RESOLUTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION, THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION AND THE GLOBALISATION OF THE ECONOMY

The Third World Congress of Education International meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, from 25 to 29 July 2001:

1. **Recognising** the dramatic increase in world trade and foreign investment and the impact on citizens resulting from the globalisation of the world economy;
2. **Noting** the intensification of the liberalisation of trade since the establishment of the World Trade Organisation;
3. **Concerned** at the impact on workers’ jobs, pay, conditions of employment and the pressures to limit the bargaining strength of trade unions by powerful transnational financial institutions prepared to increase the disparity within societies by forcing down wages and worsening employment conditions;
4. **Concerned** also at the pressures on governments to privatisate education, healthcare and other public services;
5. **Supporting** the expansion of trade and investment, provided that the objective is to stimulate growth, to help end world poverty, to raise the living standards of all peoples and to ensure environmentally sustainable development;
6. **Welcomes** the existence of, and recognises the need for, international economic and financial institutions. However, Congress calls upon governments, especially those constituting the G8 Group, to require these institutions to be more open and democratic in their procedures, in setting their aims and in establishing their priorities;
7. **Believes** that greater public awareness and a more informed debate would prove beneficial to all the interests concerned;
8. **Convinced** that the right of access to markets confers the responsibility to ensure that the workers’ basic rights are universally respected, that the State’s capacity to develop public services such as education is not impeded, that production and distribution of cultural works are especially protected and that protection of the environment is respected;
9. **Welcomes** the consensus reached at the UN World Summit for Social Development, including the specific reference to the importance of respect for the seven basic international labour standards, to make progress in the reduction of poverty and unemployment;
10. **Supports** the work done by ICFTU and ITSs to find ways to ensure observance of international labour standards within international trade agreements and notes, with appreciation, the work of TUAC on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) while stating principled opposition to this agreement;
11. **Calls** on the World Trade Organisation to take into account the efforts of governments, trade unions, employers and international organisations like the ILO to raise standards by implementing the ILO Conventions;
12. **Urges** the WTO and the ILO to establish a joint working group on Trade and Labour Standards to examine how core labour standards can be integrated into trade agreements, to determine operating mechanisms and means of co-operation between the WTO and the ILO;
13. **Believes** that the free market model, which underpins the WTO’s trade liberalisation program, is inappropriate for education;
14. **Congress calls** on EI and its member organisations to:
   - **Work** with the ICFTU and the ITSs to encourage the governments and employers on the Working Party of the ILO Governing Body on the Social Dimensions of the Liberalisation of International Trade to enter into dialogue with the Worker’s Group to consider how the procedures of the WTO can be adapted to promote the observance of core ILO Conventions;
• Publicise among member organisations information to raise awareness of violations of standards by companies, particularly when child labour or forced or bonded labour are involved, or where workers are refused the right to organise;

• Promote - through the trade unions in different parts of the world - a new approach to the processes of regional integration. We must devise new organisational strategies for Mercosur, NAFTA, the European Union, the Central American Market, the Organisation of African Unity, and the various regional organisations in Asia;

• Oppose, through strategically planned actions, WTO plans which result in increasing poverty, concentrating wealth in the hands of a minority, and preventing the emergence of genuine programmes for health, education and scientific and technological development, geared to creating a more responsible and caring world;

• Promote the creation of negotiating bodies in each country to enable the trade unions to discuss the new framework which all these changes as a whole imply for working conditions and education;

• Encourage member organisations and their members to support companies that respect core labour standards in the production of their products and support initiatives to promote social labelling;

• Participate in the trade and labour standards discussions with the ICFTU, at the ILO and through TUAC at the OECD;

• Focus specific attention on encouraging EI member organisations to lobby their governments to support strengthening the mandate of the ILO to deal with countries that consistently violate the core labour standards;

• Continue to work to promote the inclusion of core labour standards in trade agreements;

15. Congress also calls on EI and its member organisations to campaign for education, health care, and social services generally to be excluded from the scope of the WTO’s General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Consistent with this objective, EI and its member organisations should:

• Demand full openness and transparency of GATS negotiations e.g. publication of government mandates, consultation with national and international union organisations, publication of reports and projects on trade in services discussed within the OECD and regional trade groupings;

• Oppose proposals to transform GATS into a comprehensive top-down agreement, thereby placing the onus on countries to secure exemptions for particular services;

• Support the right of national governments to regulate the provision of education, such as culturally appropriate content for courses and qualifications, the licensing of schools and universities, and the supply of tertiary places in particular discipline areas and the number of corresponding schools or faculties where viability is a consideration;

• Collect information on the consequences of GATS to date, and establish links with campaigns by non-government organisations concerned about the GATS;

• Oppose the development of new GATS disciplines that would allow for WTO dispute-panels to judge whether technical standards and licensing and qualification requirements and procedures affecting education and other social services are too ‘trade-restrictive’;

• Oppose the development of new GATS disciplines that limit the rights of national governments to determine the allocation of government subsidies to education and social service providers.

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Education International Policy Resolution