



# POLICY

## A FAIR GO FOR ALL

### 19. INTERNATIONAL

1. Congress re-affirms the union movement's enduring commitment to promote the rights of workers in all countries.
2. Congress asserts the need for strong, independent, representative and democratic unions in all nations. We salute the courage of workers facing conflict, struggles for liberation and democracy, the fight against starvation, discrimination and exploitation in every quarter of the globe.
3. Rapidly growing inequality in the global economy pushes millions of wage workers into precarious work, or through privatisation, casualisation and outsourcing, millions are relegated to becoming the hard-working poor. The situation of the migrant, informal and rural sector workers is bleak, though they make up an increasing percentage of the global workforce. The climate crisis is exacerbating inequalities, eroding food and energy security, constraining access to water, triggering civil and military conflicts, shifting disease burdens, amplifying catastrophic weather impacts, and immiserating millions.
4. In this context, unions, workers organisations and social justice movements are essential to protect the rights of all of the world's working people. We stand in solidarity with the global labour movement for decent work, against exploitation and precarious work. Forced and slave labour in global supply chains are a scourge to be eliminated everywhere.

### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

5. Congress affirms the long-standing priorities for action for Australian unions through the ACTU are:
  - a) to uphold the rights of workers everywhere and, in particular, in our immediate neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific region;
  - b) to work to eliminate discrimination, xenophobia and racism;
  - c) to secure a more effective aid program with higher levels of development assistance for the people of developing countries;
  - d) to promote democratic reform and the peaceful resolution of conflict;
  - e) to pursue reform of international institutions, including strong global regulation and governance that puts people first;

- f) to support an independent Australian foreign policy; and
  - g) to secure urgent action to achieve a comprehensive global agreement on climate change, including measures and financing for a Just Transition for workers in all nations with special focus on ameliorating the impact on women and people living in poverty.
6. Responding to the threats of climate change and the economic crises that are endemic under capitalism, the shape of a fair and sustainable globalisation will be influenced by our values, our activism and our unity through international unionism.
7. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Unions Council bring together national councils and confederations with the Global Union Federations (GUFs) to tackle in unity agreed priorities for the global union movement. Congress is committed to regional and global organising, and will work with affiliates and their GUFs to co-ordinate action plans in strategic industries, along global manufacturing and transport/logistics supply chains and in regions.
8. Unity is essential in order to:
- a) support rights at work and secure fair labour laws in other countries;
  - b) organise workers in global corporations and their supply chains through international collective bargaining and the use of our leverage with Australian companies;
  - c) organise in economic processing zones (EPZs);
  - d) get access to and organise in closed off manufacturing or energy sites where workers are also housed (e.g. LNG site in Papua New Guinea);
  - e) hold governments to account for the lack of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and to achieve agreement about the post-2015 development agenda including finalising, through the United Nations, a comprehensive suite of effective Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), incorporating commitments to a decent life and decent work in a healthy environment, while securing needs and ensuring opportunity for future generations;
  - f) establish just globalisation based on full employment and decent work;
  - g) achieve reform of financial regulation and the international financial institutions (IFIs);
  - h) drive support for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; and
  - i) hold governments accountable for a sustainable planet.

## **GLOBAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND POLICY**

9. Congress notes that social, economic and political instability plagues all quarters of the globe. Decisive action to address climate change is yet to be achieved. Inequity and exploitation have grown. The promotion of workers' rights must be central to all union priorities and guaranteed in global governance and public policy.

10. The enduring global financial crisis that broke in the US private sector in 2008 rapidly became an economic crisis with ballooning unemployment in many countries, a sovereign debt crisis for nation states within the European Union, and a threat to democracy with concerted attacks on the fundamental rights of workers across many countries at the insistence of global financial institutions.
11. The victims of this crisis are working people, in developed and developing countries, who have lost their jobs, their livelihoods, their houses, their social security, and public services. Young people, women and older workers are especially affected by the crisis.
12. The ITUC and Global Unions' have consistently called on G20 leaders to initiate a major recovery plan that invests in infrastructure and 'green jobs' and protects low incomes; to reregulate financial markets; and attack the explosion in inequality in income distribution that generated the US debt bubble and contributed to the global financial meltdown. Yet governments that bailed out major financial institutions have left unchecked the power relationships and corporate cultures that gave rise to the risky and irresponsible behaviour by financial institutions that lie at the root of the crisis.
13. G20 leaders' summits initially expressed support for coordinated economic stimulus measures that put jobs at the heart of the recovery, but this support has weakened substantially over subsequent years. No longer focused on finding remedies for acute crisis, they have become routine showpieces for managing chronic global economic malaise. As most recently reflected in the Brisbane Communique issued under the Australian Presidency of the G20 in 2014, no longer is their concern to pursue job-centred growth initiatives, to implement strong regulatory reforms targeted at preventing practices which led to the crisis, or to adopt new revenue raising measures such as a Financial Transactions Tax (FTT). G20 Communiqués now embrace fiscal consolidation with public expenditure cuts and austerity measures in the hope of appeasing financial markets.
14. Since early 2010, G20 government policymaking has been driven by global financial markets rather than the other way round. On the back of unprecedented guarantees of their liabilities provided by governments, the banks have returned to profits, paying massive bonuses to executives, lobbying against financial reform, and failing to resume lending to small and medium-sized businesses.
15. The failure of austerity policies to generate sustainable growth is patently clear, as is their cruel impact on the lives and living standards of working people and their families. We salute the courage of the Greek people in rejecting the devastating austerity measures imposed on them and electing a government that speaks truth to power and puts jobs at the heart of macroeconomic policy. We call on the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank to respect the democratic process and negotiate all outstanding matters in good faith with the Greek Government.
16. Congress supports the alternative policy package developed and consistently advocated by Global Unions - ITUC, GUFs and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), which puts jobs first and makes withdrawal of economic stimulus contingent on growth returning to above-trend rates. To shape a post-crisis world that is economically, socially and environmentally just and sustainable, this plan calls for G20 governments to:
  - a) Put quality jobs at the heart of recovery by establishing differentiated but coordinated jobs targets for the G20 countries, including immediate measures for job-intensive infrastructure programs, green jobs investment and labour market programs to raise skills;

- b) Strengthen labour market institutions, social partnerships, collective bargaining, negotiated and legislated minimum wages, and income support for low-income groups to reduce income inequality; and commit to a jobs pact for youth;
- c) Establish a sound and secure social protection floor that is supported by adequate funding according to national levels of development;
- d) Implement rapidly the reforms to the financial sector that were agreed at the London G20 summit in 2008 but never effectively enacted, to check the insidious power relationships and toxic corporate cultures that were the genesis of the risky and irresponsible conduct of financial institutions and the root cause of the financial crisis via effective regulation; ensure financial groups that are 'too big to fail' are effectively restructured; and establish a financial transactions tax.

## **INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

17. Congress calls on all international financial and development institutions including the IMF and World Bank, to honour and respect the 2008 ILO Social Justice Declaration for a Fair Globalisation, which provides the framework for implementation of decent work built on core labour standards, social protection and safety. Congress calls on the World Bank to adopt effective social and environmental safeguards that require all World Bank projects to comply with all ILO core labour standards, including freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, irrespective of their status in national law, to fully cover government workers, to cover contract and sub-contract workers directly and in the supply chain, and to cover workers in the informal sector

## **TRADE AGREEMENTS AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

18. Congress re-affirms support for fair trade which puts workers' rights, labour standards and equity at the core of trade rules and provides policy space for nations to develop sustainable industries and retain and develop regulation to protect health, environment and other policies in the public interest. Congress calls on the Australian Government to support the inclusion of enforceable labour rights and enforceable environmental standards in all bilateral and regional trade agreements negotiated, and to oppose Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions which favour the interests of multinational corporations. Congress also opposes stronger monopoly patent rights in medicines, which would delay availability of cheaper generic medicines, and opposes extension of monopoly rights for copyright holders at the expense of consumers. Australian trade unions will work with trade union centres in trading partners to gain support for strong labour rights protections in trade agreements from their respective governments, notably the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) negotiations, and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA).
19. TPP and PACER Plus are proposed to be large regional agreements covering trade, services and investment across numerous nation states, with TPP being negotiated between Australia, the US, Japan and 9 other Pacific Rim countries and PACER Plus covering 14 Pacific Island countries plus Australia and New Zealand. TPP would be the largest regional trade deal in history, covering 792 million people and 40 per cent of global trade; leaks from TPP negotiations have revealed that some countries are trying to reject protections of workers' rights and that the TPP deal does not cover ILO Core Labour Standards. Both proposed agreements carry profound implications for the economies and societies concerned. Congress condemns the secrecy with which both TPP and PACER Plus continue to be negotiated, with the texts being withheld from public scrutiny until after Cabinet

makes the decision to sign them, after which they cannot be changed. Where consultations occur, the format of consultations allows only minimal engagement by civil society, trade unions and communities. We call on the government to release the text of all trade agreements for public and parliamentary debate before they are signed or withdraw from negotiations.

20. TPP would be the largest trade deal in the history, covering 792 million people and 40 per cent of global trade. If ISDS provisions are included in it, foreign corporations would get access to private tribunals outside the Australian legal system if they can allege that a change in domestic law, regulation or policy will “harm” their investment. These regulations can include laws to protect workers’ rights, public health, and the environment or consumer protection. According to leaked documents, the US is also pushing proposals on behalf of its major global pharmaceutical, media, and tobacco corporations which would increase the price of medicines, increase costs and restrictions on the Internet, and undermine laws on public health and environment (such as tobacco plain packaging regulations). We call on the government to reject all these proposals.
21. With respect to PACER Plus, Congress supports the concerns of Pacific Island unions and community organisations that a free trade agreement will not address the most pressing needs of vulnerable Pacific Island communities facing poverty and loss of land from rising seas due to climate change, and that priority in Australian policy should be given to these issues.
22. Congress asserts again that workers are not commodities and arrangements for temporary seasonal workers should not be part of PACER-Plus or other trade agreements. These arrangements should continue to be made through separate government to government migration agreements, with appropriate arrangements to protect the rights of temporary workers, and to ensure that these workers are employed on the same working conditions as their Australian and New Zealand counterparts.
23. Congress notes that Australia is jointly leading, with the United States and the European Union, negotiations on a services-only free trade agreement known as the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). Involving 23 countries, this Agreement aims to liberalise the worldwide trade of services far beyond the trade liberalisation of the multilateral GATS or any of the proposed other regional or bilateral agreements. TISA is being negotiated outside of WTO processes and also involves a coalition of service industry organisations, predominantly but not exclusively US based. Congress notes that TISA may put public healthcare, broadcasting, water, transport, education and other services at risk. The proposed deal could make it impossible for future governments to restore public services to public control, even in cases where private service delivery has failed. It would also restrict a government’s ability to regulate key sectors including financial, energy, telecommunications and cross-border data flows.
24. Congress commits the ACTU to continue constructive engagement and debate on Australia in the Asian Century and notes that a feature of Australian workers’ income and job security rests on the quality and nature of the Australian economic, political and social relationship with Asia generally and with China, India and Japan in particular.
25. In that context Congress urges the Australian Government, through the web of bi-lateral and multi-lateral relationships and institutions that guide Australia’s engagement with Asia, to ensure that economic, trade and industry development frameworks that underpin those relationships support further diversification of Australian industry aimed at providing decent and secure employment into the future and support the growth of democratic institutions in those partner nations, including independent trade unions.

26. Congress urges the Australian Government to take more positive steps to ensure Australian industry and working people, both now and in the future, achieve better outcomes from Asia's dependency on Australian contributions to energy, raw material and food security in Asia.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

27. Congress acknowledges the United Nations' Business and Human Rights agenda and the ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy as well as the OECD's Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and strongly supports calls for corporate responsibility to respect human rights along the supply chains and for companies to be held accountable.
28. Congress acknowledges the work of the ITUC Committee for Workers' Capital and supports the use of capital strategies where workers' capital can be effective in providing practical interventions of international solidarity.
29. Congress calls on the Australian Government to promote multilateralism by supporting the United Nations and the ILO. Congress calls on the government to ratify the following priority Conventions:
- a) UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 2003;
  - b) ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) ;
  - c) ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal People, date, (C.169);
  - d) ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97);
  - e) ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 195 (No. 143) ;
  - f) ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181);
  - g) ILO Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 (No. 94);
  - h) ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189);
  - i) ILO Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177);
  - j) ILO Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176);
  - k) IMO Convention on Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships 2009
  - l) ILO Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151);
  - m) ILO Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)
30. Congress further calls on the Australian Government to use Australian ratification of these Conventions to leverage their ratification more broadly in the Asia Pacific Region.
31. Furthermore, we call on the Australian Government to support the UN Secretary-General's proposal for a Convention to prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling,

transfer and use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and provide for their elimination in a verifiable, irreversible, transparent and time-bound manner.

32. Congress opposes the current federal government's proposal to strip Australian citizens of their citizenship (including where that citizen has no other citizenship) without due process and natural justice and potentially in breach of our obligations under International Law on the Reduction of Statelessness.

## OVERSEAS AID

33. Congress condemns the Australian government's appalling budget cuts to overseas aid and calls on the government to reverse them and restore Australia's good standing in providing aid and assistance to countries in need. Australian aid should focus on addressing the widening inequalities within low and middle income countries and in benefiting poor people and poor countries rather than assisting Australian business abroad or linking aid with offshore processing. Congress urges the Australian Government to focus on the Decent Work agenda and on sustainable development in our region, working with other governments and social partners to effectively meet internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals and realise peace and democracy in countries experiencing conflict.
34. Congress believes the Australian government should honour international commitments to raise international development expenditure to 0.7 per cent of GNI, with at least 10 per cent of the aid program delivered by non-profit Australian NGOs in partnership with local civil society organisations. Congress calls on the Australian government to adopt the policies of most other OECD donors in consciously earmarking ongoing funding for the development of the international trade union movement, as key contributor to social and economic development, and as leading component of democratic civil society. Congress further calls on the Australian government to hold an inquiry into the transparency, accountability, effectiveness, value for money and profit margins in the large commercial contracts in the aid program.
35. Congress commits the ACTU to press the Australian Government to substantially refocus aspects of its international development assistance programs so that:
  - a) Recipient nations commit to internationally accepted labour standards as part of acceptance of Australian aid;
  - b) Programs involving employment contain a component requiring independent trade union participation;
  - c) Public sector programs assist recipient nations develop regulatory structures capable of ensuring those nations have the capability to ratify and comply with core ILO and IMO Conventions; and
  - d) A component of aid program funding is set aside to ensure that in all significant infrastructure and resource development projects the local population is trained in skills to enable them to be employed in these projects, to ensure these jobs respect workers' rights as espoused by the ILO's Core Conventions, and to ensure that the government of that country receives a fair share of the wealth being generated from their resources to provide public goods.

## FREE, DEMOCRATIC AND INDEPENDENT UNIONS

36. Working people continue to organise and create free, independent and democratic unions in countries where workers lack rights and face suppression for voicing their demands for fairness and justice at work. Congress applauds the efforts to create new democratic and independent unions and reform existing state-controlled unions in these countries. The ACTU and Australian unions have supported the development of free and independent unions in many parts of the world and will continue to assist to strengthen these efforts. Congress calls on the Australian government to support this work and integrate decent work and support for trade unions into the Australian aid program.

## REGIONS IN CONFLICT

37. Through the International Committee the ACTU will continue to monitor and seek to influence democratic, peaceful outcomes to support workers and unions especially in countries and areas of the Asia-Pacific region including:
- a) Fiji, where the 2014 general election ended decades of overt military dictatorship. While the repression of unions and systematic violations of human and worker rights under the military regime's Decrees are yet to be resolved, the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding on Employment Relations, signed at the ILO Governing Body meeting in Geneva in February 2015, is a welcome step in the right direction. Congress reiterates its solidarity with the Fiji Trades Union Congress and encourages all moves towards ending division and building unity across the Fiji union movement;
  - b) Burma/Myanmar, where progress towards true democracy is slow and hesitant. Congress welcomes the return to Myanmar of CTUM General Secretary Maung Maung after years in exile, and applauds the work now underway by CTUM and the broad Burmese labour movement with the support of the ITUC and ILO in (re)building a free, democratic and representative trade union movement and urges all unions to work to end division and build unity as this is fundamental to ensuring that workers are influential in Burma's emerging economy and their voices are heard;
  - c) West Papua, where violations of human and trade union rights are endemic and reports of atrocities chillingly frequent. Congress supports the right of the West Papuan people to self-determination consistent with UN principles; recognises the Federal Republic of West Papua; and further supports the application by United Liberation Movement for West Papua for full membership of the Melanesian Spearhead Group;
  - d) Cambodia, where in 2014 five workers demonstrating in support of increased minimum wages were shot dead by police and dozens arrested, and the exercise of legitimate rights by free independent unions continues to be suppressed; and
  - e) Congress further affirms its support for independent, representative and democratic unions in other countries including Thailand, China, Brunei, Iran, Iraq, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.
38. The ACTU and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions work jointly in coordinating and providing funding for the South Pacific and Oceania Council of Trade Unions (SPOCTU). Congress endorses and supports SPOCTU's efforts to organise young people and SPOCTU's work on minimum wages in Pacific Island countries. Similarly, Congress endorses and supports the continuing engagement with the Southern Initiative Group on Trade Union



Rights (SIGTUR) by ACTU and through affiliates in supporting the growth and development of grass-roots unionism in all countries of the wider Indian Ocean region. Congress endorses ITUC policy and practical initiatives in monitoring and influencing democratic, peaceful outcomes in the interests of workers and unions globally, including Africa, and the Americas. We salute the struggle for self-determination and independence in Western Sahara, the continuing struggle of unions for peaceful democratic change in Zimbabwe, and the struggle against violence, murder and intimidation of unionists in Colombia.

39. Congress recognises and applauds the leadership role played by the ITUC in supporting the struggles of all democratic unions throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and the recent establishment of the ITUC-Arab regional organisation. The impact of Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the rights of all workers in the region and their families – Palestinians, Israelis and other communities – is rightly the central focus of ITUC concern. Congress notes the role of workers in the inspiring political struggle in Egypt, North Africa and the Middle East, and affirms its solidarity with working people facing repression in countries including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies and caught in bitter conflicts in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria, and Somalia. Congress notes with regret the reversal of democratic processes and workers' rights in the region, and extend solidarity with workers, and solidarity with working people caught in bitter conflicts in Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Somalia.
40. Democratic unions across the region have shown the vital role they can and must play in delivering the hope for open, transparent civil societies where the rights of all people are protected irrespective of their ethnicity, nationality, religion or gender, and we extend our solidarity to them. Congress stands in full solidarity with the ITUC in condemning terrorists and terrorism in all guises, noting that the leaders of unions have been targeted by various terrorist groups across North Africa and the Middle East. Congress deplores the related rise of right-wing extremism in Australia, where groups purportedly seeking to 'reclaim' our country hide behind the Southern Cross to vent their divisive racist and nationalistic views.

#### **UNION AID ABROAD - APHEDA**

41. Congress congratulates all the staff, volunteers, supporters and partners of Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA who have contributed to the substantial achievements of the organisation since its establishment in 1984. The ACTU and unions recommit to grow APHEDA as a central part of our union work. In particular, ACTU and unions will promote individual member contributions to assist the future work of APHEDA in supporting development and social justice internationally. Of particular note is APHEDA's work in raising and delivering emergency relief to countries of our region hit by natural disasters including most recently Cyclone Pam which devastated Vanuatu in 2015. Recently celebrating its 30th anniversary, Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA is uniquely the aid agency owned by and accountable to the union movement, focused not on charity but solidarity, social justice and the struggles of working people for dignity, equality, rights and prosperity.

#### **GLOBAL UNION CAMPAIGNS**

42. The ACTU supports the work of the ITUC and the GUFs in coordination of and campaigning for action on issues of critical importance to working people and their families worldwide. On climate change, promoting sectoral agreements, the promotion of decent jobs in the emerging clean energy sector, and measures to support jobs in emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries (EITEs), Congress supports the ITUC's call for a 'just transition' for all workers and for the funds to support development and adaptation in vulnerable countries. Congress applauds and endorses the ITUC's Qatar and UAE campaigns to rid the world of the scourge of forced labour which amounts to modern day slavery; the continuing battle in

the ILO against employer attempts to weaken and undermine the right to strike; the “Count Us In” campaign to organise more women in unions and bring more women into leadership positions in unions; and the “Get Organised” campaign to promote the organisation and recruitment of young workers in unions.