTAN: TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT SIGNED

A General Agreement for 2005-2006 was signed 19 January 2005. The trade unions, the Government and the employers have undertaken to pursue a policy aimed at raising the population's level of income. The Republican Tripartite Commission will consider establishing the subsistence minimum as the basic social indicator. The Agreement includes provisions whereby the size of the subsistence minimum will be calculated on the basis of 43 foodstuff items instead of 20. The share of the minimal food basket in the subsistence minimum structure has been set at 60 per cent while the share of non-food products and services has been increased up to 40 per cent. The Government must start using the basic so-

cial indicator of the subsistence minimum in calculating pensions and fringe benefits in 2006.

It is envisaged to establish the minimum size of the monthly wage not lower than the subsistence minimum and to ensure a step-by step increase of teachers' and doctors' salaries in 2005-2006. The Republican employers' associations have undertaken to settle the arrears in wages and pension contributions.

KAZAKHSTAN: LABOUR CONFLICT IN COAL INDUSTRY

In his letter of 4 March 2005 to the General Director of the "Mittal Steel Temirtau" company, the FTURK leader, Siyazbek Mukashev, expressed his concern over the social tension in the company's labour collectives, particularly at coal mines. He called upon the company management to start negotiations with the representatives of the trade union of the company's coal department.

The coal miners' conference held at the end of January 2005 put forward serious claims to the company management in view of its refusal to negotiate a new General Agreement, the planned closure of a number of coal mines and impending unemployment threat, and extremely low pay.

The administration has defiantly ignored the trade union opinion. The company's owner, Indian national Lakshmi Mittal, who lives in London, has managed to prevent picketing using his relations with the city authorities in Temirtau.

Siyazbek Mukashev's letter warns that in case the company refuses to negotiate the Federation will stage an all-Republican action of solidarity with coal

miners and appeal to courts and international organisations for support in defending their lawful rights.

KYRGYZ AND AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS ESTABLISH CO-OPERATION

The Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions, KFTU, and the Centre of Labour Solidarity of the American Federation of Labour – Congress of Industrial Organizations, AFL-CIO, have signed an agreement of co-operation in the field of labour rights protection. They will co-operate in promoting an active policy in productive employment, combating unemployment, managing the labour market and improving the activity of trade union structures.

KYRGYZSTAN: ON THE WAY TO CONGRESS

The 8th Plenum of the Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions, KFTU, was held 18 January 2005. The Federation's President Sagyn Bozgunbayev presented an analysis of trade union activities for the past year and outlined the major tasks to be undertaken by trade union bodies during the election campaign.

Collective agreements have been concluded at 80% of the unionised enterprises. The majority of the agreements include fringe benefits that are not stipulated by the legislation: pay rises, provision of interest-free loans to workers for housing construction, payments for forced leaves, etc.

The Labour Code has been adopted with an active participation of the trade unions. It stipulates for the protection of employees in case of the enterprise bankruptcy, and sets the minimum

wage at a level not lower than the subsistence minimum.

At the same time, Sagyn Bozgunbayev noted that the contradictions between labour and capital continued to intensify. Individual state structures as well as employers are trying to introduce some amendments in the current legislation that would undermine workers' economic rights.

Despite the positive shifts in the country's economy the gap in wages and incomes is ever growing. The average income of 10 percent of prosperous citizens exceeds that of low-income people by 21 times. The number of the unemployed has increased by almost 2.9 percent. Due to lack of jobs, the number of people that have left abroad amounts to approximately 25-30 percent of the able-bodied population. The wage arrears constitute 440.2 soms (US\$ 10.8 mln).

The 20th Congress of the Kyrgyzstan trade unions is planned for September 2005. Simultaneously, the 100th Anniversary of the emergence of the first trade union organisations in Kyrgyzstan will also be marked.

The KFTU leader emphasised that the election campaign should be used to put forward trade unions' legitimate demands and work out concrete stands on socio-economic issues in the workers' interests. Sagyn Bozgunbayev particularly noted attempts by the employers to put the trade union committees' activity under their control or even eliminate grass-route trade union organisations wherever they can.

KYRGYZSTAN: KFTU SUPPORTS POPULAR CONFIDENCE POWER

The KFTU Council has pointed out that it had earlier urged all the parties in the

political conflict that evolved following the parliamentary elections to immediately start a dialogue and settle the differences in a civilised and peaceful way without resorting to force.

However, the authorities did not respond to this appeal at that time and the people has materialised its will by removing from State power those who have lost its confidence.

The Council has declared its full support for the new power of popular confidence. Being interested in maintaining stability in the country, it has called upon trade union members and all the compatriots to preserve order and self-control as well as contribute to the realisation of the most cherished hopes of Kyrgyzstan's citizens. It has also urged trade union bodies of different levels to establish constructive co-operation with the newly formed state authorities.

MOLDOVA: NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE INFORMAL SECTOR

The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Moldova, CSRM, has launched a nation-wide campaign under the slogan "Legal Labour –to You and the Nation". Measures will be worked out jointly with the social partners to reduce the share of the informal sector and overcome its negative impact on the national economy in general.

The CSRM plans to channel its efforts in three directions: a) enhancing the level of awareness, b) improving organisational work, and c) developing social dialogue. A national information centre is going to be set up for workers employed in the informal sector. It is intended to distribute publications and audio- and video-materials of educa-

tional nature on a wide scale as well as organise various events.

In February 2005, the CSRM-affiliated Federation of Trade Unions of Workers in Small and Medium Entrepreneurship and the Association of Small Business of Moldova held a joint "round table" to discuss the issues of protecting the rights of workers and employers in the informal sector. The conference noted that the State did not create favourable conditions for developing small business in Moldova. The artificial barriers and high taxes compel the employers to operate in the informal sector environment.

MOLDOVA: CSRM TO CONVENE ORDINARY CONGRESS

At its meeting held in March 2005, the CSRM Executive decided to convene the 4th ordinary congress of the Confederation 27 October 2005. The plan of preparations for the congress has been approved.

MOLDOVA: ILO DEMANDS

The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has published a report on the violations of trade union rights in Moldova. The report points out to numerous facts of interference by authorities and the employers in trade unions' affairs, specifically, pressure on union members to make them transfer from one trade union to another. In particular, the National Federation of Trade Unions of Agricultural and Food Workers "Agrosindind" has been exposed to such external pressure for quite a long time. The ILO Committee has underlined that the Moldavian Government will have to submit explanations to the ILO regarding the criminal proceedings initiated against the Federation two

years ago. Apart from that, an independent enquiry will have to be carried out to look into facts of forced withdrawal from the "Agrosindind" membership of trade union organisations at some of the industry's enterprises. The Committee has demanded that the Moldavian Government take measures to stop exerting pressure on trade union activists and ensure for trade union representatives free access to the enterprises.

RUSSIA: FNPR ATTACKS GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL POLICY

Following the protest actions held in January in various regions of Russia after the adoption of Federal Law No. 122 relating to the substitution of monetary compensations for fringe benefits (the so called monetisation of fringe benefits), the FNPR made a statement. In particular, the statement emphasises that during the preparation and preliminary review of the draft law the trade unions repeatedly warned the authorities about the crudity and hastiness of the Law's adoption. The wide scale of citizens' protest actions has confirmed the Federation's concern. In many regions, the size of the monetary payments has turned out to be insufficient and inadequate to the fringe benefits being replaced. This has seriously infringed people's rights and undermined their social protection. No social conflicts have occurred in the areas where the transition to the new system has been carefully thought out and well-placed (Moscow, Murmansk, Volgograd, etc.).

The FNPR has pointed out that it is imperative to resume discussions on the practical implementation of the new law in regional tripartite commissions as well as amend the federal and regional legislations, if appropriate.

Should the negotiation process yield no result, the FNPR reserves the right to resort to protest actions and other forms of pressure on the legislative and executive authorities.

At its meeting held 9 February 2005, the FNPR Executive discussed the trade unions' tactics and demands of a pay rise in view of the critical change in the structure of workers' and their families' expenses, increase in the cost of goods and services and the consequences involved in implementing Law No. 122.

The FNPR submitted 21 February 2005 its comments on the draft Medium-Term Programme for Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation (2005-2008). The Federation's comments note that the Programme lacks any sound policy regarding the monetary income of the population. There are no social indicators determining the target levels of human resource development and quality of life growth that the Government intends to achieve by 2008. The Programme actually indicates that the Government has abandoned its obligations to elaborate a single social policy and provide common social guarantees throughout the country's territory, which runs contrary to the Constitution. At its meeting held 25 February 2005, the Russian Tripartite Commission rejected the draft and sent it for follow-on revision.

RUSSIA: MIKHAIL SHMAKOV'S PRESS CONFERENCE

FNPR leader Mikhail Schmakov addressed 3 March 2005 the editors-in-chief of trade union mass media and outlined the Federation's priority lines of activity. They include struggle for higher pay and bringing the minimum wage rate up to the subsistence mini-

mum level, cancelling the “single social tax”, and other objectives.

Mikhail Shmakov emphasised that the FNPR was inquiring its affiliates’ opinion regarding the possibility of staging an all-Russia protest action in connection with the consequences brought about by the law on the monetisation of fringe benefits and the increased rates for communal services. About 50% of the organisations are in favour of putting forth urgent trade union claims during the traditional 1st of May rallies. A number of regions are holding their own protest actions.

Mikhail Shmakov outlined the FNPR’s stand concerning the issue of the housing and public utilities reform. On the one hand, the provider of any services in the market environment should be paid in full since it has a direct impact on the range and quality of services offered and on the wages of workers employed in this particular sector. On the other hand, compensation arrangements should be made for low-paid categories of the population and those who are entitled to privileges, so that the payments for communal services do not exceed 22% of the total family income, as is required by law.

Referring to delays in wage payments in the country, Mikhail Shmakov noted that according to the information provided by industrial trade unions there are practically no debts at enterprises where trade union organisations exist. Today, the total sum of such debts in the country constitutes approximately 19 billion roubles (US\$ 667 mln). Of special concern are delays exceeding three weeks. As regards hunger strikes, Mikhail Shmakov spoke against this form of protest since it inflicts great damage to the workers themselves rather than to the employer. An industrial action is more effective but trade

unions are reluctant to use it. One of the reasons is inability to organise a strike in full compliance with law.

Answering a question on the prospects of social partnership development in Russia, Mikhail Shmakov stressed that in the basic link, i.e. at enterprises, it was progressing in the positive direction. More and more trade union committees succeed in bargaining full-fledged collective agreements. The majority of regional tripartite commissions are demonstrating productive work. However, the state of social partnership at the highest level gives rise to concern. The current cabinet is not inclined to regard the opinion of trade unions and employers.

The FNPR President noted that the Federation is presently affiliating over 50% of the economically active population of the country. However, the growth of the trade union membership is progressing with extreme difficulty. The new owners and managers put up sophisticated resistance to the trade unions.

RUSSIA: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO PALACES OF LABOUR?

Addressing a meeting of the Government 17 March 2005, FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov reported that in a number of cities the trade unions were accommodated in Palaces of Labour. These buildings were subsequently recognized as federal cultural monuments and the government began demanding from the trade unions an unacceptably high rent for them.

Mikhail Shmakov appealed to the authorities to take measures that would enable the trade unions to continue using the buildings they had been occupying for over 70 years. He emphasised that “as far back as 1925 the

Council of People's Commissars handed over these buildings to the trade unions in perpetual tenure".

TAJKISTAN: TRADE UNION OBJECTIVES

The General Council of the Tajikistan Federation of Trade Unions, TFTU, met in January 2005 to review the results of the Federation's activities in 2004. The trade unions focused their attention on the struggle against unemployment as well as issues of labour migration and raising the workers' living standard, while co-operating closely with the state authorities and international organisations.

TFTU President Murodali Salikhov pointed out that much remained to be done to eliminate wage arrears, and the trade unions need to take a firm stand in reinforcing control over the compliance with the occupational safety standards at enterprises.

An important place in the intra-union activity will be devoted to the work with the youth, enhancing the role of grass-root organisations, and addressing the issue of union membership motivation.

The General Council adopted a document reflecting the Federation's platform during the forthcoming elections to the Parliament and local authorities.

The trade union election campaign will be launched in the first quarter of 2005 and will culminate in the 18th Congress of Tajikistan Trade Unions in May 2006.

UKRAINE: NEW ENVIRONMENT FOR TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

The Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine, FTUU, met 21 Janu-

ary 2005 to outline trade union objectives in the new social and political situation.

The Council approved an Appeal to Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko highlighting the participation of the trade unions in building civil society and addressing socio-economic problems in the new environment. The Council adopted a statement "On the State Budgetary Policy in 2005" touching upon the social dimension of the reform policy, the issue of ensuring the transparency of public finances, and funding budgetary sector organisations.

The Council relieved Olexander Stoyan of the FTUU President's duties following his request and elected a new FTUU President, Alexander Yurkin, who had been President of the Ukrainian Atomic Energy Workers' Union as well as President of the Interstate Federation of Atomic Energy Workers' Unions which is an affiliate of the GCTU.

The Appeal to Viktor Yushchenko underlined that the President's plan of action "Ten Steps towards People" largely coincided with the FTUU Programme of Actions adopted by the Federation's 4th Congress. This creates a good basis for constructive co-operation between the trade unions and the authorities.

The FTUU Council suggested that the reform of the compulsory state social insurance system and pension system be completed while respecting the principles of equality of citizens' rights and social justice. According to the FTUU, it is also essential to switch over to managing these systems on a parity basis with the participation of employers' and workers' representatives and with the control functions being assigned to the State. The Council also proposed to fix in the Ukrainian legislative acts the right

of workers and trade unions to take part in enterprise management, privatisation, bankruptcy procedure, etc., and enhance the status of the National Social Partnership Council as well as its regional and sectoral bodies. It is important to adopt new regulatory acts (primarily, the Labour Code) that would ensure the implementation of citizens' socio-economic rights.

The Council also emphasised that the budget review planned by the new State authorities should envisage securing citizens' constitutional guarantees that require the establishment of the minimum wage, old-age pension and welfare benefits at a level not lower than the subsistence minimum.

UKRAINE: FTUU LEADER'S INTERVIEW

In his interview to mass media, the new FTUU President, Alexander Yurkin, highlighted the necessity to consolidate the efforts by the authorities, the employers and the trade unions to implement the citizens' constitutional right to safe work and remuneration not lower than that in the "best neighbouring countries".

The FTUU will work to make the Parliament fundamentally change its approaches to determining the subsistence minimum by including expenses for purchasing (renting) housing, health promotion, education and income tax payments.

The FTUU President expressed his conviction that the trade union claims for securing citizens' constitutional guarantees would be met before the end of this year. The new Government has changed the philosophy of its approaches to resolving human problems and has recognised that it is "the State that exists for people" rather than peo-

ple exist for the State, noted Alexander Yurkin. The trade unions are satisfied with the fact that of the new Government's plans stipulate the creation of appropriate economic and legal conditions for raising the population's income, enhancing its economic involvement and reducing its stratification based on the income level. In addressing these issues, the FTUU will not only support the Government but actively participate in realising these objectives by its own, trade union means.

"We suggest that the employers and the authorities stop their "market demagoguery" and embark on the road leading to tangible and equal social partnership where the parties' interests are realised on a balanced basis", stressed Alexander Yurkin. He expressed firm belief that the Ukrainian trade union movement might and would become an important component of modern democracy.

UKRAINE: MINERS' DEMANDS

The Central Committee of the FTUU affiliated Ukrainian Coal Miners' Union demanded 11 March 2005 from the Government, the Ministry for Fuel and Energy and the company "Ugol Ukrainy" to pay full remuneration to the industry's workers. The situation with current wage payments in the coal industry has again aggravated for the last three months. Apart from that, work remuneration at the majority of the industry's enterprises drastically lags behind the wage rates envisaged by the current legislation and the General and Sectoral Agreements. This situation has already triggered wild-cat protests at a number of coal mines.

The trade union proposed to urgently resume the activity of the ad-hoc Coordinating Council for settling crisis situations at coal mining enterprises.

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GCTU INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT AND
GCTU PUBLIC RELATIONS CENTRE

42 LENINSKY PROSPEKT
119119 MOSCOW, RUSSIA
TELEFAX +7(095) 938-2155
PHONE +7(095)952-2782
+7(095)938-8649
Web site: www.vkp.ru;
E-mail: inter@vkp.ru

THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, GCTU, IS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATION THAT WAS FOUNDED AT ITS FIRST CONGRESS ON 16 APRIL 1992.

ITS CONSTITUTION, WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE FIRST CONGRESS, WAS AMENDED AND SUPPLEMENTED BY THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 22 SEPTEMBER 1993, THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 18 SEPTEMBER 1997, AND THE FIFTH (EXTRAORDINARY) CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 26 MARCH 2004.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GCTU ARE:

- CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' ACTIVITIES ON THE PROTECTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS OF WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PENSIONERS;*
- ASSISTANCE IN THEIR PROTECTION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES;*
- AND*
- ORGANISING TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY AND CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.*

THE GCTU BUILDS ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITH FULL RESPECT FOR ITS AFFILIATES' COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND THE EQUALITY OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

THE GCTU AFFILIATES NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRES OF ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN, AND UKRAINE, AS WELL AS 32 BRANCH TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS.

THE GCTU IS READY TO CO-OPERATE WITH ANY OTHER NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR BEING MEMBERS OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEIR PARTICIPATION IN GCTU ACTIVITIES DOES NOT IN ANY WAY RESTRICT THE INDEPENDENCE OF ITS AFFILIATES.

THE CONFEDERATION ENJOYS OBSERVER STATUS WITH THE CIS INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, THE CIS INTERSTATE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, ETC.

INTERNATIONALLY, IT IS IN CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE ILO , UN DPI AND ECOSOC.

THE GCTU SUPREME BODIES ARE THE CONGRESS, CONVENED ONCE EVERY FIVE YEARS, AND, IN THE INTERVALS BETWEEN THE CONGRESSES, THE COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IS EXERCISED BY THE GCTU AUDITING COMMISSION.

*PRESIDENT OF THE GCTU IS MIKHAIL SHMAKOV,
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GCTU IS VLADIMIR SCHERBAKOV*

DEAR READERS

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