



5th International Trade Union Conference of Solidarity with the Saharai Workers and People

DECLARATION OF THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFERENCE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE SAHARAI WORKERS AND PEOPLE

The trade union organisations, from different countries, attending the 5th Conference, held in Lisbon, Portugal, on 27-28 October 2011, make public their position of deep concern for the situation of the Saharai men and women workers and condemn the repression against the Saharai people in the occupied territories.

The trade union organisations have, for many years, followed the hard situation lived by the Saharai people, through multiple presences, visits as well as trade union and humanitarian visits and missions to the occupied territories and to the refugee camps. Those initiatives have allowed them to witness the flagrant illegality of the Moroccan occupation and the dramatic consequences of that occupation in the living, working and health conditions of the Saharai population.

In a moment in which movements and processes of struggle for democracy are taking place in countries of the Middle East and North Africa, we cannot forget that the Saharai people had already, at the end of 2010, given evidence of their yearning of freedom and democracy, as was shown by the situation in the Gdeim Izik camp, which was violently dismantled by Morocco.

In this context, the trade union organisations decide:

1. At the political level, to strongly condemn the action of the Kingdom of Morocco and of its security forces that continue to violate, in a systematic manner, the most elementary human rights. A recent example was the repression carried out by the Moroccan security forces, aided by Moroccan settlers, in Dahla, against the Saharai population. To demand an independent judicial inquiry on the dismantling of the Gdeim Izik camp, the assassinations and other repressive actions against the Saharai population.
2. To demand that Morocco puts an immediate end to the hostilities against the Saharai population and that it integrally abides by international law and United Nations Resolutions as well as by the European Parliament Resolution.

3. To demand that the Moroccan authorities open the occupied territory borders in order to allow the free entry and free movement of all trade unionists, journalists, observers and international organisations, so that they may get directly acquainted with a reality unknown to many, particularly concerning the violation of the most basic human rights.
4. To ask the United Nations to attribute the necessary competences to the UN Mission for Western Sahara (MINURSO), so that it may carry out a strict control and surveillance over the respect of human rights in the whole Western Sahara territory.
5. To call on the European Union to immediately suspend the Advanced Status Agreement with Morocco and that the agreements on natural resources (namely on fishing) are not renewed, for these resources belong exclusively to the Saharai people. To call on the trade unions from the European Union member states to pressurise their governments in this direction, with a particular attention to the very specific responsibility of the Spanish state, the administrative power in an unfinished decolonisation process.
6. To demand the full enforcement of the rights laid down in the Charter of Human Rights and in the International Conventions for all those who work in Western Sahara, so that international and national organisations may develop their urgent solidarity action. In the framework of the UN, to increase and develop a more continued action of the High Commissioner for the Refugees; at European level, a more structured, broader and more determined action of the Union for the Mediterranean (UPM), in the urgent humanitarian aid to the Saharai people and in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.
7. To reaffirm their attachment to searching a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the conflict, that allows for the self-determination of the Saharai people and so that one of the last colonial situations in the world in the 21st century comes to an end. Therefore, they salute the responsible, open and dialoguing position of the Polisario Front that, many years ago, decreed a unilateral cease fire, unfortunately never until today corresponded by any gesture of good will on the part of the Moroccan government.
8. To reiterate their unequivocal support and solidarity to the just struggle of the Saharai people for their political, social and labour rights that can only be freely exercised in a context of freedom; rights which are specifically enshrined in the UN Resolutions on Western Sahara.
9. To express, at trade union level, their unconditional support and fraternal solidarity to UGTSARIO, the trade union centre, which legitimately represents the Saharai men and women workers.

In this field, they commit themselves:

- To increase their active and concrete solidarity to UGTSARIO, to the trade union activists and to the trade union structures that are forbidden in the occupied territories, for their strengthening, capacity building and intervention in favour of decent work and protection of labour rights.
- To enhance the visibility of the Saharai cause and especially of UGTSARIO, in their respective countries, while sensitizing the national, regional or international trade union organisations of which they are members or in whose actions they participate.
- To carry out efforts to organise a meeting with the different EP groups so that a European initiative in support and solidarity with the Saharai people may take place.
- To actively promote the practical application of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions in the occupied Saharai territories.
- To organise trade union missions to the occupied territories in a perspective of strengthening trade union solidarity and struggling for the guarantee of the Saharai workers' political, social and labour rights.
- To hold the 6th International Trade Union Conference in Solidarity with the Saharai men and women workers and people at the end of 2013.

The participants in the Conference condemn the sequestration of three "aid workers", which took place on 22-23 October, in the Tinduf camps.

Lisbon, 28 october 2011

The participants