



1ST WORLD WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

BRUSSELS
19-21/10/09

*Decent work. Decent life for women.
Trade Unions Taking the Lead for
Economic and Social Justice & Equality*



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Report to the NZCTU Women's Committee,
12/2/2010





REPORT

to the NZCTU Women's Committee

on the

1st World Women's Conference
Brussels (Belgium) 19 – 21 October 2009

from Shelley Weir, TIASA National President
NZCTU Delegate to the Conference

ITUF CSI IGB





E nga Iwi, e nga reo, e nga huihui tangata.
Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou.

He mihi aroha ki nga tini aitua i wehe atu ki
te po, ratou ki a ratou, tatou ki a tatou.

No reira
Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena koutou
katoa.

Greetings to you all





Introduction

- This Report summarises the main events & experiences from the 1st World Women's Conference that I, along with Suzanne McNabb, attended late last year
 - ★ I realise that Suzanne as the official NZCTU Delegation leader, has already reported to the Women's Committee at your final meeting last year
 - ★ I apologise that due to my clashing end of semester and final exam obligations I could not attend that meeting. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend today.
- ◆ This Report is therefore a brief recap of the Conference and implications for the NZ trade union movement and NZ women





- It was a great honour to represent the NZ trade union movement and the NZCTU and firstly I wish to warmly thank you all for this privilege.
- The Conference was an inspirational & unforgettable experience.
- It directly confronted the underlying causes and immense adverse impacts of the current economic and financial crisis for women and indeed for our planet, and strategised how best to address these





- Equally, the Conference was also a very clever tactical means of consolidating women's collective voice to develop and progress two significant new draft ILO Conventions on women's rights
- and how to progress these via a carefully planned programme of national and international union gatherings culminating in the ITUC's 2nd World Congress (Vancouver) and, the 99th session of the International Labour Conference (Geneva) both to be held in Jun 2010





Conference Title: “Decent Work, Decent Life for Women: Trade Unions Taking the Lead for Economic and Social Justice & Equality”

- This was the international union movement's first world women's Conference
- Key issues discussed:
 - 450 women delegates from 102 countries attended
 - The global economic and financial crisis
 - Impacts for women
 - The urgent need for economic and financial reform and for decent work to confront the crisis





Key Issues discussed (contd)

- Organising for rights at work
- Gender Equality through Collective Bargaining
- Domestic Workers
- Climate change & food security
- Social Protection and Social Security
- Young Women Workers





Main themes:

- the economic and financial crisis is exacerbating inequalities
 - ◆ The heavy repercussions of the global jobs crisis are most severe on women
- How best to map out concerted international trade union action
 - ◆ to improve job security, pay and working conditions for women
- the urgent need to place the gender dimension high on the agenda of the international community





Key Issues

- Many governments have allocated funds to saving financial institutions
 - ◆ but are no longer able, or willing, to invest enough in public services or care work
- two sectors where the workforce is largely female.





Key Issues *(contd)*

- The crisis is likely to aggravate gender inequalities
 - ◆ Urgent need to tackle such issues

- The pay gap is one such issue
 - ★ Yet there are already various instruments available to address this
 - ★ Including various ILO tools to ensure better protection for women workers in areas such as pay, maternity protection or even forced labour

- **Question:** How to achieve effective implementation and enforcement of such tools?





Key Issues *(contd)*

The need for absolute urgency -

- “The financial crisis is a disaster for jobs in many sectors.
- Women, and particularly young women, are heading for a more than uncertain future if effective measures are not taken fast.
- Gender equality is unquestionably the key to a fair and equitable global economy.
- And achieving this is fully dependent on progress in the area of women’s rights, and protection at work in particular.”

– *(Sharan Burrows: ITUF President)*





Conference Presentations

- Included wide ranging addresses from keynote speakers
 - ◆ the ILO Director-General of the ILO
 - ◆ the General Secretary of the ITUC
 - ◆ other ITUC officers
 - ◆ Various nations' Ministers of employment, equity and equal opportunities
 - ◆ women union activists representing young workers, domestic workers, migrant workers, and their various support structures within the national and international trade union bodies
 - See the Conference Agenda (attached) showing the range and scope of inputs to the Conference





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations

- (a) Despite women's increasing presence in the paid workforce & trade unions, and important achievements in organising, collective bargaining, and rights, women often remain disadvantaged in the labour market compared to men
- World-wide, the unemployment impacts of the economic crisis will be more detrimental for women than men

★ *(ILO Report on Global Employment Trends for Women 2009)*





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- b) The commitment to advancing gender equality must not be eroded by the global economic crises
 - ◆ Crises should not be used as excuses to create even greater inequalities nor undermine women's acquired rights
- The Jobs Pact agreed at the 2009 ILO Conference must be implemented
 - ◆ The Pact specifically urges: “measures to retain persons in employment, to sustain enterprises and to accelerate employment creation and jobs recovery combined with social protection systems in particular for the most vulnerable, integrating gender concerns on all measures.”





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- c) Despite advances made, millions of women remain outside of the formal employment market in the informal economy
 - ★ including domestic work, atypical employment, and other vulnerable forms of employment.
- ◆ Organising these workers, as well as those in EPZs (Export Processing Zones) into unions and achieving Decent Work, Decent Life for all Women must be a priority for trade unions fighting for economic and social justice.





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- d) Trade unions must work together to ensure full ratification and effective monitoring of the ILO's Conventions for equality :
 - ◆ ILO Conventions 100 on Equal Remuneration; 111 on Discrimination; 156 on Family Responsibilities; 183 on Maternity Protection; 175 on Part-Time Work; 177 on Home Work.





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- e) Equal pay for work of equal value remains a critical area for trade union action
- Over the last three years the gender pay gap worldwide has not narrowed





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- f) Women trade unionists must be empowered with information
 - ◆ and be fully involved in achieving a ‘just transition’ to sustainable jobs and development

- women as producers, consumers, educators, mothers, ‘change agents’ in workplaces and homes should play a greater role in tackling climate change and addressing food insecurity





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- g) Affirmative action measures and rigorous monitoring procedures to ensure implementation of ITUC commitments to achieving gender equality are vitally important





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

- A range of Action Plans must be implemented at international, regional and national levels:
- **1. Action Plan for Organising Women Workers**
 - ◆ All unions must implement an Action Plan for involving women workers as organisers, and for organising women workers
 - ★ including, the informal economy, EPZs, Domestic Workers, Young women workers, Atypical workers, Rural women workers, Migrant workers





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

■ 2. Action Plan for Collective Bargaining, Social Dialogue and Gender Equality

- ◆ All unions to ensure fair participation of women negotiators, and implement an Action Plan for collective bargaining, social dialogue and gender equality, including:
 - ★ Job security, decent work and a minimum wage, Work-life balance, maternity rights, breastfeeding, paternity and parental leave, flexible working, childcare and eldercare support, Pay and purchasing power – closing the pay and pensions gap, Gender-sensitive job evaluation and desegregation of the labour market, Equal promotion and training opportunities for women, Women's health & safety at the workplace and in health policy, including HIV/AIDS, Policies and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment, bullying and violence from the workplace, the home and wider community, Freedom of Association and paid time off for trade union representatives, Training for all negotiators and union representatives in the incorporation of gender policies in all trade union actions , Support for monitoring of the achievement of gender equality through measurable indicators of Decent Work for Women





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

■ 3. Worldwide Action on Gender Equality, Economic & Social Justice, Climate Change and Food Security

- ◆ All unions to ensure women are full participants in all plans to implement the Jobs Pact and campaign for investment in green jobs for women and men
 - ★ Campaign for the MDG 1 on poverty and hunger through the ITUC campaign Decent Work, Decent Life for Women
 - ★ Lobby for governments to ratify and implement ILO conventions into national law
 - ★ Actively support the recommendations of the ILC Report on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work and promote the use of the ILO Gender Audit tool
 - ★ Campaign for the adoption of an international labour standard for domestic workers, and the involvement of domestic workers at the International Labour Conference 2010-11; protect and defend migrant domestic workers
 - ★ Condemn violations of trade union women's rights and violence against trade union women and actively participate in the International Day to End Violence against Women 25 November





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

■ 3. Worldwide Action on Gender Equality, Economic & Social Justice, Climate Change and Food Security (contd)

- ★ Support social security and pensions for all
- ★ Continue campaigning for quality public services, including health, education, transport, water
- ★ Support women's rights to equal access to resources, including access to ownership of land, microfinance and loans
- ★ Ensure women members have access to education on all areas of trade union work at international level, including the global economic crisis, trade and labour standards, climate change, international institutions
- ★ Actively mobilise for International Women's Day 8 March as a Global Day of Action
- ★ Support the building of solidarity of women within trade unions and between trade union women at all levels, including international solidarity actions and Global Union Federations





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

■ 3. Worldwide Action on Gender Equality, Economic & Social Justice, Climate Change and Food Security **(contd)**

- ★ Share information, experience and best practices in all areas of trade union activity e.g. organising in the informal economy, migrant workers, strong integration of gender equality policies
- ★ Trade union women building alliances with civil society and women's organisations to achieve common objectives, including the World March of Women
- ★ Promote CEDAW (the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action, ensure the involvement of trade union women at the UN CSW (Commission on the Status of Women), and support the call for a UN 5th World Women's Conference





Principal Conclusions & Recommendations *(contd)*

■ 5. Women's Representation in Trade Unions

- ◆ The ITUC should continue to progress the commitment to achieving gender parity in its programmes and structures, and giving an equal voice and representation to millions of working women worldwide.
- ◆ The ITUC should ensure compliance by its affiliates through gender-disaggregated data collection and tackling non-compliance.
- ◆ Trade unions should take a lead in achieving gender equality in all their programmes, policies, structures and activities and analyse gender-disaggregated data to ensure coherence between their policies and those of the ITUC.





Conference Highlights

- The various Workshops:
 - ◆ I was assigned to Workshop B on Day One. This Group dealt with the global crisis & organising for rights at work – core labour standards & other international Conventions and commitments to gender equality
 - ★ Our discussion, report back and ensuing Conference debate led to development of the above Action Plans
 - ◆ On Day Two I was assigned to Group II. This Group addressed social protection & social security - universal coverage to include basic income, security, health care, maternity protection, old age & invalidity pensions, unemployment benefits, child and dependant care.
 - ★ Unfortunately I took ill (later diagnosed as a poisoned molar, necessitating an emergency root canal – erk! - on my return to NZ).
 - ★ I made the first-night Welcome function in the beautiful old Grande Place town hall but illness also kept me from the Conference dinner on the second night





Where to now ? Key Points -

- The Conference conclusions are to be fed back to the ITUC Women's Committee for preparation for Vancouver (ITUC Congress) Geneva (ILO Conference) & the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in 2010
- “We must recognise the need for trade unions to work together at the international level as well as national levels. Today, globalisation of the union movement is essential, working at national level alone is no longer enough
- Unions must show internationalism means something, that it is an instrument of self interest for workers.”
 - *(Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary)*





Next steps for us?

- Urgent need to organise NZ's domestic workers
- Pressure wherever we can bring it to bear to support the 2 new draft ILO Conventions developed from the Conference.
 - ★ These drafts are to be brought to the forthcoming ITUC Congress at Vancouver, and to the ILO Conference at Geneva.
 - ★ They address employment coverage and protections for domestic workers and, the abolition of all forms of violence against women
- A large part of the underlying agenda for this Conference was the opportunity to fully canvass, debate and refine draft ILO Conventions on both the above





Some personal observations

- The wonderful diversity of representation
 - ★ women from virtually every nation were there (albeit some facing terrible repercussions including potential torture & death in their home country)
- The immense reservoir of talent and courage women across the world display
 - ★ in challenging gender inequity, discrimination, hatred, violence and oppression
- The wonderful sense of sisterhood, mutual support and understanding shared between all
 - ★ irrespective of any language, cultural, or experience barriers and differences
- The many women from the developing world at the forefront of the struggle and, the Conference itself





The way forward for NZCTU women?

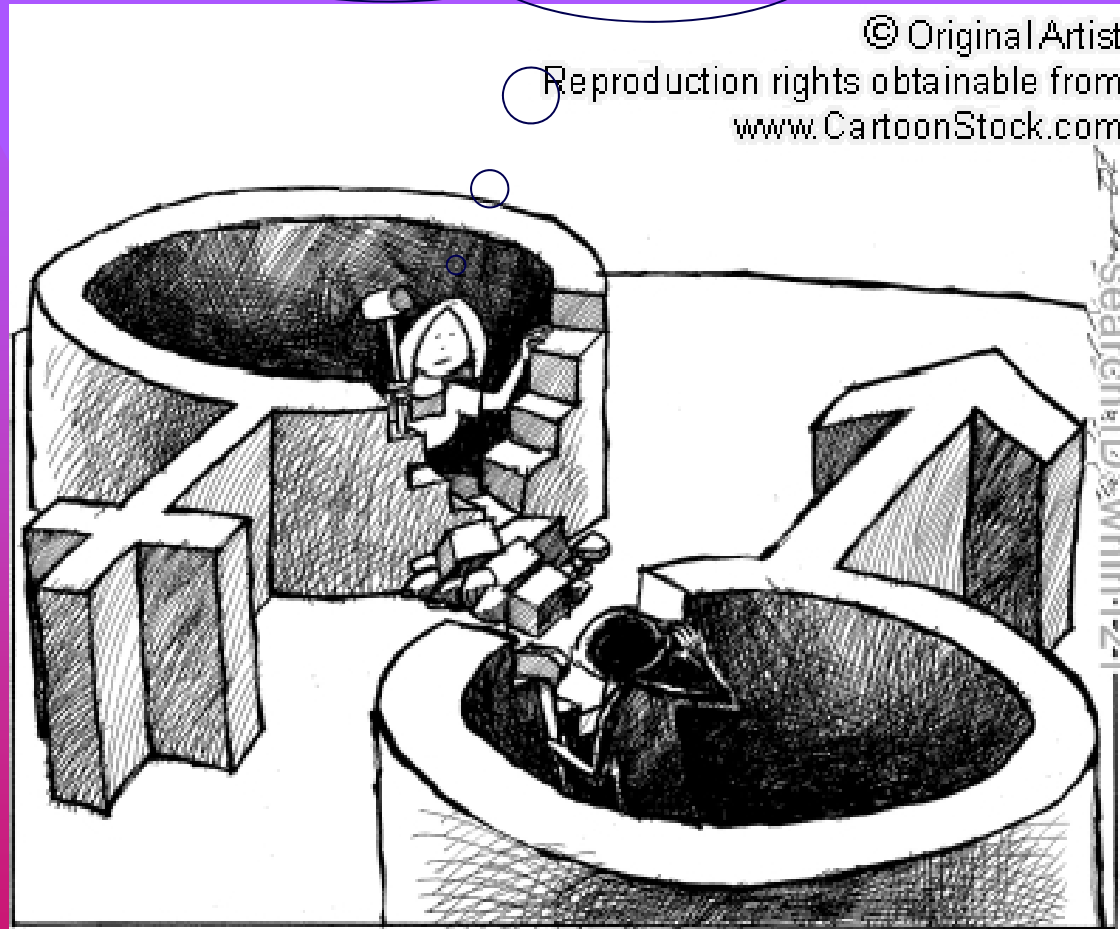
- Urgent attention must be given to organising our own country's domestic workers
 - ◆ A large proportion of whom will be Pacific island, Maori, and/or migrant women

- Equally, we must find effective and sustainable ways to attract and involve young women
 - ◆ to carry the fight for equity and equal opportunity forward , at work and in every area of our lives

- Questions?



So, what's the plan??





Important Addresses & Further Information

- The 1st World Women's Conference papers, proceedings, outcomes & photos can be found at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/-1st-world-women-s-conference-.html>
- The ITUC (our world trade union centre) is located at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/-home-.html?lang=en>





Important Addresses & Further Information

(contd)

- A Wage Indicator website that covers real wages for a wide range of occupations in 46 countries has been developed.
 - ◆ This database provides content about wages, working conditions, labour standards or other work-related topics in the countries it covers.
 - ◆ A Salary Check function providing free information on occupation-specific wages, controlled for individual factors, is part of this website
 - ◆ This Wage Indicator website also provides comparative information on the gender pay gap for specific occupations in the listed countries.
 - ◆ NZ is not yet in this database, but this site is nevertheless very interesting, Further expansion of this database to include Australasia and the Pacific is planned.
- Check this Wage Indicator website out at <http://www.wageindicator.org>





Important Addresses & Further Information

(contd)

- Worldwide the average gender pay gap is 16 percent.
 - ◆ No matter how hard they study and even when they are better educated, women do not really catch up with the pay levels of their male colleagues.
 - ◆ Amongst trade union members in general the gender pay gap is somewhat smaller.
 - ◆ According to this data the average gender pay gap in NZ (as at 2006) stood at 13.89%.
- For more details see the [ITUC Gender Pay Gap Report](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gap-1.pdf). (available on the ITUC website at <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/gap-1.pdf>)

