

WFTU | TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL

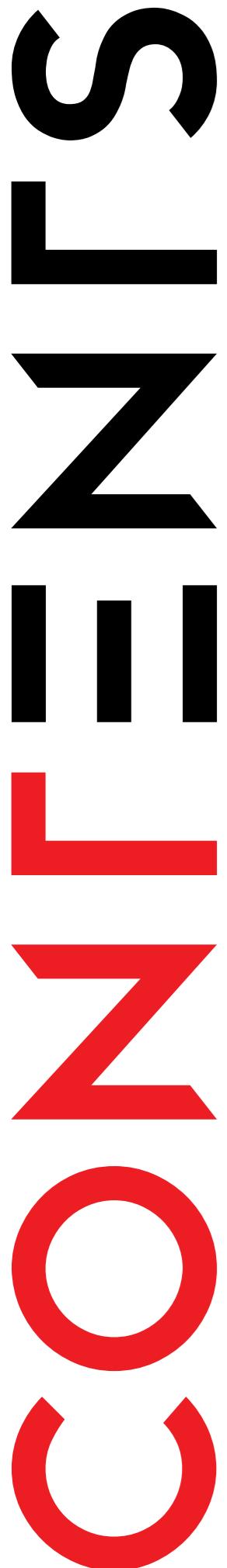
PUBLIC SERVICES WORKERS AND ALLIED



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SECRETARIAT BULLETIN



WORLD FEDERATION OF



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Editorial Comment

This issue of the WFTU TUI-PS&A bulletin covers the proceedings of the virtual secretariat meeting of our International Union that was held from the 31st of May to 01st of June 2021. The meeting was attended by the majority of the secretariat members, and discussed pertinent issues affecting workers in the sector of our Trade Union International (TUI).

Having been elected in Cyprus in October 2019, the current leadership collective of the WFTU TUI-PS&A has been forced to work under the restrictive COVID-19 measures that have been adopted by different countries across the world for most of its term of office thus far. Corona Virus was first detected in December 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan and then quickly spread throughout the world by the beginning of the year 2020. This rapid spread of the virus forced most in the world economies to shut down.

As a WFTU TUI also organising in the public health sector, we have been forced by these circumstances to be in the frontline of the fight to save lives and defeat the virus. As stated before, we believe that years of neglect and cuts in public spending on health infrastructure and personnel have ensured that many governments across the world are not in a position to formulate an adequate response to the outbreak of the pandemic. The result of this negligence has been the loss of lives and jobs at a catastrophic scale.

Our virtual secretariat meeting was convened not only to look at the challenges that have been brought about by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to look at the progress of our TUI in implementing the pillars in its Four Year Program that has been broken down into a practical programme of action driven from its central office by the office of the General Secretary. Our programme, the demands and struggles it enjoins us to pursue predate the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Already before the outbreak of the pandemic capitalism was in a crisis and workers and the working class broadly had been subjected to suffocating austerity measure under the policy of neoliberalism.



Given these pressing matters and the necessity to continue with the tasks of implementing our Four Year Program even under these harsh condition we find ourselves in; the secretariat discussed a number of pertinent issues that are integral to the work of our TUI and the struggle to change the condition of the working class. This bulletin seek to capture some of the main issues that were deliberated on in the meeting by publishing the following:

- **President address to Secretariat**
- **The political overview**
- **Highlights of the organisational overview**
- **Impact of COVID-19 on Collective bargaining and trade union rights**
- **Our Memorandum to multilateral bodies on free vaccines**
- **2021 Program of action**

The secretariat bulletin seek to communicate with our regions, our affiliates and their members so as to keep them abreast about the issues being deliberated on and decisions taken by the constitutional structures of our TUI. This, we hope, will encourage our structures and members to continue with their political work of building working class solidarity by supporting and nurturing working class organisations and struggles across the world.

By the Chief Editor: Zola Saphetha, General Secretary of WFTU TUI-PS&A

Message from the President

In his opening political message to the virtual secretariat meeting held on the 31st of May to 1st of June 2021, the president, comrade Artur Sequeira, passed his revolutionary greetings to all members of the secretariat elected at the 13th congress of our TUI and the organisations (affiliates and regions) they represent in the red trade union movement, the International Union of Public Service and Allied (WFTU TUI-PS&A) of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). He further extended his greetings to our General Secretary, comrade Zola Saphetha, the rest of central office staff and the NEHAWU who is hosting our central office in Johannesburg, South Africa.

He pointed out the existing contours of the international situation that have been worsened by the global public health crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic which was declared at the beginning of 2020 on the eve of the first Directive Committee meeting of our TUI held in March 2020 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The president pointed out that notwithstanding the limitations imposed on the Directive Committee meeting in Johannesburg, the meeting was able to approve its sectoral Four Year Action Plan to carry out the tasks approved in the Cyprus Congress of our TUI in 2019. He highlighted the fact that the secretariat of our organisation has pursued its tasks even under the conditions and limitations imposed by the existing COVID-19 pandemic. He said the organisation's political work and plans to strengthen our TUI and improve its visibility and communication, among others, is continuing in spite of the limitations imposed by the situation. The president also appreciated the fact that as a WFTU TUI, we have continued to play an active part in the implementation of the WFTU programs and the preparations for its 18th congress that will take place in Vietnam.

The input of the president also focused on the fact that experience has shown that in countries where quality accessible public services exists, such countries have been able to keep down the mortality rates resulting from COVID-19 related deaths. The fact pointed out above, the president argued, confirms the argument



that says privatised health services are unable to achieve the goal of generating profits while saving lives at the same time, and that this demonstrates how the lack of investment in public services, such as healthcare, represents a very high cost to ordinary people in terms of their health, social and economic wellbeing.

The president urged our TUI to continue with its class posture in defending the right to health for all and demanding free vaccines against the COVID-19 pandemic. He said this fight is about opposing the selfishness of the richest to protect the poorest, it is a struggle against the enrichment of multinationals (pharmaceutical companies) at the expense of the health of the people. The president urged our TUI to continue its struggle to demand that the UN and ILO work towards removing patent rights on COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacturing as a way to mitigate the destructive impact of the pandemic.

On solidarity work, the president's input highlighted the need to continue to support the struggles waged by public administration workers on all continents, and denounce the use of the pandemic by governments and capital as an excuse to undermine trade union and worker rights by increasing the working hours of workers, subjecting workers to precarious



work and eroding civilizational rights that trade unions won through the hard fought struggles of workers. He thus emphasised the need to continue and escalate all struggles aimed at forcing employers to comply with health and safety standards in the workplace to protect workers from the pandemic particularly in those sectors where they are in daily contact with the population e.g. in education, health, welfare etc. services.

In his conclusion, the president pointed out that the defence of quality public services is only possible through public investment in human and technical capacities and not in the privatisation of public servicers. He also warned our TUI against reducing the question of the resolution of our demands and struggle to the exhaustion of the COVOD-19 pandemic. Our historic demands and struggles predates the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason, he emphasised the need to continue

3. WORLD POLITICAL OVERVIEW

Significant developments have occurred in the world since the last meeting of our World Secretariat in October 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic that has attacked the world since December 2019 still persists even today and the crisis of managing the virus through inadequate PPEs and other equipment has now been compounded by the shortage of vaccines resulting from the limitations of capitalism which have been exposed from the onset of the pandemic.

As already pointed out by many, the crisis of capitalism that manifested from repeating and worsening boom and bust cycles it generates, as attempts to overcome the systemic crisis of over accumulation, has put humanity in an even more precarious position in these times of the COVID19 pandemic. Cuts in social spending, privatisation, retrenchments, short-time work, poor working conditions, poor pay and reversal of collective bargaining gains have all contributed towards the worsening condition of the working class, the erosion of trade union rights and the deteriorating quality and capacity in state provision of social services

to pursue our broader demands contained in our action plan as directed by the Cyprus congress. Our struggles to support and defend the rights of public service workers, against neoliberal policies of privatisation, and for a just society must continue even under conditions of COVID19. The president believes that our organisation must continue to oppose the imperialist wars and fight for the rights of peoples to self-determination. He called on the TUI to continue to strengthen itself through its policy of unity in action; action that does not jeopardise our class identity and keeps us in constant contact with workers in the workplace and the regions of our TUI, and thus attract new affiliates. Finally, the president reminded everyone of the need to support our mother body (WFTU) so that its 18th congress is an act that affirm internationalist and class oriented trade unionism

to the working class and the most vulnerable groups in society.

The commercialisation of essential public services does not only affect public sector workers, but it also affect the broader society as privatised public services increasingly becomes inaccessible to the majority of people in society. This neoliberal policy of weakening the state in order to commercialise its historical functions of social service provision is what made it difficult for the public health systems of many capitalist countries to respond to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic. It is also what has led to the current difficulties in rolling out COVID 19 vaccination programs experienced by many countries.

Added to the problem of depleted public health systems, is the problem of speculative hoarding of resources and medicines that are essential to combat the pandemic, this in turn is compounded by the man-made shortage of vaccine supplies that results from the limits placed by patents on the manufacturing and supply of such essential drugs and technologies.

In this regard, our affiliates and regions have waged intense struggles to ensure PPEs for workers and free vaccines for all and the WFTU TUI-PS&A central office has supplemented these efforts with a memorandum of demands addressed to the World Health Organisation (WHO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The work of the international trade union movement in defending workers' rights and the interests of the working class as a whole happens within the broader context of imperialism and rise of right wing governments in countries such as Brazil and India. The massive COVID19 death toll in Brazil and the deteriorating economic situation there result directly from the inhuman neoliberal policies of the Jair Bolsonaro government. Equally in India, the Modi government has mismanaged the COVID 19 crisis, and in its most recent atrocity it has imperilled the livelihoods of millions of Indian farmers in an attempt to commercialise farming for the benefit of big corporates.

Our work as the WFTU Public Service TUI is undertaken in different countries and regions under different circumstances and yet our struggles are united and combined through our solidarity work which enables our TUI to make its presence felt on the global stage.

ON THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The defeat of the morally bankrupt Trump administration, with its "America first policy" has marked the return of the war mongering globalist Democrats in the white house. While the democrats came to power on the ticket of reversing Trump's policies, in reality they have retained almost all of his policies in the domestic and foreign front. The barbaric immigration policy that started under Obama of caging unaccompanied minors still persist. The industrial prison system that targets African Americans is still maintained. Ordinary Americans still cannot afford healthcare and the youth still suffocating from unemployment and huge student debts. The violation of the Iran nuclear agreement and the unilateral sanctions

imposed on Iran still persists today. America is once more escalating its activities in Syria and increasing its military presence there. The unjust trade war against China remain in place and fossilising into a permanent geopolitical rivalry. The illegal and unjust Cuban blockade has not been removed and the hostility to countries such as Venezuela remain.

What this shows is that the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the USA are two sides of the same coin. History has proven that it does not matter which political party is in power, America's imperialist agenda remains dominating the world as always. Just as the Trump regime did not contribute anything toward easing tensions in the world or removing the suffering caused by America's foreign policy, the return of the Democrats to the White House has also not led to any material and significant shift. This destructive policy cannot change precisely because it serves the interests of American monopolies, multinational companies and ruling class as well. It does not matter which Party is in power, the ruling class remains the same. Whatever difference is there in the American establishment, reflects the divergent interests of competing fractions of capital rather than any fundamental ideological and class differences. However, the growing pressure and hardships placed on the working class in America, especially under the conditions of COVID-19 has resulted into job losses of many and also had a radicalising effects on the working class. The growth of left organisations such as the Democratic Socialist America (DSA), the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), the struggle for trade union recognition at Amazon in the US as manifested by the actions of workers in its Alabama warehouse and the successful strike of Workers for wage increases at Hunts Point Market in the Bronx, New York City early this year all points to the growing working class resistance in the USA and the growth of working class organisations that have been historically suppressed in that country.

The unprecedented support marches in states such as Chicago, California, Philadelphia, New York, Dallas, New Orleans, Washington DC etc. in response to the latest atrocities of apartheid Israel against occupied Palestinians is a





positive sign for the international working class movement. As the class oriented international trade union movement, we must continue with our support for all peoples suffering from the yoke of imperialism and colonial occupation in besieged countries such as Palestine, Western Sahara, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, Libya and elsewhere in the world.

As a class oriented trade union movement that envisages a socialist future for humanity, our mission is to be involved in every struggle against injustice anywhere in the world.

ON LATIN AMERICA

Latin America throughout history has become the launch pad for USA imperialism. It is common cause that the USA has been involved in the removal of progressive governments by military, parliamentary or electoral coup

as exemplified by the removal by of former President of Bolivia Evo Morales, Brazil former Presidents Luis Inacio Lula Da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. The positive news is that we are witnessing a militant response to the right wing agenda from workers and civil society organisations in the region.

The protests and massive demonstrations taking place in countries such as Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil reveal the failures of neoliberal imperialist agenda. The brutal response of some of the governments to these protests real the complicity of the ruling classes in those countries in the marginalisation and oppression of the working class in the region. The US continues to undermine the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua hence TUI PS&A continues to carry out solidarity campaigns in defence of the struggles of the people in those countries.



ON THE ASIA PACIFIC

As a result of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the working class in the Asia Pacific region is experiencing major hardships, especially in countries such as India and other countries in South Asian. Front line workers, Medical staffs, Nurses, and people working in the industrial areas are the most affected. While India is one of the countries producing and exporting COVID-19 vaccines, many people in that country do not have access to those vaccines due to the reactionary policies of the Modi government. Equally, many people are dying in that country due to a shortage of oxygen supply while the country possess the capacity to meet the demand.

As a result of vaccine nationalism, some wealthier nations are not willing to assist struggling countries in the Asian Pacific Region with their vaccine supplies. As a result of this lack of corporation and reactionary policies by some governments in the region, there is a shortage of the hospital beds, ventilators and oxygen supply in public health institutions.

Private hospitals are beyond the reach of workers and that results in frontline workers being at great risk of contracting the virus. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the number of young people getting infected in the third wave of COVID-19 is beginning to increase in many countries in the region.

Statistics from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) confirm that about 20 thousand Nepalese workers in the hospital sector lost their work while in the governmental sector about 500 people have lost their jobs. India, Bangladesh, Vietnam etc. are also facing the same problem of job losses. Governments in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia have done relatively well in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, India and Nepal governments have been negligent in their COVID-19 response programs. However pressure by workers and their unions was able to force Nepalese government to improve their provision of vaccine, personnel protective measures and had to pride an insurance to all frontline workers. Currently the struggle

of the Nepalese workers is confronting major challenges such as; poverty, social inequality, unemployment, social insecurity and low income.

ON AFRICA

In many countries on the African continent, employers and governments have exploited the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to reverse the historic gains in their struggle for workers' and trade union rights. In countries such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Liberia, governments are bent on undermining and eroding trade union rights by seeking to destroy or weaken collective bargaining.

In countries like Sudan, Chad and Mali the trade union movement is being negatively affected by the current unfolding political instability that is increasingly leading to the restrictions on trade union and civil society rights. The erosion of democracy and the rise of military juntas in these countries thus not only poses a risks to progressive democratic practices, but also trade unions who find it difficult to functions under such autocratic regimes.

As one of the under resourced region, the African continent is finding it difficult to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 PPE shortages and vaccine roll out programs. As a result of these challenges, and poor leadership in many of the countries on the continent, Africa is the continent with the least vaccinated population due to the combination of vaccine nationalism, poor planning and inability to afford such vaccines.

ON THE MIDDLE EAST

This Secretariat meeting meets in the midst of the barbaric Apartheid Israel's military aggression on the unarmed civilian Palestinian people which has resulted into hundreds of deaths and thousands of displacement of people, women and children in particular. We were encouraged by the bold step taken by our class orientated federation, WFTU, in organising a very successful and well attended solidarity virtual meeting in defence of the peoples of Palestine while the rest of the class





collaborator trade unionism are, as usual, taking a neutral position. The issue of Palestine would need to be intensified by all our affiliates by picking up all the initiatives suggested by our federation, WFTU. The US driven political instability in Syria, Iran and Yemen destabilising factor, especially for trade union activity

ON EUROPE

In the European Union the experience of the working class is almost identical in all countries. The slowdown of world economy, economic shutdowns, erosion of the trade union rights are on the rise. Even amongst the countries of the EU itself, there is major competition and hoarding of vaccines which has led to major disagreements in the region. In the midst of all these challenges, the working class is the casualty, while the political and business elite continue with sheltered lives,

The pandemic has once again exposed to everyone who cares to see that capitalism cannot resolve the crisis of its own making. The world has witnessed the collapse of the inability of the health care systems of the most advanced countries in the world failing to cope with the crises emanating from the outbreak of the COVID- 19 pandemic. These shortcomings are the product of the neoliberal policies that predates the pandemic itself. These neoliberal policies result from commercialisation of health care provision and austerity measures in the public service that have been implemented over a period of time. As workers and the working class we have always opposed and warn against such policies. The COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of social protection in industrialized countries, transformed health care provision into a commodity that is to be sold for profit.

The handling of the pandemic by many

European countries has been used as an ideological weapon against the working class in the deep process of capitalist restructuring that will redefine power relations, hierarchies, and economic relations between states and between classes in countries. The COVID-19 has proved as a fallacy the myth about Western supremacy of western health care and health systems."

Vaccines nationalism and profiteering from the COVID-19 crisis prevents the world from exiting the pandemic, it denies the possibility of economic recovery, and it devastates the social fabric of countries and forces them into a debt crisis that will affect their future economic wellbeing.

Conclusion

Our main responsibility is to combine and explain the various class struggles to be waged by the working class organisations and ordinary people against capitalism and imperialism as a single united class struggle against the ruling global elite represented by monopoly capital, multinational corporations and the satellite states that support American Imperialism.

Our program as WFTU TUI Public Service and Allied must not only aim at improving the working conditions of workers in our sector or just improving services in the sector, as our ultimate objective, but work together with other working class organisations to create a better socialist society which will replace this inhuman and barbaric system of capitalism.

It is important for our regional structures therefore to coordinate and cooperate closely with the affiliates in their respective regions in implementing the program of WFTU and TUI-PS&A as they are implementing arms of both WFTU and TUI-PS&A.

4. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

After presenting the political overview, the TUI-PS&A General Secretary presented the summary of the organisational overview report. The organisational overview was presented in line with the eight (8) pillars of the four year plan of action adopted during the Directive Committee Meeting of 12-13 March 2020, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The pillars constituting the four – year plan of action are: Internationalism-Anti Imperialism Action, Trade Union Rights, Anti-Privatisation Campaign, Collective Bargaining-Social Security Campaign, Trade Union Education, Workers Unity and Solidarity, Rights of the Youth, Women and Immigrants, Building TUI-PS&A Organisational Strength.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM ACTION

The General Secretary noted as an achievement that within six months into the year 2021, TUI-PS&A had conducted major anti-imperialist

campaigns, mainly against US led aggression. Among the campaigns undertaken were the: Campaign on the Release of Palestinian children from Israeli jails, campaign in solidarity with Venezuelan people, campaign against the



US economic blockade on Cuba. The development and adoption of a TUI-PS&A position paper on Imperialism by the secretariat meeting of September 2020

was commended as yet another milestone in the political work of this sector trade union international of the WFTU.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The organisational report also expressed a concern that, despite major advancements fought for and attained by workers at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are still countries that continue to deny workers the right to form or join trade unions. Lesotho, Liberia, and Zimbabwe in the African continent were highlighted as the most notorious countries in this regard. As a result of this observed breach committed by some countries in the world, the organisational report called upon all TUI-PS&A regions and affiliates to renew their campaigns against countries that continue to deny workers the right to form and join trade unions.

ANTI-PRIVATISATION CAMPAIGN

The report further observed that neoliberal governments, working with multinational corporations, continue to exploit the conditions



brought about by the outbreak of corona virus to accelerate commercialisation and privatisation of public assets which we consider as important pillars for state led public service delivery. Vaccine hoarding by pharmaceutical companies and imperialist governments was also raised as a major setback in the fight against COVID-19. The report commended the TUI-PS&A for developing and submitting a comprehensive memorandum of demands



to force all United Nations' multilateral organisations to intervene on behalf of the people of the world and act against the agenda of vaccine nationalism which is perpetuated by the imperialist governments and multinational corporations.

Similarly the anti-privatisation campaigns and struggles conducted by TUI PS&A regions and affiliates such as the USB in Italy were also applauded.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The report also raised a serious concern that governments and employers of the world continue to use the outbreak of COVID 19 as a pretext to undermine collective bargaining and other trade union rights. The secretariat made the observation that many governments have reneged on their duty to implement collective agreements and instead cite the outbreak of COVID-19 as the reason for their non-compliance. The following governments were reported to be the most concerning in the reversal of the achievements gained from collective agreements:



In Africa it was South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland in Asia pacific; Nepal and India and Peru in Latin America.

TRADE UNION EDUCATION

While the report acknowledged the general ideological and trade union work conducted by many regions (mainly through discussion forums, like seminars), the report hailed the ideological training program of TUI Central Office staff which is being conducted by the central office of the WFTU. The report felt that the training was very critical in assisting the central office to develop training material for inducting new affiliates as well as in conducting the general ideological and trade union education within the entire trade union movement. The secretariat also emphasised the need for political education around issues of working women, youth and immigrants in the different regions of our TUI.

WORKERS UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

The organisational report observed that regressive forms of nationalism (like racism, xenophobia and religious fanaticism) continue to be an impediment to workers unity and solidarity and it impressed upon the all TUI-PS&A regions and affiliates to always be alert and continue to conduct struggles against such primitive behaviour in countries where this barbarity still takes place.

To this extent, the TUI-PSA active ongoing campaigns against the Israeli Zionist ideology directed at the people of Palestine, the Cuban Blockade by the racist US were all highlighted as important actions in the struggle against this regressive forms of nationalism.

RIGHTS OF YOUTH, WOMEN & IMMIGRANTS
The organisational report commended the exceptional political and ideological work done by NEHAWU in Africa and TUI-PS&A in Latin America by hosting discussion forums during International Working Women in March 2021. The two seminars, while conducted in different continents, were important in highlighting how the historical subjugation and exploitation of working women in particular and women in general continue to expose the women's state of vulnerability during such calamities as COVID-19. The report suggested that TUI-PS&A must deepen the struggle against class domination and total emancipation of women



as part of the exploited class. The report requested TUI PS&A regions and affiliates to use the month of August 2021 to take up campaigns that advance the rights of the youth, the immigrants and the refugees.

BUILDING THE TUI-PS&A ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

In the organisational report, the General Secretary noted with contentment the organisational, ideological and numerical growth of this Public Sector trade union movement which is demonstrated, amongst others, through its consistent implementation of the four year plan of action even under the conditions created by COVID 19 pandemic. The observation that this Public Sector Trade Union movement has created an established culture to conduct its meetings and processes in line with the TUI-PS&A statute helps give it both the structure and system of conducting its struggles and carrying out its program.

As a sign of the numerical growth of our TUI-PS&A, the General Secretary unveiled three African trade unions that have applied for membership with this class oriented public sector trade union movement. The three unions are: Lesotho teachers Union (LTTU) from Lesotho, South African Liberated Public Sector Workers Union (SALIPSWU) from South Africa and the Public Service Union of Namibia (PSUN).

The General Secretary also reported the major achievement by our TUI-PS&A in successfully conducting continental meetings where TUI PS&A leadership got an opportunity to assess the organisational capacity of regions and their affiliates in implementing the four year plan of action as well as ascertain areas of support required by regions and affiliates from the central office.

However, the organisational report also highlighted issues posing a challenge to our TUI-PS&A organisational strength. Those issues were identified as: the lack of coherent affiliate's membership data base, gaps in the literature that traces our historic development, the lack of a coherent system to collect and preserve our archives and the absence of a systematic program by the trade union movement to follow up on our membership subscription fee payments. The members of the secretariat, especially regions and affiliates were requested to conduct programs and campaigns to attend to and resolve the above mentioned affiliation fee related matters.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

After the presentation of the secretariat report, the regional reports other several interventions, the meeting took the following decisions among others:

The secretariat meeting moved and adopted the secretariat report and its recommendations as presented by the general secretary. The meeting also adopted the regional reports and all interventions made by the members of the secretariat. The meeting further agreed that an integrated report of the secretariat meeting would be circulated to all members of the secretariat and regions and so that our vice-presidents will be able to share the report with their affiliates in their respective regions and also ensure the implementation of the decisions of the secretariat meeting at the regional level.

The meeting further resolved that the application for TUI-PS&A membership made by the three unions from the Africa English speaking region be accepted.

As part of consolidating the TUI-PS&A

organisational strength, the meeting resolved that a separate discussion needed to be undertaken where TUI-PS&A secretariat would exclusively engage and develop strategies to ensure that the TUI-PS&A is present and campaigning in all continents and also that more capacity and depth is developed in regions/continents where it already exists.

The meeting accepted the updated TUI-PS&A 2020-2021 program of action that was presented and further recommended that the central office should further align the program with the current secretariat reports and decisions; and then circulate it to all regions. The said program of action will include focused campaigns to be conducted by each TUI PS&A region/continent in accordance to their peculiar political situations.

The meeting also recognised the organisational significance of the continental meetings, their role in deepening the strength of the organisation and resolved that these meetings had to be again conducted in all regions and continents in July 2021, for a second time, with the exception of the TUI-PS&A of Europe as they will be on their mid-term break and only be able to conduct these meetings after their holiday season. The main objective of these continental meetings would be to follow up on all organisational issues raised during the first round of the continental meetings and further assess the extent of the implementation of our four year plan by regions/continents and their affiliates. The meeting noted the fact that the Africa francophone region could not participate in the first round of the continental

5. LOOKING AT THE IMPACT OF COVID19 ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

INTRODUCTION

The COVID19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact not only in the health front but in the world of work and on society generally. While millions of workers throughout the world have lost many working hours and others have been completely laid off thus leading to either reduced incomes or lost livelihoods. For healthcare workers at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic,

meetings and it was suggested that this region convene the outstanding meeting before the end of June 2021.

On the matter of improving contribution of membership subscription fee by affiliates, the meeting resolved that the General Secretary would hold a meeting with the President and chairperson of the finance committee and discuss on how to improve the above situation.

On the current Israel aggression that has caused death and displacement of many Palestinians, the secretariat meeting resolved that each region/continent would join the WFTU led solidarity relief campaign to support the Palestinian people and coordinate donations of blankets, school notebooks, soap and medical stuff that would be sent as TUI-PS&A assistance to Palestine people. The central office would formally write a letter to the trade union of PAME in Greece to request them to assist our trade union movement in the coordination of this solidarity relief program.

Regarding the draft paper on "COVID-19 and its impact on workers' rights and collective bargaining", the meeting resolved that the draft paper by the central office would be circulated to the regions and would be presented and discussed during continental meetings.

Lastly, the meeting agreed that the central office would prepare and develop a bulletin of the secretariat meeting that would capture the spirit of the reports, debates and decisions that the secretariat meeting took.

particularly those in the public health sector, the impact has been even more stressful. Not only are they confronted by long working hours, staff shortages, inadequate PPEs, unsafe working conditions and inadequate pay, but they also face the constant risk of COVID19 infection and infecting loved ones with the virus.

The impact of the virus and the responses of employers to the crisis has in many instances

resulted in significant changes to the conditions of work of workers. Trade unions too, found themselves operating under more challenging changed conditions. The changes impacting on workers lives and working conditions, and trade union activity in the workplace, in a large part resulted from the various lockdown measures that governments across the world implemented and how different employers in different parts of the world chose to interpret those measures.

It has become apparent that in those countries in which established tripartite industrial relations structures and processes was utilised to respond to the pandemic, rather than being bypassed there was less friction among social partners. Some of the impacts of COVID19 on collective bargaining in different parts of the world has been:

- a) **Deferral of the collective bargaining process**
- b) **The extension of existing collective agreements**
- c) **Failure to honour existing collective agreements**

However, overall ILO reports that in many countries, the number of newly signed collective agreements decreased visibly during the COVID19 pandemic.

IMPACT ON THE WORK OF SECTORAL BARGAINING COUNCILS

In many countries, the work of bargaining councils was affected by the various COVID19 lockdown measures in various degrees. While many councils froze their work, others carried on doing the work, to limited degree, by adopting new ways of work and technologies. This had an impact on the ability of many unions to effectively engage in the collective bargaining process during the height pandemic induced lockdowns.

LIMITING TRADE UNION RIGHT AND WORKER RIGHTS UNDER THE GUISE OF COMBATING COVID-19

In many countries employers took advantage of governments declaring COVID-19 emergency measures by refusing to follow established channels of communication in relation to health and safety matters. Overnight, all other health and safety matters were relegated to the back and COVID-19 was elevated to the centre stage. While many unions fought against this practice and emphasised the need to treat health and safety in the workplace holistically, many employers were and are still eager to cut costs by cutting corners through issuing substandard PPE equipment or ignoring existing health and safety protocols. In many instances this was made possible by the establishment of "emergency" management committees in the workplace that ignored existing health and safety committees in which workers sit. Or by ignoring and victimising workers and trade union representatives who raised health and safety concerns. In this way, trade union activity has been undermined by many employers in the name of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

ON SAFE JOBS AND SECURE LIVELIHOODS

While the economic depression that has been worsened by the pandemic has led to many employers either retrenching a section of their workforce or shutting down and laying off their entire workforce. Many employers, both in the public and private sectors have used the COVID-19 crisis to renege on existing bargaining agreements. Thus one of the main responsibilities of unions has been to fight to protect existing jobs and livelihoods by fiercely defending collective bargaining which form the cornerstone of the strength of the union movement. Additionally, progressive unions are also advocating for active social security interventions such free public services and the basic income grant for the millions of the unemployed who often eke out a living in the informal sector.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers, trade unions and the working class broadly, it has not negated the pre-existing

struggles and demands of the red trade union movement. The pandemic has confirmed the diagnosis of capitalism and imperialism as the basis of worker exploitation and class oppression. The collapse of capitalist supply lines and the limits manufacturing capacity under capitalism vindicates the critique of private capital and privatisation and the call for the nationalisation of key economic sectors and essential state provided public services. It has once again been proven that collective bargaining requires strong and well organised

6. A CALL FOR FREE AND SAFE VACCINES FOR THE CITIZENS OF ALL COUNTRIES.

On behalf of the Trade Union International Public Service and Allied (TUI PS&A) which represents more than 30 million workers across the world drawn from all continents, we join the progressive forces of the world in condemning vaccine nationalism and the drive to maximise profit from diseases or hardships afflicting humanity, and human progress such as the covid-19 pandemic.

The manufacture of many safe vaccines in a short time period proved the capabilities of the scientific revolution and the human factor. We congratulate the scientists who worked and achieved the manufacture of the vaccines and at the same time we condemn the inhuman tactics of the international monopolies to speculate on the vaccines.

According to a report of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published in May 2020, about 2.7 billion workers were affected by the partial or general lockdowns and as a result about 1.25 billion workers are employed in sectors that are going through a great recession. In addition, the pandemic has had disastrous consequences on 1.6 billion workers in the informal sector. Also, according to ILO and UN data of September 2020, an estimated 495 million full-time jobs have been lost all over the world in the second quarter of 2020 and the workers' income in developing countries was reduced by 15%.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2019, WFTU, its affiliates

unions linked to the broader working class struggle. Without the organisational muscle required not only to negotiate but also to uphold and reinforce the collective agreements they negotiate union's risks losing the historical gains they have gained in the past. History has proven that the bosses will use every crisis that results from their actions, to further marginalise and short-change workers by making them pay for such crisis.

and components such as Trade Union Internationals in different sectors, have taken many actions, initiatives, and participated in workers' struggles in defence of the lives and health of front-line workers and the peoples of all countries. We have opposed all attempts by employers to use COVID-19 restrictions as a pretext to launch attacks on workers' and trade union rights and we have spoken out against the growing poverty and hunger in the world that is generated by the underlying crisis of capitalism which the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated.

We maintain that the unfolding crisis that is now threatening the health of millions of people across the world, has paralysed world trade and shrunk the world GDP and resulting many economic hardships for workers in many countries were not unavoidable. The failure to manage and contain the spread of the coronavirus can directly be linked to the dominant policies that are imposed across the world by multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank that promote the privatisation of public services. They have encouraged under-spending on social services on which the majority of people depend, including in public healthcare, in favour of private provision for the few who can afford to buy health. Thus, the unfolding worldwide events validate our historic call, which predates the outbreak of the coronavirus, that the world can only mitigate and overcome such health crises if all countries are encouraged to prioritise the

provision of free public healthcare for all as a basic right. Collaboration and solidarity within and between countries rather than competition is the answer.

In the same way that the immediate international response to the outbreak of the coronavirus in 2020 was hampered by the speculative hoarding of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and health-equipment needed, we are now seeing the stock-piling of vaccines in excess of what is needed by the populations of the rich countries, to the exclusion of poor countries.

The worldwide roll-out of vaccines to help slow-down and to stop the pandemic is also currently being hampered by the prevailing profit-driven Intellectual Property Rights regime of the World Trade Organisation. Despite the fact that all the available vaccines have been developed through direct funding by the governments, with money coming from the peoples taxes, the big pharmaceutical corporations are now using the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) to secure patents, in order to monopolise the production of the vaccines and to maximise profits.

They are imposing extremely high prices for the vaccines to poor countries and use their patents to refuse to allow countries of the global-south with capabilities to replicate the cheaper versions in order to ensure easier access for all. It is in this context that WFTU TUI PS&A applauds the initiative by the World Health Organisation (WHO) that seeks to pool resources and ensure affordable procurement of vaccines in order to ensure that poor countries have access to vaccines.

This global pandemic can only be contained through such global initiatives aimed at equitable access for all countries – vaccine nationalism will achieve the opposite of this goal and thus prolong the pandemic. The coronavirus cannot be defeated in one country or one region, it must be defeated on a global scale so that global trade can resume and global GDP to pick up again to recover jobs and livelihoods.

In light of the above, WFTU TUI PS&A's call upon all working class organisations and progressive institutions to put pressure on all governments in the world to support the call by the WHO for vaccines to be distributed through the COVAX program to ensure vaccine access to all citizens of the world. In this regard as WFTU TUI PS&A, we put forward the following demands in support of our call for free access to safe and effective vaccines to citizens of all countries:

- (i) We call upon those countries that have stockpiled vaccines more than they need, to release their excesses for distribution amongst poor countries. Vaccines are use-values, not commodities, but public goods. We say yes to no to profits before people and indeed no profits at all before health, lives and livelihoods.
- (ii) We support the WHO's "Fair allocation Mechanism" for COVID-19 vaccine distribution through the COVAX facility, and that all vaccines must be distributed through this facility. At the same time we also support the building of vaccine manufacturing capacity in poorer countries.
- (iii) We see positively the suggestions of international organisations that are calling for the waiving of patent rights on health products that can aid in the fight against the pandemic thus enabling more countries to cheaply produce these pharmaceutical products to alleviate the current constraints related to vaccine supply.
- (iv) All nations must be urged to promote and engage in solidarity and cooperation in the global fight against COVID-19 as exemplified by the Republic of Cuba.
- (v) We condemn the geopolitical manoeuvres aimed at conquering the COVID-19 vaccine world market by imperialist countries through the slanderous scepticism over the scientific work undertaken by countries such as Cuba, China and Russia. We support the utilization of all the safe vaccines.
- (vi) The vaccination roll-out in every country must prioritise the frontline workers, the



poor who live in crowded conditions and the elderly. All governments must be transparent and accountable to ensure that the distribution and administration of the vaccines is not biased in favour of the elites. The rich must not be allowed to buy their way to the front.

(vii) The plight of vulnerable groups such as the homeless, immigrants, sex-workers and others also needs to be closely monitored during the roll-out of vaccination programmes so that these groups are not excluded or left behind in the fight against COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only called into question our attitude towards healthcare provision in society, it has also called into question our existing patent regimes and the manner in which the world pharmaceutical production and supply lines are vulnerable to the speculation of the private capital. The pandemic has further exposed and exacerbated pre-existing crises of capitalism such as unemployment, inequality and poverty. On the other hand, the capitalists have taken advantage of this emergency situation

to degrade permanent employment into low-paying and precarious employment. At the same time, this pauperisation of workers and the working class is used by the capitalists to suppress wage levels and to undermine the collective unity and confidence amongst workers.

This trend cannot be reversed by a return to the old normal and business-as-usual approach. The crisis calls for new thinking and new solutions. The top one percent of the world has continued to grow their wealth even in these times of crisis while the rest of humanity is plunging deeper into misery. Surely, this cannot be the future of humanity. As WFTU we maintain that another world is not only possible but more than ever necessary. This is a world without capitalist barbarity, without exploitation of man by man, without intra-imperialist strategies in the world health sector.

The standing demands for public and free healthcare for all, to stop privatizations, to support the health sector with the necessary staff are still in our claims and demands.

7. UPDATED WFTU-TUI-PS&A 2020/2021 PROGRAM OF ACTION

PILLAR	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVES	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Internationalism-Anti Imperialism Action	Organise Regional May Day activities, marches and campaigns Demanding an end to Monopolies and transnational that are destroying jobs in the world.	Use the May Day Celebrations to demonstrate against imperialism and its effects on the working class	Central Office and Regional Offices	1 May 2021
	Undertake Solidarity campaigns with Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Palestine, and Western Sahara.	Support the anti-imperialist struggles of the people of Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Western Sahara etc.	Central office and all Regional offices	Ongoing
	Collect parcels in support of the humanitarian, needs of Palestinians.	Support the WFTU relief campaign in the light of the Israeli bombings (supply of learning materials, clothes, toiletries, health packages etc.)	All regions (particularly Asia Pacific, Europe, Arab Speaking Africa Regions)	June 2021
	African regions to organise Africa Day activities with affiliates and other progressive unions. Central Office to issue a Africa Day statement addressed to unions on the continent	Use Africa Day celebrations to assess the impact of COVID19 on workers on the continent and establish links with progressive trade unions and working class organisations in Africa to build WFTU TUI PS&A on the continent	Central office and Africa Regional offices	25 May 2021
	Coordinate regional activities (marches, pickets and rallies) and programs for WFTU 2021 anniversary celebrations.	Engage in anti-imperialist and anti-privatisation action to celebrate the history of the WFTU as an anti-imperialist class oriented trade union movement	Central office and all Regional offices	Month of October 2021

Trade Union Rights	Fight for Free Trade Union activity in all continents and countries where public servants are prohibited from forming or joining trade unions. (vice presidents to report on countries that restrict trade union rights and rights)	Secure the recognition of trade unions through legislation by governments	All regional Offices (focus on regions in Africa and Asia-pacific regions)	Start in February and continue throughout the year
	Conduct and international campaign on the protection of workers and union rights from the imperialist onslaught. (engage regional multilateral bodies and specific governments to secure trade union rights)	To highlight and oppose the adverse effects of imperialism on trade union and worker rights	All regional Offices (focus on regions in Africa and Asia-pacific regions)	
	Campaign for the full recognition of WFTU in multilateral organisations and continental regional bodies such ILO, UNESCO, WHO, AU, EU etc.	Secure the full recognition and participation of WFTU on all multilateral organisation and continental regional bodies that have labour representation	Central Office and all regions working with WFTU at all levels	Ongoing with strong emphasis in the Month of October
Anti-privatisation Campaign	Develop anti-privatisation campaigns at a regional and affiliate level. (Marches, pickets, meetings, rallies etc.)	To oppose the privatisation of essential state owned companies and services such as water, electricity and transport. Campaign for free quality healthcare and education for a healthy and skilled working class.	Central Office and Regional Offices (Focus on Europe and Latin America regions)	Ongoing
Collective Bargaining and Social Security Campaigns	Conduct campaigns for the protections of existing bargaining rights were they existing and their legislation in countries where they don't exists	Campaign for a strong state that can intervene in favour of the marginalised in society and the environment against private financial interest.	All regions (regions in Africa, Europe)	Ongoing
Trade Union Education		To secure stable fulltime jobs for Public service workers in all continents. Advance the WFTU campaign for a 7-hour working Day, 5-day working week, and 35-hour working week in the public service internationally. Pursue the WFTU demand of the retirement age of 60 for man and 55 years for women. Campaign for social security for people with special needs, pensioners and the unemployed. Demand the professionalization of public services to improve working conditions and services provided to the people.	All regions (regions in Africa, Europe)	
		Induct Affiliates on the History of WFTU Train affiliates on the development and implementation of campaigns Deepening the political and ideological consciousness of members of our affiliates and associate organisations.	All regions with Africa focusing on Working Women and Young Workers. Latin America focusing on immigrants and women. and Europe focusing on migrant workers and youth	Runs for the duration of the four year plan
		Assist regions design and develop training materials and programs.	Central office and regional offices	Ongoing



Workers Unity and Solidarity	Conduct campaigns against racism, xenophobia and religious fanaticism. (action against the xenophobic targeting of immigrant workers and refugees and apartheid Israel)	Build working class unity internationally, combat artificial divisions among the working class and oppose right wing nationalism in all countries	Regional offices	Ongoing
Right of Youth, Women and Immigrants	Convene continental platforms for education activities women rights and working class struggles using 8 March as a launch pad Convene regional seminars and/or workshops on the plight of immigrants and refugees. Convene Regional seminars for Youth in the public sector.	Increasing awareness and building class consciousness on working women to intensify the struggle for the rights of working women. Raise awareness and combat the exploitation of immigrants Mobilisation of young workers to participate in workplace struggles and fight youth exploitation in the workplace	Central Office and all Regional offices Regional offices Regional offices	Month of August Month of June