

Reaching out to temporary workers

Global networking and building union membership in Temporary Work Agencies are two key objectives to emerge from UNI's first global conference on the industry. The aim is to improve conditions for temporary agency workers and build a dialogue with the agencies to establish agreements that set global standards. The TWA sector is fast growing around the world, employing nearly one million workers in the placing process and placing out well over 10 million temporary workers. (alke.boessiger@uniglobalunion.org)

De-regulation threatens postal services - it's official

Postal liberalisation has produced no significant benefits for either households or small businesses and threatens the financial stability of the established operator and the universal postal service. It's a message familiar to post and logistics unions around the world - but this time it's the finding of an independent inquiry for the UK government. UK affiliate CWU condemned a call to privatise the struggling Royal Mail (perhaps to private equity) from regulator Postcomm. "Yet another bad idea," says CWU. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

Protests at May Day attacks in Istanbul

UNI global union has added its protest over the police tear gas attack on May Day marchers in Istanbul. Three union centres plan to take the case to the courts after a shocking day that included beatings of trade unionists, the use of rubber bullets and the blocking of buses from crossing the Bosphorus. The union centres blamed the events on "police terrorism". (uni-europa@uniglobalunion.org)

Union Island launches in Second Life

Union Island is the new place to be. It's in Second Life - a virtual world with a million users a month. UNI has built a presence there and invites affiliates and their members to join us on the Union Island. It's a showcase for your campaigns, a place to organise globally - and you can have reserved space to hold virtual meetings with automatic translation. (Visit our blog: slunionisland.org)

Human rights call from UNI Management Committee

UNI's Management Committee has called for human and union rights to be observed in Colombia and the Philippines, where trade unionists are still regularly assassinated. On March 8 bank union leader Leonidas Gomez was stabbed to death in his own apartment and another bank worker - Janet Bonilla - has been forced into exile by threats. UNI is pressing Citibank to find her new employment in Brazil. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)

Negotiating to win full equality

Union negotiating teams with at least 40% women members and training for union negotiators on gender issues are part of a 10-point plan to tackle Europe's persistent pay gap between men and women. UNI-Europa Women's conference in Nyon also called for an Equal Pay Day every year and affirmative action to improve work-life balances. "Unions = Women = Pay" was the conference slogan. (monique.marti@uniglobalunion.org)



A Union Island welcome



May Day marchers in Istanbul faced police and tear gas

UNI-Europa Women: (left to right) Equal Opportunities Officer Veronica Fernandes Mendez; Vice President Daniela Rondinelli; President Mette Kindberg and Vice President Grace Mitchell



Argentine President at wage agreement signing



An agreement providing significant pay rises for graphical workers in Argentina was signed in the presence of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Labour Minister Carlos Tomada. It was one of four sectoral agreements signed in their presence on 23 April. Labour standards, vocational training, health and safety, work promotion and joint action to prevent social dumping were also covered.

(adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Labour Minister Carlos Tomada pictured at the signing ceremony with union leaders

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Unions demand action on world food crisis

Global union the ITUC has called on governments and world institutions to take far-reaching measures to guarantee food security for all. The UN estimates that food prices have risen 57% in a year and now an extra 100 million people face serious food shortages. The IMF and World Bank warn that hundreds of thousands could starve and that a decade of progress in poverty reduction could be cancelled out. Food riots have already hit 14 countries. (ituc-csi.org)

Rice rise prompts wage claim in Thailand

The tripling in the price of rice in Thailand prompted calls for an increase in the minimum wage during a May Day protest by 3,000 demonstrators in Bangkok. Demonstrators set up a mock banquet table, where sat a man wearing a mask of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej (who once hosted a TV cookery programme). Labour groups called for law changes to protect workers' rights and improve working conditions - and the scrapping of plans to privatise state enterprises. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Lobbying hard for stronger EWCs

The European Commission is expected to unveil its proposals for a revision of the 1994 European Works Council directive towards the end of June. Unions have rejected potentially delaying and unsatisfactory negotiations with employers to launch a campaign to lobby governments, the Commission and the European Parliament. The ETUC and regional union federations - like UNI-Europa - want more effective information and consultation rights for EWCs, better training for EWC members and clear recognition of the role of unions and federations. (uni-europa@uniglobalunion.org)

Allianz locks out Korean workers

Allianz management in Korea has escalated the four-month dispute over an imposed performance pay system by locking out its striking workers. The company has consistently refused dialogue with UNI affiliate the Allianz Life Korea union and sacked 100 sales managers who joined the action. UNI Finance has added its voice to calls for a resumption of negotiations and the release of Je Jong-Kyu and Kim Jae-Suk, arrested for leading the strike. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

UBS pressed to negotiate on job losses

The financial crisis is costing tens of thousands of finance jobs around the world and UBS wants to add 5,500 job losses by next year, including 2,600 in investment banking. Swiss affiliate ASEB and UNI Finance have called for negotiations and condemned cuts caused by monumental management errors in the sub-prime and packaged debt market. UBS says that most investment jobs will go through compulsory redundancy. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Union success in Bloomingdales

Workers at Bloomingdales - New York's up-market department store - have won a four-year collective agreement. The deal came after difficult and drawn out negotiations, which led at one stage to a strike threat on behalf of 2,000 Bloomingdales workers who are members of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

Harassment charges against Donnelly in Pontiac

Charges of unfair labour practices at its Pontiac, Illinois plant have been filed against RR Donnelly, the world's biggest printer. The complaint to the US's National Labor Relations Board was filed by the graphical sector of the Teamsters Union. It alleges harassment of workers and union activists during a campaign to win union recognition and a collective agreement. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

Paying the price of financialisation

Workers, governments, taxpayers and shareholders pay the price of the domination of the real economy by financial markets, the UNI Management Committee heard. Short-term ambitions to squeeze the maximum cash out of companies by private equity and hedge funds are also accompanied by "selling short" manoeuvres that deliberately lower share prices and can make companies more vulnerable to predatory take-overs. Yet hedge funds and private equity groups face virtually no regulation. (gabrielle.fulton@uniglobalunion.org)



UNI Management Committee
in workshop session

May Day around the world

In Moscow a blue banner was chosen for the launch of a "Say YES to the Union" campaign. Five thousand trade unionists protested at multinationals that refuse to respect labour laws and union rights when they arrive in Russia. In Rabat post and logistics affiliate FNPT-UMT protested government plans to privatise postal services. "Let us recommit ourselves to organise unorganised workers," was the message from Madan Talwar of Indian Graphical affiliate AINEF.

May Day night of labour films

On May Day global unions - including UNI - hosted a night of labour films in Geneva. Unions increasingly use film and videos in their campaigning work. The programme included short films from Australia, Iran, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the UK. (uniglobalunion.org/media)

May Day in Second Life

Over 150 avatars joined a virtual May Day in Second Life - coming from Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mongolia, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and USA. On-line discussions produced a statement supporting colleagues in Zimbabwe in their struggle for democracy. (christine.revkin@uniglobalunion.org)

New leadership for UNI-Americas Women

UNI-Americas Women in Panama elected a new leadership. The new president is Joyce Robinson from the American Postal Workers and Vice-presidents are Leonor Sierra, ANEBRE Colombia, and Gladys Zamponi, FAECYS Argentina. The meeting condemned violence against women and called for equal participation in unions. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)



Joyce Robinson, new
UNI-Americas Women's president

8% pay claim for German bank workers

German affiliate ver.di is demanding an 8% wage increase for 420,000 employees in private, cooperative and public banking. The union is also seeking to halt compulsory redundancies and to introduce measures to counter rising workloads. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

March for quality phone service

A 90-minute demonstration in Washington DC spotlighted Verizon's neglect of city customers and demanded an "equitable, reliable, quality phone service". The demo was organised by Connect-DC - a project of CWA and Jobs with Justice - in front of the city's Public Commission building where a closed hearing on the phone service was being held. (connect-dc.org)

Metro deal in Romania

UNI Commerce's Romanian affiliate FSLC and German multinational Metro Cash & Carry signed their first collective agreement in Bucharest. The agreement includes wage rises and extra compensation for work on Saturdays and Sundays. It also establishes social dialogue in this fast growing company, which operates wholesale cash and carry markets across Romania. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

Nordea meeting in Poland

Nordea union board met management and members of the Polish Works Council as part of an initiative to increase cooperation with unions in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. Nordea bank has about 4,000 employees in the region and plans in Poland to increase the branch network by 150 by 2009. Low union membership is an issue in countries like Poland. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

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Top: UNI's Christy Hoffman meets Property Services members in Tunisia

Above: Zakari Koudougou, Acting UNI-Africa Regional Secretary



Protest at bank sackings in Zimbabwe

UNI global union has condemned Standard Chartered Bank's chairman Mervyn Davies for not intervening to reinstate two union leaders sacked by the bank's Zimbabwe subsidiary. Peter Mutasa and Shepherd Ngandu were dismissed for carrying out legitimate union duties - in clear breach of international labour standards. The two employees successfully appealed against dismissal but the bank chose to pay them off with compensation of \$15 and \$16. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

US organising committee for G4S

On 19 May Wackenhut workers in the United States launched an organising committee in their campaign to organise in this G4S subsidiary with the SEIU and for safe working conditions. US workers will meet European unions in the next month to build global support. (christy.hoffman@uniglobalunion.org)

Fair hours for Chilean security guards

The new Chilean Federation of Security & Services Workers has called for fair working hours and overtime pay. The federation has 2,000 members in nine member unions and covers a number of national and multinational players. Chilean security workers want entitlements to time off, fair working hours and overtime compensation. Currently, time-off laws are often broken. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)

Organising focus for broadcasters in Manila

There was an organising focus at an Asia Pacific broadcasting workers conference in Manila. Delegates also called for cooperation with journalists on safety issues - a big issue in the Philippines, which has one of the world's worst records of killings of media workers. The conference was organised by UNI MEI (UNI's media and entertainment sector) assisted by affiliate NABU and UNI Philippines Liaison Council. (jim.wilson@uniglobalunion.org)

Indian court protects G4S workers

An industrial court in Mumbai has issued an interim order to protect 5,500 G4S security workers from unfair dismissal. This covers the workers while they pursue a case to win overtime payments due to them and follows employer threats. UNI Property Services is working with two Indian union centres to build union organisation in an industry that employs five million guards. (christy.hoffman@uniglobalunion.org)

New ILO standard on HIV/AIDS in world of work

The International Labour Office has launched a process to adopt a new international labour standard to bolster the role of the workplace in a global response to HIV/AIDS. A new report - HIV/AIDS and the World of Work - aims to help discussion at the 2009 and 2010 International Labour Conferences. It's the first comprehensive overview of action in the world of work taken by national governments and international organisations and reports that many countries have taken significant steps to tackle HIV/AIDS through the workplace. (ilo.org)

Action plan agreed in Shoprite

UNI's Shoprite steering group at its first meeting in Lusaka, Zambia agreed to build a regional union alliance in the South Africa-based multinational that operates in 16 African countries. The aim is to build union organisation and collective agreements and win a global agreement. The meeting was supported by the German FES foundation. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Strike at Quebecor Peru

196 workers held a strike at Quebecor World Peru on 29-30 April to demand a fair share of company profits in line with previous (non-union) years, better treatment and to suggest ways of avoiding production losses. The company response was to film the strikers and blacklist workers and police intimidation. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)

Malls march across India

There is a march of shopping malls across newly affluent parts of India - 100 are already open and 500 more are due to open within five years. Few are making a profit at the moment and there is pressure on young staff to work long hours. UNI helped last year to launch UNICOME - a union for shop workers in India - to help retail workers. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

SASK visitors in Nyon

UNI's Development and Regions Department with SASK Finland's Director Hannu Ohvu and staff. They discussed extending development cooperation in Africa, Asia & Pacific and Latin America. SASK already supports projects - with half a million Swiss francs - that include organising G4S in Africa and Latin America; Call Centres; UNITES in India and rebuilding Aceh.



Cutting through an ICT jobs maze

An avalanche of fancy job titles has fogged the whole ICT landscape and is hampering the mobility of ICT professionals - even within multinationals. A drive to develop portable classifications led to a European ICT Skills Meta Framework in 2005. Now institutions - including social partners and HR managers from large companies like Airbus and Deutsche Telekom - have nearly finished the next step, which is a European E-Competence Framework. (gerd.rohde@uniglobalunion.org)

Europa warns on RFID

UNI-Europa is calling for a thorough discussion between unions and employers on the introduction of RFID – Radio Frequency Identification. RFIDs can be used for to control access to buildings or pinpoint locations and replace barcodes in supermarkets. The European Commission is looking at the impact of RFID on privacy and data protection. (uni-europa@uniglobalunion.org)

UNI meets with the UPU

On 13 May UNI Post & Logistics met representatives of the Universal Postal Union in Bern to discuss the role of the UPU Consultative Committee of which UNI is a member. They also discussed the upcoming UPU congress, corporate social responsibility and remittances - UNI wants to link up postal systems to allow migrant workers to send home money to families more cheaply. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

Social partnership call for ASEAN

In preparation for the ASEAN Labour Ministers meeting on the 6-9 May a seminar on decent work was held in Bangkok. The Thai Labour Ministry, Thai labour and employers looked at ways to enhance decent work for vulnerable workers in the region. UNI-Asia Pacific Secretary Christopher Ng called for help for vulnerable workers - including migrants. The seminar was supported by the German FES foundation. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Unions work in Slovenia Gaming

The largest union for gaming workers in Slovenia, SIDS is considering affiliating to UNI Gaming global union. SIDS, which has more than 30% of Slovenian gaming workers, is developing new strategies to grow the union and strengthen the rights of gaming workers. SIDS has drafted new gaming laws with support from the country's largest gaming group HIT. Recognition of professional diseases for gaming workers and negotiating a sectoral agreement are other key objectives. (alke.boessiger@uniglobalunion.org)

IT ethics in China questioned

The Swiss media has highlighted the ranking by Geneva-based Covalence (www.covalence.ch) of the global ethical reputation of multinationals. The IT industry is ranked second out of ten sectors worldwide but when it comes to China the industry falls to last position of the classification, which is based on the ethical reputation of more than 200 multinationals. They fall down on working conditions and institutional impact - human rights, relationships with politicians and corruption. (gerd.rohde@uniglobalunion.org)

Attracting young workers with internships

In a move to attract new generation workers, the Internet union launched by Dutch affiliate Die Unie is offering to help young people get into the labour market. 3D-Internship has linked up with Global Placement Network to find internships through contacts with employers worldwide. Quality certification for internship positions and student mediators is planned - to ensure educational values and working conditions. (will-b@unie.nl)

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UNI's first ever global meeting on Temporary Work Agencies was held in Nyon on 8-9 May



UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings visits the CUPW convention and joins a demonstration against selling off a logistics operation of Canada Post

24% rises for Kenya telecom workers

A strike threat and international solidarity brought Telkom Kenya back to the negotiating table with affiliate CWU. The outcome of resumed negotiations was a 24% pay increase, bringing lowest paid members to the equivalent of US\$480. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Industrial action threat at BT

Industrial action among managers and professionals is threatened in UK telecom giant BT. Connect is protesting at BT's unacceptable pay offer and won media attention by lobbying the announcement of BT's annual financial results. BT's high profile commercial and public sector clients could be hit if the action goes ahead on 27 May. (telecom@uniglobalunion.org)

Protest at sackings of union leaders in Indonesia

UNI-Asia Pacific has protested over the sacking of union leaders in Bank Mandiri, Indonesia. The bank forced employees to resign from the union and helped create another union. 14 committee members were suspended and the branch Chair and Secretary sacked. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Push to help redundant workers in Canada

Canadian affiliate CEP is backing parliamentary moves to widen the law covering workers in the event of company closures. A private member's bill would reduce the threshold for redundancy payments from 50 employees in an enterprise to 25 (or payrolls of \$1m instead of \$2.5m) and provide two week's severance pay for each year of service. There have been massive job losses in traditional industries in Ontario in recent years. (cep.ca)

Asia Pacific youth in Singapore!

UNI-Asia Pacific youth met Singapore union youth on 22 April. 19 young people from seven unions took part and exchanged information on organising. The meeting was followed by a similar get together with ITUC Youth in the region. "Young people who want to stand up and make a difference should join a union," said Rainier Cruz, from the Philippines. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

'Cool it' call for Macao

The Macao government has announced moves to rein back rapid growth in the world's largest gaming market. Measures include a moratorium on the number of licensed casino operators in the territory, a halt to land allocations for new gaming investments, a curb on expansion plans at existing casinos and tightly restricted increases in the number of gaming tables and slot machines. The move boosted gaming share prices. (alke.boessiger@uniglobalunion.org)

Postal women step up!

The first women's seminar for UNI Post & Logistics affiliate FNPO was held in Kolkata, India with 30 women activists in India Post. The seminar was sponsored by Japan Post Group Union and aimed to build a women's network, to learn about UNI global union and to raise awareness on the impact of globalisation. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)



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Global unions for global industries

Tear gas in Istanbul

UNI's Adriana Rosenzvaig was in Istanbul on May Day and witnessed the horrific scenes herself.

Thousands of police using tear gas broke up the May Day march by three Turkish trade union centres to prevent them from reaching Taksim Square.

"Police terrorism" was the verdict of the unions and court action is planned. "People were extremely calm," said Adriana. "It was a powerful experience to feel the support of people applauding the demonstration from their buildings."



Above: Facing thousands of police and tear gas on May Day in Istanbul

Below: blue banners launch a "Say YES to the union" campaign in Moscow

Bottom: Union banners on the streets in Bogota, Colombia

May Day around the world

Malaysian unions took May Day to a children's home



May Day march in Rabat, Morocco - called for the scrapping of plans to privatise the postal service

