

Public service workers stand strong and united at close of the International Labour Conference

Every year, the International Labour Conference (ILC) takes place in Geneva. It brings together more than 5000 delegates and is often called an international parliament of labour. The Conference establishes and adopts international labour standards and is a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions. The ILC took place 5-20 June 2013.



At the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), public service workers from all over the world joined to speak up for trade union rights for public and private sector workers. More than 150 delegates from PSI affiliate unions attended this ILC. Public Services International adopted a strategy to have more impact and visibility at the ILC this year – particularly as for the first time in over 30 years, collective bargaining in the public sector was reviewed by the ILO. The ILO Survey on the Collective Bargaining in the public sector was presented in the **Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS)**.

Before the ILC, PSI lobbied actively for the inclusion of its priority cases to be considered and achieved results: South Korea (Convention 111), Egypt (C87), Spain (C122), Fiji (C87), Greece (C98), Guatemala (C87), Swaziland (C87), Chad (C 144), Turkey (C98) Paraguay (C29) and Bangladesh (C87). Saudi Arabia (C 111), Belarus (C87), Cambodia (C87), Canada (C87), Dominican Republic (C111), Honduras (C98), Iran (C111), Kenya (C 138), Malaysia (C29), Mauritania (C81), Pakistan (C81), Senegal (C182), Uzbekistan (C182) and Zimbabwe (C87) were also discussed.

PSI welcomed PSI delegates to a special briefing session at the ILC on 5 June, and then on 6 June PSI General Secretary **Rosa Pavanelli intervened on the Survey**, with additional comments made by numerous PSI affiliates.

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- coordinated with affiliates for their presentations in the CAS.
- coordinated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Education International (EI) on public service issues to be handled in the discussions on individual cases.
- worked towards specific wording to be included in the speeches of the representative of the Workers' Group in CAS by preparing comments to the Survey
- prepared comments to the summary of the discussion on collective bargaining in the public service and presented them in the Workers' Group of the Committee on Social Dialogue, which were subsequently integrated in the statement of the Workers' representative of that Committee.
- participated in the **Committee on Sustainable Development and green jobs** and worked towards specific wording in the concluding documents.
- organised **The Route of Shame on 12 June**, a demonstration by bicycle that brought together trade unionists from all over the world to protest against the violation of trade union rights. Parallel events took place in Argentina, Panama, Ecuador, Columbia and Venezuela on the same day. This was also the first time PSI cooperated with local Geneva affiliates and the Council of Trade Union Action of Geneva. The event was a resounding success and more than 10 000 people have followed it on the internet and social networks.
- organised an ILC parallel event on 13 June - **a workshop on Public finance control and anti-corruption strategies**, during which international union leaders spoke about their respective struggles to combat corruption and advance quality public services for the common good. One of the outcomes of this event is that PSI will work on developing a standard for the protection of public finance control workers.
- organised two coordination meetings for our Algerian and South Korean affiliates, which turned out to be an opportunity for PSI affiliates from all regions to get to know each other, and the issues they are facing, better. Strong support for PSI trade union rights activities was expressed as well as the request for a Week of Action for public service trade union rights later this year.

PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli spoke at the General Assembly on 18 June on the Report of the Director-General and PSI's requests to the ILO for further cooperation.

The ILC is an opportunity for people from the same region to meet and PSI delegates participated in the numerous regional, but also thematic meetings that were held outside the official programme.

In terms of gender parity there is still a long way to go. Out of the over 260 speakers in the general assembly, only 65 were women. On the PSI delegation, more than 70% of delegates were men.

This ILC was important for PSI, but even more so for the international trade union movement as a whole. Last year, a crisis was created due to the employers not accepting the authority of the Committee of the Experts and specifically their interpretation of Convention 87 related to the recognition of the right to strike. Negotiations were held over the past year, which resulted in the decision that these negotiations will be continued in the Governing Body of the ILO and that the CAS would therefore discuss 25 individual cases (countries). This was only an interim relief: in 8 out of 9 cases in reference to Convention 87, it was noted that no reference to the right to strike was made since employers do not recognise it.

We also note that in the discussion on the Survey, the employers' representatives made a very aggressive statement in relation to the basic principles that underpin collective bargaining in the public service. Moreover, they were supported by several governments. PSI will prepare a document in response to that statement and use this as a campaign tool in support of the ILO supervisory mechanisms, trade union rights and the right to strike for all workers.

In relation to our cooperation with the ILO and a renewed focus on the public service, we are hopeful that the reform will lead to more effective cooperation across the board.

PSI will prepare an in-depth report that considers the merit of the conference and the reports that were adopted, as well as proposing a way forward, but as a whole this ILC has been very useful for PSI and our affiliates.

Thanks to the preparations, visibility actions, impact on content and spirit of the discussions, but mostly thanks to the commitment of all of the delegates – to raise their voice and speak out for the public service – we made a strong team. PSI showed the international labour movement that it is alive and kicking, strong and ready to defend workers' rights. The spirit of international solidarity leads us forward.

Additional links:

[Final reports adopted by the ILC](#)
[PSI videos during the ILC](#)
[PSI photos on Flickr](#)

