

International Conference

« THE FUTURE OF WORK – VALUE THE WORK AND VALUE THE WORKERS »

The CGTP-IN aims with this document to encourage the debate and reflection of the international trade union movement to promote its common and convergent action in the value of work and workers. This is a contribution of the

CGTP-IN towards the objectives of the conference, which does not have to be ratified by the participants nor will link them to the positions assumed in it.

The concentration of wealth at the expense of the exploitation of Workers

The fundamental contradiction that marks our world lies in the fact that never before in the history of mankind so much wealth has been produced as today, with most of the wealth being concentrated in the hands of one percent of the world's population.

On average, 99% of the world's population had an income of 3,851 USD (per capita) in 2014, while those among the 1% richest segment had, on average, a wealth of USD 2.7 million (per capita).

More than 300 million workers still live on less than 1.25 USD/per day, most of whom in Third World countries. The level of poverty has been increasing in the so-called industrialized countries, where the share of work in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to drop significantly, increasingly affecting those who hold a job. Estimates point to a growth of 3 million new poor workers in developing countries in 2017 and 2018.

Between 1988 and 2011, the incomes of the poorest 10% increased by only 3/ USD per year (\$ 0.25/per month), while the fortunes of the richest rose more than 182 times. Just to get an idea of the scale of injustice in global income distribution, the Executive Director of any company listed on the FTSE 100 index earns the same as 10,000 workers of textile factories from Asian countries.

According to projections by international organizations (IMF, World Bank and ILO), unemployment levels will remain high because of the growth of the available workforce at a faster rate than the creation of jobs. It is estimated that by the end of 2017 there will be 3.4 million more unemployed than at the beginning of the year, a total of 201 million people who are denied the right to work. At the same time, a further 2.8 million new unemployed people are expected in 2018.

In turn, precariousness affects 42% of the world's workforce, 1.4 thousand million workers (according to the ILO). While it is true that between 2000 and

2010 the rate of vulnerable workers fell by 0.5% per year, the outlook for the next two years suggests that the reduction will be less than 0.2% per year. As a result, there will be an additional 11 million people a year with precarious links, a scourge that has a powerful impact in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, but which has been increasing in richer regions such as the EU.

The downward trend of the rate of profit has led capital to a flight forward, increasing the financialization of the economy and the speculative drift. The dominance of financial capital over the economy has led to productive disinvestment to make quick profits (earnings from speculative applications have grown by an average of 7% while productive investment has grown by only 2%). On the other hand, the crisis of overproduction and accumulation of capital remains and makes uncertain the solvency (associated with super profits). The response of big business has been the destruction of national industries and the handing to the multinationals of the resources and domination of the economy of each country, attacking their national sovereignty and independence. The intensification of this course as a response to the crisis of 2008 brings to countries and peoples new and more serious outbreaks of crisis.

The concentration of wealth is the result of the structural crisis of capitalism and its fundamental contradiction: the social character of production and its private appropriation. The accumulation of capital is increasingly due to the increase in exploitation, with the destruction of historical achievements of the workers' struggle, namely: the right to work; wages; limitation of weekly working time with the lack of definition of working hours, increasing unpaid work; raising the retirement age; the right to strike and protest; the right to rest and leisure; the right to work as a legal expression of the achievements of the workers; collective bargaining, leading to the individualization of labour relations to the detriment of collective regulations; the principle of more favourable treatment of the worker.

The rights of the workers are also attacked by attempting to limit or condition trade unions and other structures representing the workers in their autonomy, independence and internal democracy. The aim is to de-characterize the nature, principles and functioning of trade unions and other class organizations to weaken the organization, intervention and struggle of workers. In many countries of the world, workers' struggles continue to be prohibited and/or repressed; workers are prevented from creating their trade unions and/or representative structures; workers and trade unionists are relentlessly persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, threatened and in many cases murdered.

Despite some progress, women continue to be the main victims of exploitation and impoverishment, precariousness, inequalities, slave labour, violence; continue to be discriminated in terms of pay, maternity, access to employment, unemployment, career advancement, social security and retirement age. Women continue to occupy jobs in low-wage, low-quality sectors and activities, a situation which will be exacerbated by the ongoing changes in the world of work.

The scourge of child labour remains in many countries, with violations of children's human rights. Nearly 200 million children continue to be forced to work and more than 20 million continue to be victims of forced labour. Young people are also victims, being denied the right to education and work; high levels of unemployment, widespread precariousness and immigration, turning them into a generation without rights, subjected to the most intense exploitation.

The anachronism and inhumanity of workers subject to slavery and other bonds of servitude persist. Millions of women and men live in indecent and unacceptable working conditions, without rights, living on starvation wages, hungry, malnourished, exposed to illness and accidents, without any health coverage or without access to pensions.

The effects of the Scientific and Technological Revolution (STR) at work

The expression of the extraordinary concentration and centralization of wealth produced and the holding of the main means of production by an ever smaller number of transnationals is transforming the ongoing STR - which some call the 4th. Industrial Revolution - into a new and more serious threshold of assault on workers' rights. Public and private investment in research and technological development is largely commodified, concentrating mainly on quick and solvent profit areas. The means of production thus created are designed to cope with increasing competitiveness in the context of capitalist globalization and to overcome the trend to reduce the rate of profit by replacing living labour with dead labour (by increasing the organic composition of capital). The aim is to reduce as much as possible and, if possible, eliminate the need for subordinate work

There are those who seek to reduce the analysis of the effects of the STR to a supposed division between "optimists" and "pessimists", a way of denigrating the position of those who, like the CGTP-IN, make the defence of the interests and rights of workers its reason for being and for its action. They seek to prevent a concrete analysis of the concrete situation by concealing the nature of the relationship of subordination between the holders of capital and the means of production (including the results of the STR) and those who, like the workers, have only their force of labour and are compelled to sell it to ensure their survival.

The STR must be analyzed within the framework of the global hegemonic domination of the capitalist system and its systemic crisis, with its logic, practice and exploitative, oppressive, aggressive and predatory consequences. The STR is the result of the historical accumulation of knowledge - benefiting from all the advances of previous Technological Revolutions -, being, simultaneously, factor and expression of the crisis of the system in which it is generated. It is the product of the individual and collective effort and commitment of generations after generations which the transnationals and multinationals are appropriating - notably through the regime of patents and intellectual property - to perpetuate

and increase the exploitation of workers and peoples, enhancing at the same time the inequalities between countries, as well as the relations of dependence of countries from the Third World with the rich countries and of underdevelopment of the Third World.

The STR is being used as part of the ideological manipulation that benefits from the aura of science's credibility to override the interests of the transnational companies over the sovereign will of the workers and peoples, trying to distance the objective and make believe to those who work that they can do nothing but resign themselves. And it pressures workers to soon and beforehand accept liberalization and deregulation of labour relations, with the resulting destruction of rights, to supposedly prepare and adapt themselves to the ongoing changes and their future effects. There are even those who dare to decree that the traditional link between income and employment will be broken and that "work and wages will disappear."

The CGTP-IN believes that the objective of the economy (of production) is, first of all, to satisfy the needs of the people and not the opposite. The replacement of human functions and skills by intelligent machines, the interconnection of functions and a greater integration of all productive activity or human activity in general, are not in themselves a negative development. The decisive question is the replacement of labour by capital, the devaluation of work and workers, the regression in their rights imposed on them by the transnationals to achieve super profits. However, the uselessness of such developments is announced, since dead labour neither buys nor enables the creation of added value, and therefore does not represent a long-term solution to counter the declining trend in the rate of profit of capital.

The STR proves another of the great contradictions of our time. On the one hand, there is a human capacity to generate emancipatory solutions to the most pressing problems faced by countries and peoples. But on the other hand, the subordination of human intelligence and its production to transnational corporations and to the hegemonic ambition of the powers of the capitalist triad (US/EU/Japan) is both embarrassing and a factor of greater exploitation and impositions of anti-democratic domination. This is the expression of a world dominated by profit interests, conditioning the emergence of what is new to the interest and class domination of capital over workers and peoples.

The debate on the impact of new technologies on labour relations and employment also affects the new professions, occupational profiles, qualifications, freeing companies from responsibilities and making each worker responsible for obtaining them, in order to gain access to new jobs or keep the current one.

Only through the initiative of the workers there is debate on the issue of how to answer key questions, such as how to guarantee workers' rights, policies of access to social security, the right to decent pensions, healthcare, education or housing. Concerns and claims that are not answered by the public authorities.

Gradually, through different management models, big business seeks to impose an organization of subordinate labour relations in which the entity that gives

order or organizes them appears diffuse, does not come forward nor is often recognized by law as such, cloaking or concealing the position of subordination and economic dependence of the worker in the working relationship and creating a false idea of a relationship of self-employment or independent work, thereby imposing a more intense relationship of exploitation.

Agencies of temporary employment, outsourcing and digital platforms are some converging examples of blackmail on workers to cut their rights.

These and other forms of work organization are creations exclusively linked to the interests of big business, creating networks of dependence only possible by the active promotion of governments at their service, in many cases associated with fraud schemes involving tax havens.

In a context of high unemployment and a shortage of new job offers, the so-called digital platforms (often associated with banking and finance capital) aim at maximum profit with minimum (or no) costs of massified labour relations. At the same time, awareness grows that the gains to the economy from this type of company are worthless.

With a common nature, the platforms assume very different forms of organisation of work in terms of purpose, translating the trend towards outsourcing of services as a way of reducing costs and weakening labour relations. It is a relationship of economic dependence of the parent company through which, whenever workers organise themselves, the parent company strangles them to prevent workers from fighting for their individual and collective rights.

The expansion of work organised via digital platforms has fuelled proposals for the creation of a third category of workers (supposedly between paid work and 'independent' work). What is hidden behind this proposal is the pressure for the deregulation of the labour relations of all workers. The workers of the platforms have a relationship of subordination and economic dependence that the companies try to conceal. In essence, these platforms are large transnational companies (in many cases), hidden behind a false virtuality resulting from the use of the Internet as a proxy, to thus avoid assuming risks and obligations arising from labour legislation.

Well-known examples of working using digital platforms prove that by advertising a job offer on the Internet and by hiring those who offer the lowest price, means competition between workers, not competition between companies, subverting the right to work and work with rights, with a pay always tending to be lower, also jeopardising the health and safety of workers.

This form of organisation individualizes labour relations, seeking to weaken the possibility of workers organising collectively to fight for better wages, better working and living conditions, a way of having forms of work without any rights.

The work done comes close to the conditions of servitude because it is a form of absolute appropriation of labour (including the creative process and of individual organisation) and this being the only source of income for these

workers who are not free to decide in conscience. They do not have any right as workers, companies do not pay social security taxes, do not pay (or pay few) taxes, do not comply with health and safety conditions at work, nor do they have to guarantee daily working hours, or the right to weekly rest.

Moreover, in the case of transnational corporations and (often) with the work being outside national borders, it is more difficult to act legally and the situation will be worsened if workers and peoples do not oppose the so-called free-trade agreements, which, through supranational regulation (or deregulation), withdraw workers' rights and the possibility of determining or even influencing the decisions taken.

There are more and more cases of work on call, zero-hour contracts, self-employment, fake independent employment, volunteer work, work named collaborative/cooperative, socially convenient work, GIG work ...

The use of "artificial intelligence", in particular, by means of "robotization" is, in the context of its dominance by big business, a form of "privatization" of human intelligence and its creative ability (including in relation to the future); is a form of exploitation and private appropriation against freedom and even workers' rights and interests. The ideologues of the system try to create the idea that replacing the worker with a machine would end exploitation. In some cases, it could have as a side effect the relief of workers in relation to routine, dangerous and/or painful tasks, and be able to dedicate themselves to more creative and fulfilling processes. This possibility is remote because of the logic of reducing labour costs and maximizing profit.

The attack against workers' rights is multifaceted, as are the arguments for the stealing of rights, including their alleged defence, as in the case of the so-called "right to disconnect."

The availability and widespread use of new information and communication technologies does not justify extending the working day - if there is some justification, it is the reduction of working hours due to the productivity gains achieved. Nor do they justify the unilateral imposition of a working time or its change (when it is fixed by collective agreement) with its deregulation imposed unilaterally by the companies and without the right to any compensation for overtime work.

The regression we are witnessing in the rights of the workers would not be possible without their active promotion by the majority of governments at the international level who are increasingly acting to serve of big business. Besides the amendments to the labour legislation against the interests of workers (where the law protects them), state bodies responsible for monitoring working conditions are characterized by their absence or decisions that only benefit the companies.

The dominating interests of big business seek to create the idea that job creation depends exclusively on the initiative of each worker, especially the younger ones and on their "entrepreneurial" ability, taking away the

responsibility of governments and companies for creating jobs, throwing them into debt with the banks and to a web of dependency in which their survival depends on the degree of exploitation that they can impose on other workers.

On the other hand, they seek to make young workers believe that effective links are forms of employment of the past; that they expected the obligation to work in the same place all their life; modernity meaning uncertainty, insecurity, precariousness, confounding freedom with employment without rights.

The great changes that the labour world is undergoing are a huge challenge for the trade union movement and for the organisation of workers. The path of individualization of labour relations, the attack on fundamental rights, namely the weakening or restriction of collective bargaining, the right to strike, trade union autonomy and freedom, can mean the disappearance of some of the pillars that have shored trade union activity in the last decades. But they do not mean the disappearance of the foundations and the need of organisation of the workers to uphold their rights and aspirations. On the contrary. These are foundations and needs that not only remain but are heightened and require even greater intervention and action, of concrete reality, helping the community's understanding of the common interests of the workers. There may be profound transformations in class composition, new methods, new conflicts; lines of division between highly skilled workers and salaries and a growing mass of disposable workers living on sporadic jobs without rights; presentation of their own rights as privileges arising from personal "entrepreneurship"; new operations aiming at the fragmentation or disintegration of the trade union movement.

The trade union movement has to be able to find ways and means to continue to unite and stimulate the struggle of workers under the new conditions, meeting new demands. Workers may be less concentrated in workplaces; workers may be dispersed, without knowing their comrades, without the right to create a trade union or even without knowing the value and meaning of the creation of a trade union (or other type of workers' organisation), and where even the notion of their rights capital seeks to conceal or, if possible, make disappear. If the STR and the possibility of its expansion to the whole world can be means to attack the rights of the workers, they can be the link that with the struggle can lead the workers to new and more determined steps in their emancipation. It is up to the workers and their struggle to write history.

Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

The problems and challenges of OSH have been deteriorating due to the dissemination of precarious work.

The STR has led to an increase in the intensity of the worker/work environment relationship, forcing the worker to increasingly higher attention, concentration and delivery, reducing his freedom of action and his ability to introduce changes to his work system; to control the rate, rhythm and speed of the activity he

carries out, resulting in numerous professional risks, related to postures, repetitive movements and psychosocial risks, among others. Employers, on the other hand, put pressure on workers to leave rest periods (breaks, stops, meals) and recovery periods out of useful working time, by counting those periods outside the "working time period". With the increase of working time and the reduction of rest and recuperation, the musculoskeletal problems increase and are today a real epidemic of modern times, especially in the more developed countries.

If in developed countries the paradigm has moved from a work environment characterized mainly by work accidents to a work environment more conducive to occupational diseases related to work, in developing countries the situation gets worse due to the coexistence of the two paradigms.

Deregulated work shifts, variable remunerations, the de-characterization of functional frameworks, the unbridled competitive environment in all organisations, uncertainty about the future, constant change and the inability to cope with it, lead to great many situations of psychosocial illness, in which we can include, among other problems, work stress, chronic depression or nervous exhaustion.

We are witnessing the (re) emergence of health and safety problems that, with the knowledge and technology we have, should have been a thing of the past with attacks on the regulation of working conditions regulated by the ILO.

Social Security, Public Services and Social Functions of the States

The STR and the regression in labour relations that are being imposed through this are part of the attack on social security as a historical achievement of the workers, namely through the individualization of labour relations, submission of the labour relation to the mere expression of sale of labour without compensation or guarantees; to unemployment, lack of employment and pressure on workers to take up any job; to the desire of the financial sector to grab social security by privatizing it; to the attack on principles of universality and solidarity between workers of different generations, between men and women and between workers with different incomes.

The right to social protection through social security faces a strong ideological offensive. The extension of social protection is presented as an exchange for the spread of precariousness and erosion of work through a supposedly self-employment.

However, the fact that one does not distinguish between subordinate and non-subordinate work puts into question the right to work itself, and not only the right to social security, enabling drawing conclusions that do not correspond to reality.

It was in this context that the idea of the need for a universal minimum income, a sort of bargaining chip for the acceptance of the mass destruction of employment sparked by the digital economy, reappeared. There would be no employment for all and hence contributory social security would be doomed. The only way to avoid poverty would be to give everyone a minimum income.

This idea, apparently progressive, has unacceptable assumptions, and must be fought, because it assumes as inevitable the ongoing evolution. Those more liberal simply contend that the individual, by receiving an income from the State, must submit to market forces in everything else. Others express concerns that the decline in the share of wages in income could lead to weakening demand. The common point is that the minimum income would tend to replace all social security payments and the resulting benefits.

The guarantee of social security for all, although adapted to the specificities of the schemes in question, must not be confused or serve to cover and legalise the misuse of precarious employment or false self-employment. The first concern of the trade unions is to defend workers' rights, ensure the stability of employment and an employment bond corresponding to the existence of an effective employment contract.

The universal minimum income is a form of blackmail on workers to accept the loss of the right to work, the rights guaranteed to them by public services and the social functions of States, and is not an answer to the problem of poverty. Income from work is not based solely on payment for work and on the distribution of income by way of a benefit. It depends first on a set of factors such as public services, redistribution policies through taxes and workers' rights, including collective bargaining. By leaving the workers and the people to their fate, we would be led to a society with even greater social inequalities.

However, the existence of minimum income benefits is not disputed, combining the aspect of social provision with that of labour and social insertion.

The attempt to commodify all walks of life went through the privatization of companies (including strategic sectors), public services and fundamental functions of public interest and guaranteeing the rights of workers and peoples. Public services and social functions of States are a means of securing fundamental rights and an indirect form of redistribution of the produced wealth, reducing inequalities. Their privatization or degradation and the payment of services and functions provided by the State thus constitute a form of exploitation and deepening of inequalities. Large (often transnational) economic groups dominate national economies, increase the dependence of countries, and limit the democratic rights of peoples. Reversing privatizations and nationalizing strategic economic sectors is therefore on the agenda.

In a society dominated by technologies and digitization of processes - a trend that is accelerating rapidly - the role of education and training is fundamental. With the constant and accelerated outdateding of professional competences leading to a daily (or almost) disappearance of professions, one of the most important pillars of job retention is the quantity and quality of the professional skills that it possesses, as well as of the proven or recognized qualifications. The companies seek to shun responsibility from these obligations, turning it into

a duty of the worker.

Immigrants and Refugees

Wars of aggression, interferences, destabilization, conflicts, destruction of productive capacity and infrastructure, extreme poverty, unemployment and increasing labour precariousness, domination and national oppression, violation of sovereignty and national independence, are important factors that mark the dangerous international situation, with brutal consequences for the increase in the number of men and women who are forced to leave their countries of origin, seeking refuge or immigrating.

According to the ILO, the number of migrants has increased by more than 50% since 1990, currently standing at 232 million. More than 65 million people have been forced to leave their homes, of which more than 20 million are refugees. The number of international migrants has increased faster than the population growth, according to the United Nations. The number of migrants totals 3.3% of the global population in 2015, while in 2000 they represented 2.8%. According to the UN, in 2015, two out of three international migrants lived in Europe or Asia. About half of the migrants were born in Asia.

The current wave of refugees adds to the millions of men and women in this situation, in some cases for dozens of years, particularly the Palestinians (more than 5 million), driven out of their homeland by Israeli aggression and occupation, as well as the Sahrawi refugees resulting from the continued occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco.

The images of the arrival of immigrants and refugees to EU countries, the dangers faced, the risk involved, overcoming military barriers, testify to the hypocrisy of the EU and NATO in the Mediterranean and the meaning of their "rescue missions". This does not, however, conceal the militarization of the Mediterranean and the response to this tragedy, which will be further accentuated by EU agreements with the militias dividing Libya, Turkey and other countries, notably in North Africa and the Middle East, ways to increase repression of those seeking a decent life. Decisions and guidelines that are responsible for the deaths of more than 10 thousand people since 2014, with 2856 people dying while trying to reach EU countries just in 2016.

A fortress EU, criminalizing millions of men and women (examples of which are the shameful walls, detention camps), leaving them with no rights and in most cases in extreme poverty, subjecting them to all types of exploitation and discrimination, violence and even the threat of death.

The claiming action and the value of work and the value of workers

The essence of the human condition is associated with work; source of creation of wealth but above all of the personal fulfilment and transformation of the individual in his relation with the environment and in society, directing it to the progress of Humanity.

The unity, organization and struggle of the workers are mutually reinforcing conditions in the claiming action. The claiming action is a decisive condition for the valorisation of the workers; for the valorisation of work in meeting the needs of every society.

The workers continue to show great combativeness and tenacity, refusing to conform and defending claims and proposals with courage and dignity, standing up to pressure, blackmail and imposition of fear by capital. The brutality of the offensive has found in many workers the will not to give up the inalienable right to a decent life.

It is therefore necessary to join forces, develop and articulate small and big struggles at the national level; small and big strikes, demonstrations, protests, marches; converging the workers into a powerful mass movement involving many millions of workers to resist, counter or even defeat the proposals of the employers and governments at their service. The mass struggle remains quintessentially the instrument of resistance and construction of an emancipating alternative of the workers.

In spite of the unfavourable situation, the daily struggle of the workers continues to produce its effects, valuing many victories achieved, although insufficient in the face of the brutal dimension of the offensive. It is up to the class-oriented trade union movement to encourage workers, raise awareness, value the joy of struggle, solidarity, struggle as an expression of workers' interest; the struggle as a valorisation of work and workers.

No change in productive processes justifies (or may justify) the regression in working and living conditions. Despite the unfavourable correlation of forces to the workers at the international level, there are no reasons for despair or conformism. On the contrary. It is within the reach of the struggle of the workers, of their organisation and mass action, to construct the alternative power that meets their rights and aspirations.

Productivity gains from the STR should be used to reduce working time, increase rest and leisure time, and increase wages and other workers' rights. It is necessary to reduce the rates of work and have conditions of stability and quality of employment that involves the establishment of the principle that each permanent job must correspond to an effective bond.

The intervention of the trade union movement to uphold the rights of the workers of the digital platforms involves, in a first stage:

- the demand that States should recognize (through legislation) that they are companies that act in a relationship of subordination and economic dependence;

- the demand of compliance with the right to negotiation and collective bargaining, with the recognition of all the rights established by law, including in many cases, effective working relationships.

We cannot accept that the workers involved are considered as workers of a lower category, with fewer rights, restricting them to "some protection" or defining the activity as being subject to a mere "code of conduct" of the companies; or restricting their rights to "self-organization", dissociated from corporate obligations. Such a concession would mean, in addition to accepting the relationship of absolute exploitation of these workers, legitimizing a greater blackmail for the reduction of the rights of all workers.

The processes of adaptation of production and working conditions cannot be imposed unilaterally by companies and by sacrificing workers' rights. The rights of those who work, including the right to work, must in any case be ensured. Striving for the results of the STR to benefit the workers, peoples and countries and not against their interests and aspirations is therefore an essential goal for the future.

The improvement of wages and the promotion of collective bargaining are rights and at the same time a condition to reverse the trend of inequality, precariousness, unemployment and poverty.

To begin with a correct establishment of minimum wages in each country, depending on their history, concrete reality and needs that labour income must satisfy, followed by the enactment of labour legislation that defends workers and promotes collective bargaining, without forgetting a fiscal policy that would relieve labour incomes and affect those of capital. And policies to end wage differences that often occur between precarious workers and the rest.

Only a consequent public investment on education policies (in the full sense of education and not only as a response to the needs of big business), training and professional qualification, and the obligation of enterprises to train workers - with increasingly more advanced demands - will help to prepare the workers for the ongoing STR. These include access to free and quality education and continuing programmes to improve the skills of the workforce.

The end of the tragedy of immigrants and refugees demands an end to wars of aggression against independent and sovereign countries, their occupation or interference and destabilization, respecting the principles of the UN Charter and International Law, namely the sovereignty and independence of every country and respect for the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs, decisive conditions for a future of peace and for the construction of a new international order based on cooperation and friendship among peoples, progress and social justice. It calls for an end to the imposition of policies of exploitation, submission and economic and financial domination of countries with fragile and dependent economies, notably by the US and the EU, through so-called free trade agreements and other agreements and treaties.

To defend peace and the economic, social and human development of the countries of origin must be the high political priority of those who wish to contribute to the solution of this problem and a starting point for the

implementation of the right to return - a desire expressed by the majority of immigrants and refugees.

The rights and interests of refugees and immigrants are the rights and interests of all workers! We must strengthen solidarity and unity in the struggle to achieve equal rights by combating all forms of discrimination against immigrant or refugee workers, along with their unionization and involvement in the struggle, in the organisation of workers, including trade union activity, with equal rights and duties.

The collected experience and scientific and technical capacity has reached such a degree of evolution that it can either enable extraordinary emancipatory advances if used in favour of workers and peoples, or the suppression of freedom and the domination of almost all spheres of life - issues that are on the agenda and focus of the action and goals of the workers' struggle the issues of power

The profound changes in the productive process demand a central role of the States in the economies, not hiding behind the neoliberal principle that the market regulates everything. The proof of the role of the market portrays increasing inequalities in income distribution, disposable use of workers, increasing poverty, occupational accidents and diseases.

The insufficient growth of creation of jobs (with quality and rights) is inseparable from the domination the world economy by transnational corporations. In view of the increase in the workforce, it raises the need to intensify the struggle for the States to play a pivotal role in directing and boosting economies, regaining ownership of strategic sectors, increasing national production (in countries where this is necessary), making workers and peoples the protagonists and recipients of this change.

On the other hand, the response to increasing environmental degradation will not come from the privatization of the atmosphere or from the rapacity of other natural resources. A serious process to deal with existing environmental problems must overcome the economic and social system that created them, capitalism, and what this involves in terms of the holding of the means of production by capital. An incentive for local production and local consumption, for food sovereignty and security, is now needed, in addition to the necessary international cooperation. A course that would imply the use of finite resources in a more rational way and a rebalancing of the relation between the human being and the environment.

The supranational domination of capital - the role of sovereignty in the defence of workers' rights

The process of transnational domination by capital on workers and peoples - from which the appropriation of the STR is an important part - is under fast evolution (despite facing strong resistance) and involves the attack, limitation and even liquidation of sovereignty and independence of all countries that do not yield. Aiming at an even greater concentration and centralization of capital,

major capitalist powers (using their economic, military and diplomatic powers) try to impose so-called free trade treaties on smaller, more dependent countries (an ever-widening network of agreements seeking one after another to move further in their attack on the sovereignty and rights of peoples). Also part of this strategy is the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union and the WTO. Great powers, in particular the US and the EU, unilaterally impose their decisions and guidelines with extra-territorial consequences, notably through sanctions and blockades, confronting the rights and freedoms of peoples, their sovereignty, in violation of the UN Charter and international law.

The central axis of this action is the withdrawal of the power to decide or influence the decisions that only the workers, the peoples and the countries have, implementing a regime in which the States not only submit themselves but become guarantors of the domination by the great economic and financial groups on the wealth and natural resources and to increase the exploitation of workers and peoples. Tax havens are part of this process, enabling large economic and financial groups to avoid paying taxes, damaging States and populations, increasing the rate of exploitation and sheltering money laundering of all types of trafficking (arms, human beings, drugs) and financing terrorism. An increasingly smaller number of large transnational economic groups now dominate sectors of strategic importance through privatization and new mechanisms, notably the so-called public-private partnerships, which ensure large revenues at the cost of public funds.

Large transnational corporations hide behind digital platforms which, in addition to targeting the intensification of exploitation of workers, are ways to avoid tax payment obligations by depriving states of tax revenue and sources of funding for Public Services and social functions of States.

In Europe, the European Union has been consolidating itself as an instrument of domination by large economic and financial groups, based on the pillars of neoliberalism, federalism and militarism led by the great powers. Conspicuous are the Economic and Monetary Union and the Euro for their leading role in the offensive against the rights of workers and peoples, against sovereignty. The workers, the people and our country have suffered what these supranational impositions mean through the aggression program of EU and IMF, with: cuts in wages and pensions, brutal worsening of the tax burden on labour incomes, attack on rights such as collective bargaining and trade union freedom, attacking public services and social functions of the State, imposing a legal framework in which supranational subordination became law and transnational capital was awarded guarantees.

Popular participation in the political life of countries and in the exercise of power - in addition to being increasingly negligible - is only recognized if it ratifies the plans of transnational capital. Invoking the fight against terrorism, freedom, rights and guarantees of the peoples are attacked, going ahead in the construction of an increasingly transnational apparatus to impose repression and authoritarianism.

In order to guarantee this order, the great capitalist powers reinforce militarism, threats, destabilization, interference and aggression against sovereign and independent States, led by the United States, defying International Law and the UN Charter – it should be remembered that most of the transnational corporations are US-based. The arms race is relaunched, the aggressive character of NATO (led by the US) is reinforced, and its purpose to forge ahead with more wars of aggression under the cover of a supposed "fight against terrorism", a phenomenon for which they bear huge responsibility. The European Union deepens its militarism as a European pillar of NATO, moving towards greater interventionism. Workers and peoples are confronted with a strategy of war and economic, political and diplomatic chaos promoted by the US and its allies in NATO which threatens all humanity.

The CGTP-IN defends what is enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CPR) according to which "sovereignty is one and indivisible and resides in the people". For the CGTP-IN, democracy, sovereignty and national independence are values and practices intrinsic to the emancipation of workers and have an irreplaceable role in the progress of society, of a regime of freedom and economic development to serve the material and spiritual needs of the human being. They are essential to ensure equality, full implementation of rights, freedoms and guarantees, for the valorisation of work and the dignification of workers. They are determining so that economic power is subordinated to the popular power and the economy and the productive forces fulfil their role in the satisfaction of the rights and aspirations of the peoples. National wealth should be used for the benefit of peoples and countries. Trade relations between countries should be based on independence, equality and mutual respect of their interests.

A concept that is inseparable from the necessary construction of international relations with the aim of creating a new international order based on the principles of national independence, a policy of peace, friendship, respect for human rights and peoples' rights, as defined by the UN Charter and International Law. And a policy of equality between States, in defence of a peaceful solution to international conflicts, of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. For the defence of the right of peoples to self-determination, independence, development and cooperation with reciprocity of advantages with all countries and peoples, for the emancipation and progress of humanity.

To fight to put at the service of peoples and nations the national riches that are presently in the hands of foreign monopolies, to prevent the value and wealth created by labour in every country from going abroad, to develop economies on a national and independent basis, to defeat the influence, the command and the supervision imposed by the imperialist powers, are in our view democratic demands that the trade unions must embrace as theirs.

And it also is a proof that, wherever processes of struggle and governments based on national sovereignty and independence can affirm themselves, rejecting the domination of transnational capital, the class interests of the workers are more easily safeguarded and their rights ensured, as well as progress and social justice.

To start at the national level does not exclude, but rather implies the strengthening of bonds of solidarity, the search for common or convergent objectives of workers' struggle with other anti-monopolist strata. The struggle in defence of national sovereignty and independence expresses in our time the path of the class struggle, thus assuming an undeniable internationalist character.

In the opinion of the CGTP-IN, the national question is decisive to create better conditions for workers' organisation and struggle. The necessary unity in the action of the trade union movement at the international level, having as central and decisive question the defence of the class interests of the workers implies, besides the class character of the organization itself, a strong rooting in each country, taking into account specific problems, the needs and aspirations of the workers, giving a mass character to the resistance and struggle that imperialism's offensive demands. And at the international level it demands an adequate evaluation and determination of common or convergent goals of struggle, cooperation and solidarity in a broad, unitary way, against the main enemy, bringing together countries and forces against imperialism, the class interests of the workers, for their emancipation.

The international cooperation of the trade union movement and the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Founded nearly 100 years ago, the ILO bases its action on fundamental principles that, despite differences in historical time, remain valid today, recognizing the central role played by workers in societies and the importance of the achievement of rights and social progress. The preamble to the ILO Constitution states that: universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. That is why the struggle to "improve the regulation of working hours by fixing the maximum duration of the working day and week is urgent; the importance of hiring; the fight against unemployment; the guarantee of an adequate salary; the protection of workers in the event of illness and against accidents at work; the protection of children, adolescents and women; old-age and invalidity pensions; protection of migrant workers; recognition of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value; the principle of trade union autonomy and freedom and continue to be a priority for the class-oriented trade union movement.

After many struggles and huge sacrifices by workers around the world, the Philadelphia Declaration (1944) recognized and enshrined the principle that labour is not a commodity. A recognition of extraordinary value that is now being called into question. The fundamental conventions of the ILO stem from this process, as well as International Law that recognizes and enshrines them - in addition to the UN Charter.

Hundred years later, the daily lives of most workers continue to be marked by many (or by the same) problems of the past, and in cases where rights have been gained and living conditions improved, they are being questioned and a

regression is being imposed on them. The ILO and its recommendations played an important role in establishing minimum rights for workers, an emblematic international reference that encouraged the struggle in many countries for rights, progress and social justice.

Turning back and accepting the loss of fundamental rights achieved would be unacceptable and unjustifiable. All the more so, with the level of wealth produced and the accumulation of technical and scientific knowledge (and if there is political will), there is no material basis for accepting regression. Going further in the achievement of rights is of the most elemental social justice and is within reach of the workers.

The action of the trade union movement has to encourage the struggle of the workers in the uncompromising defence of the principle of non-regression of their rights and point the way to overcoming the enormous injustices that continue to mark the work and life of the workers.

As defined by the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) - and continues to have full validity: *"the failure of any nation to adopt truly human conditions of labour is an obstacle in the efforts of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries"*. The regression of working and living conditions in a country, even when that country ensures the most evolved framework of rights to its workers, will always be the setback of all.

In recent years, with the disappearance of the socialist system in Eastern Europe and with the consequent increase in global imbalances in favour of capital, the employers have attacked the ILO's system of functioning, notably the right to strike, the role of experts and their important work to ensure the effectiveness of standards by blocking the operation of the Standards Enforcement Commission.

The exercise of the right to strike in freedom and with all guarantees is fundamental for us, in parallel with collective bargaining, to defend the rights of workers and safeguard trade union freedom. Without the right to strike or with its limitation, workers are subject to the arbitrariness of the interests of capital, with greater risk of this process being enshrined in national legislation. It is the freedom and the right to establish their representative organisations - with their action and struggle - that disappears. It is the achievement of recognition of the unequal relationship between labour and capital - with advantage to capital, whose holding of the means of production not only remains but increases worldwide - which will be lost. The battle to defend the right to strike at the ILO is therefore of the utmost importance and requires the maximum unity of the trade union movement.

With a balance of forces that is unfavourable to us at world level, it is necessary to achieve convergence among all, by their own choice or even for reasons of conjuncture, converge on this or that subject with the workers in the defence of their rights and aspirations.

At the same time, the ILO must also be safeguarded, while maintaining its scope, objectives and regular functioning. Expediting the course of its de-characterization or weakening would be a loss of international references that

continue to play an important role in the life and struggle of the workers. Everything must be done to guarantee representativeness and equal rights to all its Member States, irrespective of their size, in the same way as the independence of each trade union organisation from supranational structures, are objectives that should unite the trade union movement. While the ILO should remain an organization open to the world, capable of integrating knowledge and experience from universities to NGOs, these contributions do not justify the inclusion of such structures within the ILO, jeopardizing its tripartite nature – albeit imperfect, too often employers and governments are on the same side, would be further diluted by the inclusion of new elements/groups.

At the same time, we must work to ensure the creation of an ILO Workers' Group, more inclusive and plural, representing the diversity of the trade union movement, without exclusions, capable of guaranteeing unity and relentless protection of workers' rights and aspirations.

In our opinion, the main concern of the ILO Centenary should be the discussion on how to implement the principles of its Constitution and its Fundamental Conventions, failing which, it will promote the deepening of international competition based on the interests of capital and withdrawal of rights to workers, that is to say regression. It will be up to the trade union movement, representing the workers and going as far as possible in its involvement, to take the initiative towards this aim.

Action and cooperation of the trade union movement for the value of work and workers

The international action and cooperation of the trade union movement should aim, first and foremost, to strengthen the struggle of the workers in each country, with common and converging actions that boost them. It is essential to reinforce actions of solidarity with the struggles in each country, company and place of work, making them known, valuing the achievements made. Particular action, cooperation and solidarity should be taken in cases where the freedoms and guarantees of trade union action are violated. The right to work and to work with rights, are cornerstones of the workers' struggle. The right to collective bargaining (not conditioned) is at present a basic condition for trade union action, which cannot overlook the access to essential goods, which are still denied today to many millions of workers.

There can be no rightful valorisation of the work and workers as long as in some countries forms of exploitation and unawareness of workers' fundamental rights persist. Following the paths that its history, experience of struggle and concrete conditions of action and organization enable, the international trade union movement must unite or converge in solidarity and cooperation with the goal of progress and social justice, full employment and a future that will materialize the

millenary aspirations of emancipation that have fuelled the struggle of workers all over the world.

Faced with the internationalization of capital, the international division of labour and the domination of transnationals, the response of the trade union movement cannot be the abdication of its autonomy and of concession of its role to supranational structures or international trade union centres. Collective negotiation and collective bargaining separated from the workers' struggle and the reality of each country, their national rights and their sovereignty, undermines the relationship of labour forces and capital and the search for solutions to their problems. Supranational negotiation - both at continental and global levels - of the working and living conditions will not lead to harmonization in the progress of workers' rights, but it will be another form of pressure for their reversal. Another thing is the necessary solidarity between workers of the same transnational company, with their struggles whose reinforcement is an important condition for their achievements in each country.

In the view of the CGTP-IN, the trade union movement must strive both nationally and internationally so that supranational decisions do not harm the interests of the workers and the people of each country. It should involve and mobilize workers for the defence of sovereignty as an imperative feature of development and a basis for international cooperation in all fields. It must make every effort to achieve unity in action in the interests of the working class, in particular in the ILO.

This is the basis on which, in equality and abiding the UN Charter and International Law, workers and peoples can develop better and closer relations, overcome growing antagonisms, improve mutual understanding and build true international cooperation in order to create institutions, agreements, consensus, solutions and decisions for the problems and challenges of our world.

This is also true in the struggle for peace, where we need a broad unity of all workers, regardless of their political, religious or other options, as well as with the countries that defend it. Due to their position in societies, the workers are those most sacrificed by the wars of aggression and those who are most interested in peace. It is up to the trade union movement to strengthen its cooperation and play a more active role in raising awareness and mobilizing for its defence.

The CGTP-IN stresses the decisive role of workers' struggle in the historical evolution of humanity and in the defence of their legitimate rights, collective and individual aspirations, in the multiple dimensions of citizens and creators of material and spiritual wealth. And emphasizes and welcomes their courage and determination to face the offensive of capital, against the hardships imposed on them, never giving up fighting for their rights and aspirations. The CGTP-IN upholds their civic, economic, social and cultural emancipation, combating injustices, inequalities, discriminations, exclusions, selfishness, racism,

xenophobia, cultural alienation and the economic exploitation of the capitalist system, in the historical perspective of building a classless society.