

**3rd ITUC Asia Pacific Conference
Resolution No. 1**

**BUILDING WORKERS' POWER
TOP PRIORITY FOR ORGANISING AND RECRUITMENT**

The Conference recognises that past few decades of globalisation and structural adjustment policies had taken their heavy toll on the conditions of working people throughout the world. The number of working poor has gone up - 1.22 billion people live on less than US\$1.25 a day (the present internationally accepted poverty line). Of them, the Asia Pacific region accounts for 733 million. Though there has been some respite from grinding poverty and hunger in some countries there is still considerable number of human beings gnawing under the poverty line. The inequalities between countries and within the countries have gone up. The share of workers income in the national economy has come down. Fundamental workers' rights are systematically eroded without any exception. Decent work is a far cry.

Unemployment is assuming alarming proportions and is increasingly defying any solution. Even in countries with impressive record of economic growth, the growth in employment is not commensurate with the GDP growth. In fact, in many countries there has been shrinkage in decent work in formal sector. If at all there is any significant creation of employment, it is in the informal / irregular sectors with sub-human working conditions. Along with surge in informal economy in developing countries, precarious unsafe vulnerable employment is also on the rise.

This gloomy scenario underlines the relevance, the need and the role of trade union movement. Only through trade unions, workers can improve their working and living conditions. Trade unions enable them to fight for their immediate needs but also transform society in order to eliminate the means of exploitation, and thus achieve social justice in a sustainable form. Trade unions represent toiling masses and bargain collectively for a fairer share of wages, safer workplaces, better conditions and social justice measures.

The ITUC represents the largest democratic force on earth and its regional organisation in Asia Pacific is the sole representative organisation of working people in the region. This unrivalled position entrusts on us the onerous responsibility of making our movement more effective, more representative and more inclusive organisation bringing more and more working people to the union fold. Organising all working women and men into free and democratic trade unions is the most important challenge facing the trade union movement everywhere.

A global survey commissioned by the ITUC revealed that democratic unions independent of government represent just 7% of the global workforce. Trade union penetration is declining globally. Barring a few exceptions in our region, this all pervasive phenomenon is not leaving many countries unaffected. In majority of the countries in our region, unionisation rate is less than 10%. More than 20% unionisation rate is very rare. Growing informal economy and precarious employment have contributed to declining membership. So are the restructuring and new forms of business organisations; hostilities of governments and employers; and inadequate legal frameworks. This scenario hardly provides an atmosphere conducive to free organising. Through organising, we can usher in the change we want.

People learn and understand the basics of collective action by acting collectively. Organising may vary from region to region, country to country, area to area and even enterprise to enterprise. There is no readymade model or solution on how organising should be done. Model must be developed, suited to the environment, the needs and aspirations of the workers in that particular sector, area or enterprise where an organising campaign is to be launched. We should follow the dictum – **“Think Globally, Act Locally.”**

Organising and recruiting will tend to become a ritual unless accompanied by collective agreements. Organising should be closely linked to collective agreements. This is not only necessary because of the need for improving the workers' conditions, but also to retain membership. The growth of unionisation should reflect in the number of collective agreements and the workers covered by them. In case of MNCs and EPZs, it is increasingly important to plan and coordinate such campaigns internationally. Targeted organising campaigns are required to recruit workers in the informal economy, migrant labour, EPZs and, of course, women and youth.

Organising must become an integral part of all trade union work. Education is a key element in organising strategies, whether it is for unorganised workers participating in an organising campaign, establishing trade union structures in newly-organised establishment or training professional and voluntary organisers. Through education and action, trade unions must strengthen the commitment of workers to trade unions and to collective action, as well as to recruit and develop the activities essential to trade unions.

The Conference notes that some affiliates of the ITUC-AP in recent times have done exemplary work in organising by bringing teeming millions into their fold. This has been in the case of both formal and informal economies. It would be useful to disseminate information on such experiences and success stories.

Supply chains engage large numbers of workers. And they are also notorious for denying workers their basic right of freedom of association and collective bargaining. Hence, we have to bring supply chains into the priority area of action in respect of organising.

Asia Pacific region has a tardy record in respect of ratification of fundamental conventions which facilitate organising. We need to intensify our campaign for ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions relevant to organising. Also, there is need for legal frameworks and labour law reforms to ensure right to organise and bargain collectively.

The ITUC-AP should be fully involved in the ITUC activities on organising. The Regional Conference would like to endorse and reiterate the action points set by the ITUC Berlin Congress.

The Conference commits the ITUC-AP, working with affiliates and GUFs to:

- Accord top priority to organising;
- Intensive campaign for ratification of the ILO Core Conventions;
- Exercise collective pressure on non-ratifying governments to ratify core conventions;
- Campaign for trade union law reforms in accordance with ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 to ensure right to organise and bargain collectively for all working places;
- Establishment of task forces on organising at various levels to execute organising activities;
- Concerted organising campaigns in supply chains, unorganised sectors within organised enterprises;
- Targeted organising campaigns aimed at informal / atypical workers, migrant labour, EPZs, women and youth;
- Active involvement in the internationally coordinated and strategically targeted organising initiatives;
- Establish education and training into all stages of organising process;
- Participate in and support the ITUC Organising Academy;

- Assist in preventing fragmentation of union movement and encourage all initiatives for greater trade union unity; and
- Intensive organising campaigns to achieve the 20% increase in membership during the next Conference period in accordance with the ITUC Berlin Congress Decision on organising, 20 million new members in this Congress period.