



## **2011 UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS (New York, 8-10 June 2011) –**

### **ITUC statement 11 May 2011**

The International Trade Union Confederation, which affiliates 305 national level trade union organisations in 151 countries worldwide, representing altogether 175 million workers, wishes to support the process of recommitting efforts to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support that takes place this year. The Universal Access Regional Consultations and the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS create a critical moment to evaluate achievements and gaps in the global AIDS response. 2011 marks 30 years since the first case of AIDS was identified. It is the 10th anniversary of the UNGASS meeting that was held in June 2001, and the 5th anniversary of the 2006 HLM that made an unequivocal commitment to attain universal access by 2010. The 2011 HLM provides an important milestone for countries to recommit to the response to HIV, an issue of international security, global health, human rights and social justice.

The ITUC is working extensively on HIV and AIDS issues related to the world of work from the social justice perspective and in relation to our extensive engagement in HIV and AIDS related processes such as the G8/G20, UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP), Global March Against Child Labour and others.

Trade unions strongly consider that HIV issues do not stand alone; partnerships are essential and human rights are fundamental. A worldwide crisis requires worldwide mobilization, No HIV response can be effective unless it combats discrimination and exclusion.

Our concerns relate to the following observations:

- More than 90% of PLHIV (people living with HIV) are workers since infections are concentrated among people of working age – 15 to 49 years (Juan Somavia, ILO Director General);<sup>1</sup>
- 36%-56% of PLHIV have experienced loss of employment and 40-61% workplace discrimination - exclusion or forced disclosure of HIV status<sup>2</sup> while fewer than 60%

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<sup>1</sup> ILO (2008) "Saving lives, protecting jobs. International HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programme SHARE: Strategic HIV/AIDS Responses in Enterprises", Second Report March 2008 available at

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_protect/@protrav/@ilo\\_aids/documents/publication/wcms\\_092043.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@ilo_aids/documents/publication/wcms_092043.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Global Survey Results 2010 UNAIDS PCB NGO Delegation Consultation "Stigma and Discrimination: Hindering Effective HIV Responses" available at [http://unaidspcbngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2010-NGO-Delegation-Consultation\\_Global-Survey-Results-EN.pdf](http://unaidspcbngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2010-NGO-Delegation-Consultation_Global-Survey-Results-EN.pdf)

of countries report having any mechanism to address cases of HIV related discrimination (2011 UN SG Report);<sup>3</sup>

- So far only about 30 countries worldwide have reported that they have adopted rules explicitly regulating HIV/AIDS in the world of work (2009 ILO Report);<sup>4</sup>
- More than 50% of the world's population is excluded from any type of social security protection.

That is why trade unions see the need for the following issues to be addressed in the renewed, democratised global response to HIV/AIDS:

- (a) recognition that HIV continues to constitute a global emergency challenging human rights and dignity, threatening development, social cohesion, and noting that the impact of HIV is imposing a devastating social and economic burden on many countries;
- (b) recognition that the ability of people to protect themselves from HIV, especially women and girls, continues to be compromised by unequal legal, economic and social status, including poverty;
- (c) reduction of stigma and discrimination on the basis of real or perceived HIV status in recruitment, employment and occupation – as a part of the “getting to zero discrimination” strategy;
- (d) increased access to prevention services through workplace HIV service delivery, including workplace peer education - as a part of the “getting to zero new infections” strategy;
- (e) supporting countries in responding to HIV/AIDS within broader plans and actions related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty reduction strategies and development, including scaling up of national workplace HIV policies;
- (f) scaling up social protection strategies and access to treatment, care and support through workplace HIV/AIDS service delivery, including access to mother to child transmission (MTCT) treatment – as part of the “getting to zero new AIDS related deaths” strategy;
- (g) continuous HIV reviews by the UN and ensuring that HIV and human rights issues retain priority in the broader health context, including the development and ratification of a set of human rights indicators for national monitoring, accountability and budgeting.

Our recommendations for inclusion in the HLM outcome document are outlined below:

First, we see the need for explicit reference in the HLM outcome document to the ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200)<sup>5</sup> that was adopted last year by the International Labour Conference, taking into account that this Recommendation is currently the only international human rights standard referring specifically to HIV and AIDS;

Second, we see the need to recognise the role of the world of work in addressing the pandemic, in offering a valuable entry point to reach various population groups, women and men, young people, key populations, rural and urban communities, in the setting where they spend much of their lives – the workplace.

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<sup>3</sup> UN GA Resolution 65/\_ of 28.03.2011 A/RES/65/\_ Report of the Secretary General

[http://unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2011/20110331\\_SG\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2011/20110331_SG_report_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> ILO (2009) “HIV/AIDS and the world of work” Report IV(1), ILC, 98<sup>th</sup> Session, Geneva, 2009, para 247, available at: [http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/vihsida\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/vihsida_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ILO HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200) [http://www.ilo.org/aid/lang--en/docName--WCMS\\_142706/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/aid/lang--en/docName--WCMS_142706/index.htm)

That is why we would like to call for the inclusion of the following proposed paragraph in the HLM outcome document:

“call for the world of work to play a significant role preventing HIV transmission and providing treatment, care and support for HIV-affected workers and their families, as well as in protecting their human rights as outlined in the International Labour Organisation’s HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200); integrating the response at the workplace into the response to the pandemic in local communities and national economies; and recognising that certain occupations and parts of the working population are particularly at risk”

We see the benefit of the HLM discussion on responsible accountability and a country ownership framework, shared responsibility and mobilisation of leadership – including the workplace dimension.

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*For more information on the trade union statement and actions on HIV and AIDS, please contact the global trade union coordinator on HIV/AIDS, Zuzanna Muskat-Gorska ([zuzanna.gorska@ituc-csi.org](mailto:zuzanna.gorska@ituc-csi.org)).*