

# ***HRCT Trade Group Board meeting***



***Copenhagen, September 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2013***

## ***Item 5: Health and Safety Housekeeping Campaign***

### ***Background***

During its annual meeting held on November 2012 in Cyprus, the HRCT Trade Group Board meeting the Secretary decided to develop a global campaign around Health & Safety issues for housekeepers. The campaign was officially launched during IUF's Executive Committee held in May 2013.

Within the IUF website it has been created a specific HRCT section where to upload documentation, recommendation, and any other useful information. The first document to be adopted as IUF Recommendation for Housekeepers is related to working environment and workloads.

On July 14, IUF's Massimo Frattini ran "The British 10K London Run" displaying the newly created "Housekeepers Rights Logo Campaign" (click [here](#) for more).

### ***Follow-up***

The Secretariat proposes working on:

- 1) Producing and distributing leaflets showing the results of these surveys to raise the awareness of the risks related to the job;
- 2) Contacting other GUFs and national unions to seek information about the average working life in other different sectors (i.e., miners, iron workers,

chemical workers...) and compare these with the average working life of the housekeepers in their respective countries.

- 3) Cooperating with international and local Health & Safety authorities to share this information and contrast and compare any other research on the health and safety hazards that housekeepers are exposed to.

Identifying potential target chains to raise these issues internationally.

## ***Appendix 1: Introduction to IUF's Housekeeping Campaign***

### ***A PANDEMIC BY STEALTH***

Hundreds of thousands of housekeepers around the world, most of them women, are victims throughout their working lives of conditions of work which stealthily and silently destroy their health. It culminates in their exclusion from the labour market in their last working years, condemning them to poverty when they lose their jobs.

This group has to work under conditions which vary widely in terms of rights, wages and conditions of work depending on the national and corporate reality. Many of these working conditions are sub-standard and urgently need to be addressed. But there is one factor common to them all, the slow, silent, inexorable and permanent impairment of their health, with consequences which appear years later, often just at the time they are “expelled” from the labour market and thus cannot enjoy a well-earned retirement.

Concealed within magnificent luxury hotel establishments as well as more modest establishments lie exhausting daily tasks, mechanical repetition of movements, movement of heavy furniture, pressurized work patterns, contact with toxic products and a long list of other personal risk situations including sexual harassment.

Furthermore, taking advantage of the international financial crisis, employers are downgrading conditions of work, either directly or through outsourcing. This situation has led to a decline in already low wages and an intensification of the work.

This group also suffers most brutally from the effects of gender inequality, another heavy burden on their hard working conditions.

The trade union movement cannot, remain impassive in the face of this true pandemic. We in the IUF-UITA are issuing a new challenge, a challenge to give these workers healthy and safe conditions of work. The IUF General Secretary and the IUF-HRCT professional group are launching **the campaign**:

#### ***FIXING THE FUTURE***

##### **Objectives:**

- To denounce these conditions of work to global political and labour organizations in our sphere (ILO-WTO).

- To identify “good practices” which can serve as examples, so that we can clearly see those companies with the worst conditions of work on which to target our organising resources to remedy that situation.
- To identify specific cases which clearly support our concerns, taking examples from each region to show the global nature of this threat.
- Through our website, to dedicate a specific page where we will keep this demand alive as a key element to generate discussion among affected workers.
- To increase union membership and activism amongst housekeepers in each IUF region.