



**CES (ETUC) - CONFEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES SYNDICATS**  
**CISL (ICFTU) - CONFEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES SYNDICATS LIBRES**  
**CMT (WCL) - CONFEDERATION MONDIALE DE TRAVAIL**

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# **Trade Union Activities**

## **Porto Alegre, 24th to 31st January 2005**

- ✓ **WSF International Council, 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005**
- ✓ **4<sup>th</sup> Trade Union Forum, 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January**
- ✓ **5<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum, 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January**

**Porto Alegre, Brazil**  
**January 2005**

### **a) WSF International Council, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

- ✘ The WSF International Council has around one hundred members representing networks, social movements and other civil society and grass roots organizations. On behalf of the international trade union movement, Juan Moreno (ETUC), José Olivio and Ivonne O'Callaghan (ICFTU), Eduardo Estevez and Isabelle Hoferlin (WCL) attended the meeting along with some national trade union organizations like CUT (Brasil), CAT (Brasil), CLC (Canada), COSATU (South Africa) and KCTU (Korea).
- ✘ The main agenda points were the evaluation of the methodology and preparation of the World Social Forum in 2005 and the continuity and expansion of the WSF process in 2006 and 2007.
- ✘ The debates reflected once more the tensions in a coordination body with broad participation, including organizations with different strategies and expectations around the WSF future. Despite its increased representation in the Council, the more radical organizations now try to reduce the IC strength due to the existence of another well articulated block of organizations aligned with the original WSF group, which includes the Brazilian organizing committee and many organizations committed with the Charter of Principles, always defending a more open, peaceful and democratic approach. So, behind the pretext of the need for expansion of the WSF process there's a clear intent to reduce the influence and strength of the IC and of the Brazilian organizing committee.
- ✘ In the same sense goes the strong presence of these groups in the Social Movements Assembly that meets during the WSF (the same happens during the European Regional Version of WSF, the European Social Forum – ESF), when a mobilization agenda and many proposals are approved, normally covered by the media as if they were WSF resolutions.
- ✘ The decentralization may be considered a positive aspect, if one sees it as the consolidation of the many thematic and continental initiatives, but it can also dilute and harm the image built around the original Porto Alegre idea. Davos was defined by the World Economic Forum as its siege and permanent identification mark. In the same way, Porto Alegre should be a mark and place of reference for the WSF, allowing some eventual displacement.
- ✘ The current Brazilian political situation does not help in keeping the WSF in Porto Alegre. The Workers Party (PT) now holding the power at country level faces some internal divisions and is not governing any more the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the city of Porto Alegre, but the new authorities issued many declarations supporting the city as a permanent place for the World Social Forum. During the IC meeting, Roberto Savio, from IPS proposed Porto Alegre as siege for WSF 2008 with support of the Trade Unions and many CSO organizations but the lack of consensus postponed the discussion, under the argument that it was too early to discuss 2008.
- ✘ A previous decision defined already the 2007 version to happen in the African Continent and this IC decided to realize a decentralized edition in 2006, around the same days of the Davos WEF. The final decision on how many and which activities will be part of the 2006 version will be taken in the next IC meeting, to be held in Nederland, from March 29<sup>th</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup>

- ✘ The original proposal suggested the decentralization to be the simultaneous edition of Continental Social Forums in Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa, but many of those had already defined another date. The organizing committees of both the European and Mediterranean edition didn't accept to change dates to January. By the other hand, the organizers of the Americas Continental edition of WSF decided to comply with the WSF dates and do it in Caracas, and claimed in the IC meeting that there should be no other in the American Hemisphere. There was no agreement on that. To postpone the final decision to the next IC meeting was the solution accepted by those firmly against the ASF proposal, which were afraid of the repercussion of such announcement as an evidence of the WSF changing Brazil and Lula for Venezuela and Chavez.
- ✘ This dispute, actually more around form than content, will be settled in Nederland but it's already defined to do the Americas Social Forum in Caracas, despite the internal and external controversies provoked by the Chavism.
- ✘ In a meeting with President Lula, some members of the IC presented questions accusing Lula of treason to the WSF ideals and submission to Davos', which were answered by the Brazilian President saying that it was his obligation to discuss with governments and multilateral organizations even when their visions were quite different, in order to make the case for the need of urgent solution for problems like external debt, poverty and hunger, and that he would not apologize for going to Davos and debate there the same questions as he usually does in Porto Alegre.
- ✘ Despite the fact that it is not possible nor necessary to change numerically the correlation within the IC, due to the many contradictions and decision making based on consensus, it would be convenient to improve the participation of the international trade union movement, besides ETUC, ICFTU, ORIT and WCL, inviting other regional trade union organizations and Global Unions Federations to be more involved with the IC, considering the many regional and thematic aspects of its agenda.

#### **b) 4<sup>th</sup> Trade Union Forum, from 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> January**

- ✘ Adopting the Future of the International Trade Union Movement as main theme, the fourth version of the Trade Union Forum, a joint realization of ETUC/ICFTU/WCL plus ORIT and CLAT, gathered around 800 trade unionists from all over the world in the afternoon of January 25<sup>th</sup> and morning of the following day, as an external activity held before the opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum.
- ✘ Starting with the welcome addresses of the general secretaries of the Brazilian affiliates of ICFTU (CUT, FS and CGT) and WCL (CAT), after the keynote interventions of Guy Ryder (ICFTU), Willy Thys (WCL), Maria-Helena André (ETUC), Víctor Baez (ORIT) and Julio Roberto Gómez (CLAT), a broad debate was developed around the main theme, convened by Emilio Gabaglio, in which many brothers and sisters took the floor debating the construction of a new unified International Trade Union Confederation.
- ✘ Many speakers were delegates representing trade unions without international affiliation, some speakers had already debated the issue within their organizations

and others announced that an internal debate would follow the discussion in the Forum.

- ✘ The majority of the interventions welcomed the decision taken by both ICFTU and WCL to build the new organization as well as the decision to dedicate this edition of the TU Forum to this debate, which was openly discussed by the first time after the WCL decision last October in Morocco and of the ICFTU Congress in Miyazaki last December.
- ✘ With a positive attitude, many suggestions were made aiming the success of the unification process, referring to the role of the new organization and the participation in the congress, pointing out the need for a participatory process, equality among all the members of the future organization and so on. Both Guy Ryder and Willy Thys gave answers to those questions stating that instead of a simple merge between ICFTU and WCL, the process was designed to build a new organization including the affiliates of both organizations and all democratic and independent trade union organizations willing to be a part and to play a key role in this process.
- ✘ Actually in the following days ICFTU and WCL organized some meeting and contacts in Porto Alegre having the participation in the unification process as subject.

### c) 5<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum, from 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January

- ✘ The fifth edition of the World Social Forum registered the participation of around 150 thousand people and 6588 organizations from 135 countries in 2500 activities. Many conferences, seminars and workshops were organized by trade union organizations and NGOs linked with the trade union movement and themes.
- ✘ Despite the lack of coordination among the different activities, that would be desirable to avoid superposition and double effort, the realization of the activities in the same place facilitated the participation in the many events of interest.
- ✘ One important event was the launching of the Global Call for Action against Poverty, when President Lula and five representatives of international CSO addressed a public of around 15000, being Guy Ryder one of those, speaking on behalf of ICFTU, WCL and Global Unions.
- ✘ We must register the improved participation of trade unionists during the opening march of the WSF, in the afternoon of January 26<sup>th</sup> and in the March for Employment, January 29<sup>th</sup>, organized by the International Federation of Metalworkers and its Brazilian affiliates, CNM-CUT and CNTM-FS, with support of ETUC/ICFTU/WCL and other trade union organizations.
- ✘ The **Conference on the Social Dimension of Globalization** was the central activity of the ETUC/ICFTU/WCL within the WSF, this year co-organized with SOLIDAR, Social Alert and the Global Progressive Forum and with the support of ILO, involving ACTRAV and Cabinet.
- ✘ Besides the opening of the Conference with keynote speakers introducing the report of the World Commission on SDG, the different aspects of the report were discussed in 9 workshops. Despite the little space for the workshops that were held

in tents with capacity of around 100 people, the average participation was high and regular, despite the bad conditions of the tents, specially in terms of ventilation and high temperature. The global evaluation is positive, either in terms of the quality of the interventions and the number of trade unionists participating, as well as representatives of friend NGOs and political personalities, like Giuliano Amato, Elio Di Rupo and Antonio Guterres among others.

- ✘ The conference was better organized than our initiatives in Mumbai and Porto Alegre, the previous years. To do all workshops in the same venue, in a space reserved to all trade union related activities (terrain 6-sovereign economies), contributed to improve the participation. One point for future reflections should be the fact that the audience was basically trade unionists, despite the participation of NGOs and other organizations. It was regrettable the coincidence of the event with Lula and the opening of our conference, but the public participation was good enough.
- ✘ Even when not centred in the predefined themes the contents of the interventions in the workshops were quite good, offering enough subjects for our future reflections. A report will be issued for each workshop. It's work in progress to be delivered after the organizers receive them from the rapporteurs.
- ✘ Some proposals for action were formulated and will be discussed in the follow-up process. A final declaration issued by the organizers is opened to adhesion and will be published in the web site of each organization.