

**International  
International  
Policy**

***ACTU CONGRESS 2003***

1. The ACTU recognises the importance of union action to:
  - (a) uphold the rights of workers in the Asia-Pacific region and internationally,
  - (b) eliminate discrimination against particular groups,
  - (c) secure higher levels of aid and development assistance for the people of developing countries,
  - (d) promote democratic reform and the peaceful resolution of conflict,
  - (e) reform international financial institutions, and
  - (f) achieve an independent Australian foreign policy.
2. The ACTU will support measures that promote the rights of workers and a better environment in which they live and work, such as:
  - (a) the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and
  - (b) global framework agreements negotiated by the ICFTU and Global Union Federation initiatives.
3. To improve the position of workers Unions can also use:
  - (a) the UN Global Compact,
  - (b) the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies,
  - (c) shareholder action, and
  - (d) corporate governance instruments.

4. Many unions in the Asia-Pacific region are confronted with a critical and uncertain future. The challenges to workers and their unions are formidable as they are:
  - (a) attacked and harassed by governments determined to destroy them;
  - (b) undermined by World Bank and IMF policies and programmes;
  - (c) frequently out-manoeuvred by the resources of transnational companies;
  - (d) divided into a multiplicity of national union centres; and
  - (e) too frequently without strategic, properly resourced plans and programmes to recruit, organise and campaign.
  
5. In assisting the development of unions in our region the ACTU will continue to support the programmes in this area of Union Aid Abroad - Australian People for Health Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA), and work with:
  - (a) other national union centres and their affiliates,
  - (b) the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and its Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (ICFTU-APRO),
  - (c) the South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions (SPOCTU), and other union networks such as Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR), and
  - (d) the Global Union Federations.
  
6. Strong, independent, inclusive and democratic unions are the key institutions for organising workers and promoting the rights of workers and their families at the local, national, and international level. The ACTU will offer support and solidarity to workers and groups seeking to establish independent unions in countries where governments or employers control workers' organisations. It will support international campaigns that foster inclusive and representative unionism such as campaigns:
  - (a) for the rights of women workers,
  - (b) to combat anti-semitism and racism, and
  - (c) to combat discrimination against gays and lesbians.

## Global Union Activism

7. Global Unions, particularly in the Asia Pacific region are now engaged in a battle for their survival. They now must become strategic, organising, campaigning and activist forces, integrating and mobilising all workers whether in the sector workplace, at national, or regional and international levels. The ACTU will support every effort, whether through its affiliates and their Global Union Federations or through the ICFTU to ensure that unions in the region are mobilised and strengthened to defend and promote their rights.
8. Affiliates will be supported in their own solidarity initiatives, and in efforts to encourage individual members to contribute to solidarity work, particularly in the region.
9. The ACTU strongly supports the campaigns for international debt relief and for the Australian Government to commit at least 0.7% of GNP to overseas aid and development assistance, as called for by the United Nations. The ACTU opposes the trend of moving development aid through commercial, for profit companies and calls upon the Australian Government to allocate at least 10% of its overseas budget through accredited Australian non-government organisations for international development.
10. The ACTU commends the decision to permit the tariff free entry of goods from the Least Developed Countries.
11. The ACTU will continue to:
  - (a) provide Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA with core funding,
  - (b) encourage unions to negotiate the inclusion of the organisation on employer lists of charities for payroll deductions, and
  - (c) encourage individual unionists, and union officials and staff to donate to Union Aid Abroad- APHEDA.
12. ACTU Congress congratulates affiliated unions, state and provincial labour councils and countless thousands of delegates and rank and file members who participated in the largest anti-war actions ever seen in Australia. The union movement joined the majority of Australians in opposing the use of military force in Iraq, building important links with the community and young people in particular.
13. The norms of international law under the auspices of the United Nations are the most highly developed rules in existence to prevent war. These processes require further reform and democratisation. The attack on Iraq, by the US, UK and Australia is a serious breach of the law with grave implications for the future. The US-led occupying authority of Iraq should be replaced by a UN administration as soon as

possible. Moreover, the US should abandon consideration of the proposal for a US-led standing international peace-keeping force, operating outside UN authority.

14. Peace is union business. The ACTU will oppose the unilateralist policy and pre-emptive strike doctrine of the Bush Administration, and campaign against the use of bases in Australia and our armed forces for these purposes. The ACTU will defend the authority of the UN, and promote the acceptance of this position on the part of the Australian Government.

### Terrorism

15. The ACTU unequivocally condemns terrorism. Brutal acts of terror directed against civilians and aimed at maximum loss of lives cannot be excused, rationalised, justified or defended under any circumstances.
16. The ACTU believes that the fundamental pillars of peace and disarmament include:
  - (a) acceptance of the authority of the UN, and the provision of additional resources to UN agencies;
  - (b) the promotion of freedom, democracy, justice, peace education, and of basic human and trade union rights;
  - (c) development assistance and socio-economic programmes that attack the root causes of war, conflict, and terrorism by addressing the conditions that deprive communities of justice and an equitable share of resources;
  - (d) an international treaty based regime which provides for the multilateral progressive and verifiable elimination and cessation of the production and possession of weapons of mass destruction, and weapons, such as land mines and cluster bombs; and the cessation of the export of small arms to conflict zones in the developing world;
  - (e) leadership, by the major possessors of weapons of mass destruction, in complying with weapons control conventions, in refraining from the development of new tactical nuclear weapons, and in initiating disarmament; and
  - (f) the avoidance of any unilateral action which could trigger a new nuclear arms race.
17. The ACTU will continue to work and co-operate with community organisations in campaigning for transparent, democratic and accountable multinational financial institutions, such as the World Bank, Asia Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The social and economic problems caused by the IMF's deregulatory requirements on East Asian countries during the financial crisis and by World Bank loan conditions for many developing countries necessitate a new model which emphasises the importance of:

- (a) expenditure on health and education,
  - (b) affordable access to water and food, and
  - (c) constructive state intervention.
18. The ACTU will encourage its affiliates to participate in new frameworks, such as the World Social Forum, that organise opposition and promote alternatives to the deregulatory model.
19. The ACTU believes in a more independent Australian foreign policy which recognises:
- (a) the priority of Australia's relations with nations in the region;
  - (b) that national security and combating terrorism not only includes an effective defence force, but also a commitment to the promotion of human rights, reducing inequality, and achievement of the millennium development goals;
  - (c) that Australia's defence doctrine and military structure should remain focused on national defence and security in the immediate region;
  - (d) that Australia's security interests include promoting the objective of a regional arms limitation agreement in order to avoid both a conventional arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and
  - (e) the advantages of a complementary trade policy focused upon multilateral outcomes that do not discriminate between Australia's Asian and North American trading partners, rather than the extension of a military alliance through a free trade agreement with the US.
20. The priority of relations with nations in the region does not mean that Australia should cease promoting democratic reform and recognition of human rights.
21. The ACTU believes that a stable, democratic Indonesia is a key element of foreign policy and the emergence of independent and representative Indonesian unions are integral to that process.

22. The ACTU recognises in particular the importance of supporting the union movement in Timor Leste as essential to realising a democratic and independent sovereign nation able to fully benefit from its natural resources.
23. In addition this will require the transition of the TNI to a professional army that does not depend on business activities for its finances; the resumption of peaceful negotiations with the people of Aceh; as well as ensuring through negotiations, the rights of the people of Irian Jaya/West Papua to have their voices heard in regard to economic, social and political rights.
24. In light of the failure of the Downer policy of engagement with the military regime in Burma, the ACTU believes that the Government should heed the call of the Burmese opposition to isolate the regime.
25. The deployment of Australian police and troops in the Solomon Islands at the request of that country's government and with the support of the Pacific Islands Forum does not set any unilateralist precedent, and is consistent with our responsibilities to the region. Australia should increase its assistance to the South Pacific, particularly to programmes designed to:
  - (a) tackle the outbreak of AIDS,
  - (b) promote multi-ethnic civil society institutions,
  - (c) increase transport and economic links between and within the individual countries,
  - (d) raise levels of education, and
  - (e) strengthen internal governance and regional political and economic arrangements.

### **Middle East**

26. The ACTU supports the "road map" and a genuine strategy for its implementation which gives new hope that real progress will be made to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, based on the co-existence of two sovereign states in line with United Nations' resolutions. Furthermore, the ACTU opposes the establishment of the "separation wall" as a violation of Palestinian human rights.
27. The ACTU commends the ICFTU in its commitment and continued support of the Israeli and Palestinian trade unions to resume and strengthen their dialogue and co-operation.

### **Colombia**

28. During 2002 nearly 200 unionists were assassinated making Colombia, by far the most dangerous country in the world to be a unionist. In only two cases out of some 3,500 unionists murdered since 1987, have their killers been convicted of murder. The ACTU, condemns such brutality and will continue to provide support and solidarity with unions in Colombia; requests the Australian Government to provide protection for Colombian unionists seeking resettlement, as refugees; and reaffirms its commitment to play an active role in the ongoing national and international action through the ICFTU, Global Union Federations and the ILO, to ensure justice for Colombian workers and their families.

### **Union Support**

29. Within the Asian region unions struggle for their survival. In particular, the ACTU will continue to co-operate with unions in Indonesia in the further democratisation and strengthening of their organisations; to support the development and capacity of the Burmese union movement and to continue to campaign for the release and return of the legitimate government led by Aung San Suu Kyi; and the continued expansion of the support for the union movement in Timor Leste.

### **Refugees**

30. The increasing complexity of the movement of asylum seekers, internally displaced peoples, and refugees demand responsible and multifaceted strategies including, aid and development co-operation; trade and investment policies; defence policies including a strengthening of peace keeping capacities; maintaining and extending relations with the United Nations' system including those related to sustainable development and environment; as well as immigration/refugee specific policies.
31. Australia should rescind legislation which has excised Christmas and Cocos Islands, as well as any other territories from Australia's migration zones. In addition it should not be taking advantage of the financial fragility of small countries in the region to relocate detention centres and refugee processing outside Australian territory. The ACTU calls on the Commonwealth Government to honour Australia's obligations under the Refugee Convention, to:
  - (a) end mandatory detention,
  - (b) cease deporting people to unsafe or unstable countries, and
  - (c) grant all refugees permanent settlement rights and as such abolish Temporary Protection Visas.

32. The ACTU recognises that the scale of the movement of people seeking either asylum, or a better standard of living as guest workers or as unregistered immigrants, warrants a coordinated international response. The ACTU welcomes and will contribute to the discussions within international trade union organisations on the global movement of people, noting that they also include the development implications of the recruitment by OECD nations of skilled workers, professionals, and graduates from the developing world.
33. The ACTU recognises that with the increasing globalised movement of goods and services, comes the increased movement of people. The ACTU commends the ILO in initiating and co-ordinating an international approach to labour migration and urges both its affiliates and the Australian Parliament to become involved in the process leading up to the International Labour Conference 2004 discussions on the issue.