



Message on the Occasion of the 1st May 2010 International Workers' Day

2010: A Historic Opportunity

The Movements affiliated to the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW) express their solidarity with all working women and men around the world and shares their worries and preoccupations in the face of unemployment and poverty which are being accentuated by the world economic crisis.

The observation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on the global crisis of employment underlines “that it started as a crisis of the financial markets, but soon transformed itself into a global employment crisis that engendered hardships and poverty into the lives of numerous workers their families and their communities.”

We should not forget that before this crisis, when the world economic growth was rising a large part of the world’s population was already experiencing problems in accessing food, health and other public services, they were living in extreme poverty or in the informal economy and had seen the increase in economic and social inequality.

This situation became far worse with the crisis: companies have stopped employing workers and a number of them have dismissed large numbers of employees. This situation has created suffering and deepening poverty and a loss of self confidence and a reduction in “employability”, in effect the more a person lives without a job the more he or she will find it difficult to find one.

Children, families, the poorest and most vulnerable are amongst those most affected by this crisis. According to the ILO, the increase in unemployment and poverty puts at risk, education, health and the well being of children. This situation could see a reversal of the recent advances made to reduce child labour in the world and increase their access to education.

The economic crisis has also increased unemployment of women workers as underlined by the ILO in its annual report [Global Trends of Women’s employment](#). We observe also an increase of immigrants who are returning to their own countries and a reduction of migratory flows towards host countries.

Young workers are equally amongst those most affected by the crisis. Many Young workers wish to assure a future where they can support their families and their communities and make a contribution to society, are seeing their dreams go up in smoke by the lack of work. The biggest challenge for society and the all the countries of the world is to allow Young workers access to a stable, productive and decent job.

Faced with this situation, many people are raising their voices to denounce the nature of an unsupportable globalisation. Last year during its international call for the establishment of a Global Pact for Employment, the ILO demanded that the basis of a global economy be fairness and sustainability and affirmed that it is vital to promote the respect and use of social dialogue such as collective negotiation. The ILO underlined that social dialogue is a mechanism of respected value for setting up policies adapted to national priorities. It is equally about a solid basis for the support by employers and workers to governmental policies aimed at overcoming

the crisis and creating sustainable solutions.

As Christians, in such a context we must remind ourselves of the social teachings of the Church. Rerum Novarum, the first social teaching document, referred itself to the question of labour in posing a fundamental criterion, according to which “No one is allowed to violate with impunity this human dignity that God himself treats with great respect”. It defends amongst others, the rights at work and to a just wage, the right to rest from work, the right to association and to the protection of women and children.

Let us see this crisis as an opportunity to raise awareness of the need to profoundly change society especially in the way that it organises the economy. These changes are necessary in relation to economic and financial speculation. So that wealth and resources will be at the service of human beings and in order for the practice of the rights at work will be applied to achieve decent work. “The human person in his or her integrity is the first capital to save an value” (Caritas in Veritate, 25).

This first of May opens up for us a horizon of solidarity with our work colleagues, of justice and participation in the construction at a world level of another model founded on decent work. We must go towards an economy that supports people and social life, that proposes a fair distribution of riches and produces the necessary wealth in a way that is decent and respectful of the dignity of all working women and men and of the environment. It is about an historic opportunity to improve the future of our humanity.

World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW)