

**Global Unions Forum**  
**«Towards social justice: applying labour standards to precarious work»**  
**ILO - 3 October 2008**

Welcome you on behalf of the Secretariat of the Workers' Group to this forum on precarious work.

Precarious work has been identified by several GUFs and ITUC as a major obstacle to achieve decent employment. It is a growing phenomenon that is spreading across different sectors. You will hear presentations from my colleagues showing how precarious work whether we talk about contract and agency work, temporary or casual labour precludes workers from joining a union and bargain collectively on their terms and conditions of employment.

Precarious work is also about low-paid and insecure jobs and poor working conditions that often perpetuate poverty and social exclusion. We are talking here about millions of workers who are excluded from the protection of labour standards and social protection.

The reason we are here this afternoon is that we believe the ILO has the instruments to address precarious work and we would like to engage with you on how best to do this.

Much of what the ILO will be focusing on in the next years will have to do with the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization that was adopted last June.

The Declaration has several provisions relevant for our discussion today. Let me mention some of them.

The Declaration recalls that freedom of association and collective bargaining need to be effectively recognized in order to realize decent work.

It recalls the importance of the employment relationship as a means of providing legal protections to workers

It recognizes the role of standards as a useful means of achieving the constitutional objectives of the ILO.

It recognizes the need to develop policies in regard to wages and earnings, hours and other conditions of work, designed to ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all and a minimum living wage to all employed and in need of such protection

And it recalls the importance of effective systems of labour inspection.

In the informal consultations that took place some weeks ago on the follow-up to the 2008 Declaration and strategic policy framework the Workers' Group already asked the Office to step up its efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Employment Relationship Recommendation. In light of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Convention 98 next year we have asked the

ILO to strengthen its work on collective bargaining. Our Group has also supported the greater focus being currently given to wages.

The general discussion on gender that will take place next June should also be an excellent opportunity to address precarious work given that women are often over-represented in this category of employment.

We also need more work on the practical implementation of international labour standards and use decent work country programmes as a tool to achieve it.

These are some ideas that I flesh out for the debate. More proposals will come from the GUFs colleagues.