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**TO ALL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS
TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
TO THE REGIONAL COMMITTEES
TO THE REGIONAL OFFICES**

Brussels, 24 November 2016

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President

Susan Hopgood

General Secretary

Fred van Leeuwen

Re: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls

Dear Colleagues,

At its 48th meeting in October, the Executive Board adopted a recommendation from the Status of Women Committee to commemorate 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, by issuing a **CALL TO ACTION** to all member organisations, encouraging them lobby their governments for support for a binding ILO Standard on ***Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work***.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Gender-based violence is a fundamental violation of human rights. It is a manifestation of gender-based discrimination and of unequal power relations between men and women, which it also perpetuates. Gender-based violence exists in all regions of the world: globally, 35% of women have experienced physical violence and 40-50% of women experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work.

Gender-based violence disproportionately affects girls, women, and men who are viewed as not conforming to dominant perceptions of masculinity.

Irrespective of where the violence takes place, gender-based violence has the potential to limit victims' participation in the economy and in society, and to negatively impact the workplace.

WHAT DO TRADE UNIONS WANT DONE ABOUT IT?

Trade unions are leading the call for a new **binding ILO Instrument** (i.e. a Convention plus a Recommendation) on ***Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work***.

An International Standard would provide clear and comprehensive guidance on effective laws and workplace policies to address and prevent this serious global problem. Harassment, stalking, threats and abuse – all types of gender-based violence at work – are known to impede job performance and productivity, and can prevent individuals from participating in the labour force. An International Standard will contribute to developing safe workplace cultures, and effective mechanisms that empower and support victims.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?

Since November 2012, a proposal to develop an ILO Convention on gender-based violence in the workplace has been pending before the ILO Governing Body.

On 8 November, the ILO Governing Body:

(a) requested the Office to prepare the first discussion of possible instruments on violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work by the Conference at its 107th Session (2018) taking into account the guidance provided in the Conclusions of the Meeting



of Experts on Violence against Women and Men in the World of Work (Geneva, 3–6 October 2016) and further guidance given by the Governing Body.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The next step in the process is that the ILO will circulate a Law and Practice Report, and a questionnaire on an ILO instrument to address ***Violence and Harassment in the World of Work*** in **March-April 2017**. It is expected that the questionnaire will ask governments to give their views on what form the ILO instrument should take - i.e. whether it should be a Convention, supplemented by a Recommendation; or a stand-alone Recommendation.

WHAT ACTION CAN YOUR UNION TAKE?

NOW is the time for your union to enter into dialogue with the key ministries that are likely to advise the government on this issue (e.g. the ministries for labour, gender and education).

Your union must explain three key issues to the government in relation to the proposal for a binding ILO Standard on *Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work*:

1. It is crucial to respond to the ILO questionnaire by calling for a **Convention plus a Recommendation** (which provides guidance on implementation), so that it will be a **binding ILO Standard**.
2. There needs to be a **particular focus on gender-based violence** within the Standard, since women are disproportionately affected by violence (in the world of work and beyond).
3. The definition of 'the world of work' must be broad, and not simply limited to the physical work place. It should include transport to and from work, for example, and spaces or places where work-related training or social events take place etc.

If your union requires further information on this issue, or about the Global Union Federations' efforts to secure a binding ILO Standard on *Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work*, please contact madeleine.kennedy-macfoy (madeleine.kennedymacfoy@ei-ie.org).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ONLINE

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gbv_factsheet_afl.pdf

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/afl-cio-solidarity-center-effort?lang=en>

<http://www.ilo.org/actrav/lang--en/index.htm> - the Bureau for Workers' Activities at the ILO (ACTRAV) is due to publish a report containing case studies and evidence of where and how violence in the world of work manifests in different sectors across the world (expected in December 2016).

Thank you!

Yours sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen
General Secretary