

Minutes - Inaugural UNI ICTS Global Union Conference Mexico, 20-21 October 2011

Workers breaking through in a digital world

Thursday 20 October

1 Opening Session

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

Welcome address by **Francisco Hernández Juárez (STRM – Mexico)** and **Bo Larsen (UNI Telecom World President)** who encouraged people to continue the struggle against the multinationals (MNC's). **Adriana Rosenzvaig (UNI Americas)** welcomed all participants to Mexico City and gave an overview of the situation in UNI-Americas and wished everyone a fruitful conference.

Approval of Standing Orders and Adoption of Agenda

The standing orders and agenda of the conference were adopted unanimously.

Election of Credentials and Resolutions Committee

The names of the credential and resolution committee members were read and adopted unanimously.

UNI Africa: Mr. Benson Okwaro, Cowu, Kenya – Elected Committee Chair

UNI Americas: Ms. Barb DOLAN, CEP, Canada

UNI Asia Pacific: Mr. Shafie BP Mamal, UNIVEN, Malaysia

UNI Europa: Ms. Ann-Helene WESTRUP, Unionen, Sweden

UNI Europa: Mr. Andy Kerr, CWU, UK

Secretary:

Mr Lorenzo DE SANTIS, UNI ICTS Research Assistant

Ms. Birte DEDDEN, UNI Europa ICTS Policy Officer

2 UNI ICTS Breaking Through

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

Philip Jennings (UNI Global Union): We met with the labour ministers of the G20 who committed to promote new jobs and social security for workers.

We must fight to ensure that working conditions improve in call centres. Another challenge is organising trade unions in MNC's. It is necessary that the rights of all workers are respected in subsidiaries around the world so we call on all participants of the conference to sign the petition for a fair share of profits in France Telecom throughout its subsidiaries.

Working conditions are improving in the companies where there is union presence. We must use modern strategies to develop our unions and make an effective use of our social networks. The European social dialogue is integrated but, it is not social dialogue in the traditional context, but it is tripartite. It is a consultation model which takes care of legislation in Europe. There are two pillars: social dialogue with the employer federations and consultation with social partners and social dialogue in the context of European Works Councils. The IT sector has a lot of non-European companies and this is now part of the ICTS project.

UNI ICTS Global Strategic Plan

Marcus Courtney (UNI ICTS) presented briefly the global ICTS strategic plan. He focused on the importance of the regional actions and the achievement of UNI ICTS strategic objectives.

Regional UNI ICTS Strategic Plans

UNI ICTS Regional Vice Presidents presented detailed regional strategic plans in line with the global strategic plan.

Franca Salis Madinier (Europa) said UNI Europa still has effort to do to organise the IT sector. Mapping all social partners is underway with the commission and other union federations in order to promote social dialogue in Europe.

Benson Okwaro (Africa) and **Kato Tomoyasu (Apro)** presented the strategic plans for their regions identifying regional companies that they were targeting in their efforts.

Francisco Hernández Juárez (Americas) warned participants that a governmental reform underway in Mexico may strongly hurt union power. The government in places is taking decisions against Mexican workers especially in terms of taxes. To improve the situation solidarity campaigns are needed and thanked the support of the FES. Also unions have plans to fight against offshoring and outsourcing and to protect workers' rights. Focusing on youth organising and multi-country actions based on peer reviewed research is important. He concluded by sending solidarity messages to workers in Colombia and the United States.

40 for 40 campaign

Tamami Uda (President - UNI Apro Women) said women representation in unions' decision making structures must be at least 40%. She called on all leaders to adhere to the campaign by signing the pledge cards at the conference.

Comments from the floor

Tayiboula Fall (SYTS Senegal) said the increasing size of telecom operators in Africa attracts the government's attention because they can profit from it. In Senegal, the State created a tax on incoming calls which puts jobs at risk, inflates prices for consumers, and

lowers the benefit of having a foreign operator competing in Senegal. SYTS asks UNI to write a letter to the Senegalese government to act on this issue.

3 Bargaining Rights in the Americas

Chair (**Bo Larsen**).

Mexico: Protection contracts

Maria Xelhuantizi (STRM – Mexico): The aim of this kind of contract is to protect management against clauses of the collective agreements and allows them to increase their profits while decreasing the salaries of workers. Those contracts are legal but not legitimate as they are imposed on workers. They are based on legislation from the executive power and not the legislative one. More than 90% of contracts in Mexico are protection contracts.

US: Barriers to union recognition and bargaining

Larry Cohen (CWA – USA): gave an update on the trade union movement in the USA and its surroundings. US collective bargaining declined before the Second World War and recovered around 1947. In the US there was no national law until 1937 that gave the right to collective bargaining to workers and by 1960 one out of three workers was unionised. In Mexico, the constitution requires union recognition before a union can be created in the company; which is not the case in the US. Recruitment efforts must go on in the US, in Mexico, in Colombia. Building a strong social movement is key to our success.

Telefónica / Atento

Victor Fabela Rocha (STRM – Mexico): The Atento campaign slogan is “recruit and organise workers” and national and international solidarity are crucial in that regard. The legal system is particularly problematic in Mexico where everything is done to discourage unionisation. On 23 September 2009, Francisco Juarez from STRM denounced the situation of workers at Telefonica in Madrid before the unions present. There had been unjustified redundancies going on. STRM responded by participating in the international arena for trade union freedom and in a solidarity campaign to support union actions.

Alvaro Molina (USTC – Colombia): Constant violations of human rights including the assassinations of unionists in Latin America during the past 50 years have been exposed. The treaty for union freedom has been ratified but expectations are low. In Colombia unions are not powerful enough to counterbalance power in favour of workers but international solidarity is essential to keep the spotlight on the situation. Telefonica has a Global Agreement with UNI but we must organise to get this GA applied. Union presence in the firm is low and USTC has no access to work sites. On top of that 300 workers have recently been outsourced. The situation in Telefonica subsidiaries Movistar and Atento is similar.

Marcus Courtney (UNI ICTS): said UNI has recruited a researcher to focus on the situation in Colombia. Unions have difficulties with the repression of the government. Telefonica is the leading telecom company in the country but there is a lot of outsourcing going on. Colombia utilises intermediaries to escape from the labour legislation. On April 2011 the White House announced a plan for workers' freedom but it is not being implemented.

Comments from the floor

Adriana Rosenzvaig (UNI Americas) mentioned actions taking place in Colombia and said the Atento case will be presented to the OECD after the conference. She said we are against the Free Trade Agreement but in favour of a Global Agreement.

Billy Hayes (CWU – UK) said a peace process must be activated in Colombia to protect unionists and sent his solidarity support to unions there.

Luis Lopez Chau (SUTTP – Peru) sent his support to unions in Mexico and Colombia when it comes to the struggle against Telefonica.

America Movil

Wilfredo Berríos (SUTTEL – El Salvador): made a presentation on the anti-union behaviour of Telefonica in his country.

Victor Fabela Rocha (STRM – Mexico): STRM recently put forward an OECD complaint against America Movil whose growth has been the biggest ever last year. Promoting union dialogue with the company in places where it is non-existent remains a priority.

Comments from the floor

Genise Monteiro (SINETEL – Brazil): In Brazil unions are negotiating with America Movil but nothing concrete can be proposed to workers yet. As for Telefonica the best collective agreements after 12 years of privatisation has just been signed. The firm's behaviour in other countries is not acceptable.

Chester Hughes (ABWU – Antigua & Barbuda): Problems in his country are similar to those in Latin America. Digicel doesn't recognise unions and offers only short-term contracts. The union is fighting against that and asks for international solidarity as the Caribbean area is suffering from the crisis and union membership is decreasing.

Christina Baguera (STPT – Portugal): Read a declaration from her union asking UNI to lobby the European Commission and the Portuguese government for better wealth sharing.

4 Call Centre Action Month

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

Daniel Lynch (UNI ICTS): Quality jobs are required for workers to deliver quality service. The call centre sector is continuing to grow with large numbers of jobs being off-shored or near-shored to countries with poor labour standards and practices, inferior to those where the customer is calling in from. In 2011 UNI Call Centre Action Month calls on affiliates to take action to protect workers in the industry to guarantee basic conditions which protect workers and allow them to provide quality service. We need to change the rules of the game so that employees can negotiate to improve their working life and conditions.

Comments from the floor

Claude Lambrechts (CNE-CS – Belgium): In Belgium we have rights in this sector but we want to make progress to guarantee quality jobs for quality service. A harmonisation of working conditions to prevent social dumping is essential. We need to educate both workers and employers on these issues as well as governments to cause a meaningful change to the situation.

Conference adjourned for participation in the Atento demonstration.

Friday 21 October

5 Credentials Committee Report

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

	Africa		Americas		Asia Pacific		Europe		Total	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Delegates	0	2	8	19	4	13	22	48	34	82
Observers	0	0	2	5	1	9	3	3	6	17
Guests	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	1	4	4
Countries	2		12		5		13		32	
Affiliates	2		14		9		29		54	

Total participants = 147

Percentage of Women = 29.9%.

Report unanimously adopted.

6 Report and update from Japan after the earthquake and tsunami

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

Kato Tomoyasu (ICTJ – Japan) 4000 people are still missing. The country is being rebuilt after the destruction of several cities. ICTJ is sending volunteers every week to the affected areas. Certain member's help cleaning the sites as the cleaning up systems for drinkable water have been damaged. ICTJ is trying to help public authorities in those sectors. Electricity and telecommunications disappeared for some time after the tsunami. We have been focussing on the energy question as telecoms can't function and be rebuilt without electricity. We would like to work with UNI on environmental issues in the future. He thanked UNI for its support to Japanese affiliates.

7 Organising Multinational Corporations and Global Agreements

Chair (**Bo Larsen**)

Deutsche Telekom

Lothar Schroeder (ver.di - Germany): A video message was played. He said the campaign must ask T-Mobile USA to respect union rights and stop firing union leaders. He asked for international support.

Birte Dedden (UNI Europa): Outlined the Deutsche Telekom campaign, which has now been running for several years, with CWA and ver.di playing a key and important role in giving the campaign momentum in 2010. Since March, the ITUC has joined the campaign and we have increased campaign activities. Although AT&T announced in March to buy T-Mobile USA – which would be good for workers, investors and consumers – DT/ T-Mobile USA did not change their anti-union behaviour. We are now increasing the pressure on the company by engaging German and US politicians to raise awareness about DT double standards; by organising a forum with investors and engaging them to support the campaign; and by using social networks and new media to promote the campaign. Participants were encouraged to sign the campaign petition on LabourStart.

Larry Cohen (CWU - USA): The company's behaviour is pathetic. More than 10,000 workers are asking for collective bargaining rights and the company ignores the call. He then congratulated ver.di's members and thanked UNI for its support. He asked the delegations to sign the LabourStart petition in order to reach the goal of 10,000 signatures asking the firm to respect workers rights in the US.

Comments from the floor

Marko Palada (HST – Croatia): Workers' rights are not respected in Croatia even though profit margins are huge. A campaign has been launched to support workers' rights and a letter with firm recommendations to Deutsche Telekom management will be sent to affiliates.

France Telecom

Franca Salis-Madinier (CFDT-Cadres – France): said the France Telecom (FT) group is present in more than 200 countries with a clear expansion strategy in developing countries. The FT Union Alliance was formed in 2003 and recognised by management in 2004. In 2006 a Global Agreement was signed which was crucial for African colleagues in their fight against corruption. A coordination seminar was held in Africa to promote the union alliance. The challenge today is the application of the agreement. Many actions well covered by the media have been organised with the support of UNI. Progress still needs to be made and we are asking the participants to sign a postcard which will be sent to FT management.

Jean Paul Gristi (CGT-FAPT – France): Read a solidarity statement from the France Telecom Union Alliance that demands a more equal distribution of the added value created in the Group through the allocation of a "world bonus", additional to all existing provisions. Recognising workers in this way will increase motivation and the sense of belonging of all the employees of the Group throughout the world.

Benson Okwaro (COWU – Kenya): Gave an overview of the situation at FT in Africa. He said the unions in the Ivory Coast could transform redundancies into voluntary departures whose conditions are under negotiations. In Madagascar workers are negotiating with management to stop the payment of a share of their salary via Orange Money. In Kenya the plan to lay off workers due to the financial crisis has been cancelled for the moment.

Delegates were then photographed holding up their signed postcards to Stéphan Richard CEO of France Telecom.

IBM

Koen Dires (LBC-NVK – Belgium): IBM has been targeted as a benchmark. If unions can impose collective agreements and social dialogue at IBM they can make it at any IT company. But IBM is still fighting unionisation. In Turkey for instance, union leaders have been sacked as well as Bulgaria.

A video of the birthday messages from the IBM alliance to the company were played on the company's 100th anniversary.

Gerhard Rohde (UNI ICTS): declared the future of the alliance depends on five pillars:

- Governance : new leaders must be supported
- Communications: they must be more regular and visible. We must increase our presence on social networks.
- Innovation: the majority of IBM employees are highly qualified. We should take advantage of it to innovate.

- Solidarity: actions must be improved and be innovative. We should think about the training of union leaders.
- Research: more of it is needed.

MTN

Aminata Keita (UNI Africa): Since the UNI Africa regional conference in 2009, MTN is a strategic priority for UNI Africa. It's a 100% African company, the largest service provider in Africa and is expanding in Arabic countries. The IT sector has very poor trade union practices in Africa. MTN operates in 21 countries: only 1 country is happy with labour relations. Challenges are: workers frightened to organise, after meetings the networks do not work, recruit, organise, grow, activist training, threats of redundancies for activists.

UNI Africa has asked for help from partners. The ILO wants to support us to help organise activities focused on MTN. The aim is the creation of a Union Alliance before the end of 2011 and to sign a Global Agreement before the next UNI congress in 2014. A petition has been sent to MTN to ask them to respect trade union rights and to reinstate dismissed workers in South Africa as a court decision has ruled in favour of the workers.

Comments from the floor

Vidar Hennem (EL & IT – Norway): presented the situation at Telenor in Norway. He outlined that the union had discussed Telenor's activities with the Minister of Trade, with the company recently indicating they would start a dialogue with UNI in 2012.

Bjorn Lindh (SEKO – Sweden): Presented the situation at Teliasonera in Sweden. He emphasised the importance of working with other unions at the international level to advance the organising of workers in the company.

Manuel Gonçalves (SINTTAV – Portugal): The Global Agreement with Portugal Telecom should not depend on the wealth of a country. We also want a Global Agreement at Vodafone as at least 3 Portuguese unions have members in this company. For that to happen we must work together internationally.

Lewis André (GTAWU – Grenada): It is the responsibility of the labour movement to make sure all workers can freely choose their union. Political action is crucial in order for trade unions to keep their independence. We must do this transition and build political alliances without forgetting our roots. We must also engage in the legislative front to control jurisdictions and be able to influence government's election.

Larry Cohen (CWA – USA) concluded the session by thanking everyone for their great efforts and called on them to pursue the common fight for workers rights across the world.

8 Organising the Next Generation

Chair **Takuya Watanabe (ICTJ – Japan)**

Lorenzo De Santis (UNI ICTS) introduced his report on the effect of the crisis on the next generation and the importance and difficulties to unionise youths. Since the crisis started the situation of young people in terms of precarious work, unemployment and inactivity worsened. The economic recovery will take longer for youth than for adults. The biggest recovery will happen in the European CIS (former non-EU Soviet countries) region. It is time for governments to act and invest in youth and to offer them quality jobs.

Makiko Kurosu (ICTJ – Japan): ICTJ have various youth activities including volunteering, workplace visits, union training, peace activism and environmental issues that target young people to create networks and improve the membership of the next generation. She concluded by saying youth unemployment is increasing and we need to be proactive.

Peter Hellberg (Unionen – Sweden): Introduced the communication strategy of his union to improve its membership. Although the unionisation rate is high in Sweden (70%) recent developments showed a decrease in membership. We must change our way of thinking and our image: a strong union needs workers who are satisfied with their job.

Andy Kerr (CWU – UK): focused his intervention on the action plan of his union “building tomorrow together” which is focuses on putting organising at the centre of CWU’s strategy, working together at every level, evaluate the results and never give up!

Michael Jäkel (ver.di – Germany): We are building networks based on common interests. We lobby the government so that they recognise the importance of the ICTS sector to Germany and why it is important to keep high skilled jobs. There are organising opportunities there. We are active in more than 1000 companies and have full-time union organisers. We distribute surveys in companies to evaluate working conditions and job satisfaction. In other words we share our visions and show our competencies to our members.

Comments from the floor

Rachel Beausejour (CGT FAPT – France): It is important to develop unionism in order to promote democracy and gain power for workers. Action days were organised in France against the division of the workforce and the emergence of precarious jobs.

Hervé Morland (F3C-CFDT – France): The issue of internet modifying media needs a trade union response as it changes professional profiles. The creation of ICTS is a good thing. The sectors are already together in our union. We must take advantage of modern technologies to unionise people in IT. It is good to focus on multinationals but UNI should encourage agreements with companies from Africa too (cf. Senegal Telecom).

Manil Ojha (NTCWU – Nepal): It is important for Nepalese unions to participate in international work as we are a developing country facing rapid technological change.

Thomas John (NUBSNL – India): The IT sector creates a lot of jobs especially in services and it will continue with the rise of cloud computing and broadband. Although employees are suffering from various illnesses (stress, no rest...) and enjoy no work-life balance. It is very difficult to organise in this sector as salaries increase and MNC’s are protected even when they dismiss workers.

Kumar Ashok (TEAN – Nepal): The Nepalese telecom market has undergone liberalisation since the 2000’s. Since then infringements of labour law, a lack of social dialogue and job cuts has made it very difficult to organise in the sector.

Rebecca Munko (ver.di – Gemany): She introduced the work of the youth sector at ver.di whose key tasks are collective bargaining with involvement of young workers in negotiations and youth organising. They recently negotiated pay rises for apprentices and gained 1377 new members from January to March. They call for better communication with youth in other unions.

Takuya Watanabe (ICTJ – Japan): Organising is difficult but we have collective wisdom among our members to break through. We will keep on promoting solidarity and continue to engage in organising.

Koen Dries (LBC-NVK – Belgium): We have written a solidarity letter to IBM regarding the dismissal of the Bulgarian colleague at IBM. The letter will be sent to the European Works Council of IBM for follow-up.

9 ICTS for the long run

Chair **Fanca Salis Madinier**

High Speed Broadband

Fanca Salis Madinier (CFDT Cadres – France): It is important to anticipate technological developments and their regulation, as they will impact employment, training, the environment and organisations in general. Cloud computing will impact on media, culture and the ICTS sector. Borders between Media and Entertainment and ICTS have become blurred.

Lorenzo De Santis (UNI ICTS): He described the evolution of broadband since Athens in 2007 and its implications for the ICTS sector. He presented a paper titled “UNI ICTS For The Long Run – Broadband: What happened since Athens 2007?”

Almir Munhoz (SINETEL – Brazil): He explained the situation of broadband in Brazil and more specifically the national broadband plan with the goal to boost economic development via digital inclusion. One of the main problems was the concentration of broadband access in certain areas as there was no obligation to cover non-profitable parts of the country. It is unclear if the state owned operator is in control of the process or not. Network deployment and services should not be in the hands of only one company and society must be involved in the decision-making process. Public-private cooperation is needed. He concluded by saying that the non-existing regulation on content is a top priority for his union.

Minao Noda (ICTJ – Japan): see presentation.

Comments from the floor:

Emilio Miceli (SLC-CGIL – Italy): He described the situation in Italy where investment in broadband is non-existent which slows down innovation. The restructuring of operators doesn't help and the content providers are those making the money. He added that investments in call centres should be improved instead of outsourcing.

Cloud Computing

Video from **Ken McCabe (USA)** and presentation by **Lorenzo De Santis (UNI ICTS):** They explain the basics of cloud computing and its probable impacts on ICTS and the jobs in the sector.

10 ICTS Strategic Priorities 2011-2015

Marcus Courtney (UNI ICTS): We must organise more workers and win more Global Agreements. The plan focuses on four areas: MNC's organising, finding new avenues to engage affiliates in EWCs and “Jobs for justice” through Global Union Alliances and

Global Agreements. Also we must increase our regulatory influence. He concluded by saying we must enforce the existing global agreements.

The conference adopted the strategic plan & priorities.

11 Solidarity Statements

Chair **Benson Okwaro (COWU – Kenya)**

Solidarity statements were read on Deutsche Telekom, IBM, France Telecom, Mexico, Pakistan Telecom Company Limited, CISCO Russia, Atento El Salvador. Affiliates from Pakistan and Russia were not present at the conference and it was noted that they sent their messages to be presented. All solidarity statements were adopted by the conference.

12 Ratification of ICTS Rules:

Chair **Bo Larsen**

Marcus Courtney (UNI ICTS): There has been extensive consultation with all regions on the new sector rules. There was one amendment which was read to participants regarding representation at conference by delegations. The new ICTS rules were adopted unanimously by the conference and the merger officially declared.

13 Conference Conclusions:

Chair **Bo Larsen**

Marcus Courtney (UNI ICTS): Thanked STRM for organising the conference with UNI. He committed to support regions that have problems regarding violation of workers' rights. Finally innovative and dynamic campaigns are run in the sector and will continue especially in IBM, HP, Telefonica and Deutsche Telekom.

Bo Larsen adopted the conclusions of the conference.

14 Election

The new world committee was presented.

Larry Cohen (CWA – USA): thanked Bo Larsen who steps down as World President. Larry nominated Francisco Hernandez Juarez from Mexico to stand as the new president.

The conference elected Francisco Hernandez Juarez by acclamation unopposed. Bo Larsen handed over the presidency.

Acceptance speech by Francisco Hernandez Juarez. He thanked everyone for their confidence in him to lead the new sector in difficult and crucial times for unions all over the world.

Farewell speech by Bo Larsen. He thanked the affiliates for their trust in his leadership.
Conference closed.