Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers’ Union Education Workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol)

■ Address: Cheollohoigwan 4th Floor, 739-4 Daerim 3-dong, Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, South Korea [150-815]

■ Web: www.kptu.net ■ Tel: +82 (0)70 43930335 ■ Fax: +82 (0)2 4970444 ■ Email: limwolsan@gmail.com

**June 22, Korean Education Support Workers’ Protest for Trade Union Rights, Regular Employment and an end to Discrimination at Work**

**Request for Solidarity Statements for Pre-Strike Rally, June 22**

Greetings and solidarity from the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU)-affiliated Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers’ Union, Education Workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol)!

KPTU-EdSol represents some 20,000 education support workers in South Korea who face severe job insecurity and discrimination in wages and conditions.

In November of last year, we joined other unions representing education support workers to carry out a historic national strike to demand our rights. As a result, education authorities have now begun to recognize us as collective bargaining partners and bargaining is now underway for the first time in several municipalities around the country.

Unfortunately, bargaining is moving ahead slowly, and the central government has not passed legislation needed to change our employment status. **On June 22, we will hold a national rally to declare our intentions to strike if our demands are not met. If the government and education authorities do not respond, we expect to go on strike in July**.

We are aware that conditions of education support workers in South Korea are similar to those of education support workers in other countries. We hope that through a successful struggle, we can create a positive case in which education support workers win respect for their trade union rights and decent working conditions, which can provide strength to our sisters and brothers around the world.

We also hope that you will support us in our struggle. Please help us send a message to the Korean government that there is international attention to the situation in Korea and support for Korean education support workers’ demands.

Please send solidarity statements, which we can share with our members at our pre-strike rally on June 22. A sample statement can be found below. Information about the conditions of Korean education support workers can be found in the attached document.

Please send statements by **June 15** so we have time to translate them.

Statements should be addressed to the KCTU-Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers’ Union, Education Workers Solidarity Division.

They can be sent by email to limwolsan@gmail.com or faxed to 82 2 497 0444

Please contact Wol-san Liem, limwolsan@gmail.com, 82 10 5003 8419 for more information.

**Statement of solidarity with of Korean Education Support Workers (Sample)**

The (name of union) is a union in (name of country) representing (number of workers) in (name of industry) .

**We recognize and applaud the critical role of educational support workers in South Korea and around the world in delivering high quality public education to all citizens.**

We support the Korean Public & Social Services and Transportation Workers’ Union, Education Workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol) and other education support workers in South Korea who are planning a nation-wide rally for June 22. At the rally, in which tens of thousands are expected to gather, education support workers will put forth their demands, including: recognition and respect for their trade union rights, formalization of employment status (directly employed by municipal school authorities), the introduction of a fair pay scale and improvement of working conditions. If the South Korean government and education authorities do not bargain in good faith and respond positively to these demands, the workers are expected to go on strike in July.

In November of last year, KPTU-EdSol and other education support worker unions carried out a historic general strike. As a result, collective bargaining with education authorities has begun for the first time in several municipalities. It is clear, however, that without continued pressure, authorities are unlikely to bargain in good faith and respect education support workers’ trade union rights.

In South Korea there are roughly 250,000 precariously-employed education support workers. These workers account for more than 50 percent of precarious employment in the Korea public sector and their numbers continue to increase. Korean education support workers play a vital role in public education by providing healthy food to students and teachers, aiding in teaching, running school libraries, keeping schools clean, providing afterschool care and instruction and counseling and supporting socially vulnerable students. Nonetheless, they are not recognized as part of the teaching staff and severely discriminated against. Korean education support workers face continuous job instability and earn only roughly 50% of the wages regularly-employed school staff earn. Moreover, there is no wage scale based on years of experience for education support workers, meaning that the pay of a worker who has worked for twenty years is the same as a worker in his/her first year (roughly $1,000 USD).

We fully support the struggle of Korean education support workers to change these conditions. The demands of these workers for formalization of their employment status through direct hire by education authorities, correction of discrimination in wages and conditions, and the implementation of a pay scale based on years of experience are just and legitimate. We call on the Korean government to heed these demands.

Everyday wealth disparity, employment insecurity and unemployment are growing more severe in South Korea and around the world. The South Korean government must seek a solution to problems, leading by example by doing away with precarious employment in the public sector. This will require an adequate commitment of financial resources and an honest effort to reform the related legal systems.

We call upon the South Korean government to respect the trade union rights of education support workers, to engage in collective bargaining with their union representatives, and refrain from repression against peaceful collective action and assembly.

***[signed and dated]***