

In numbers

The ITF

114,640 The earliest records of the ITF, dating from November 1901, say that this was the number of affiliated members. Membership today stands at over 4½ million.

12 There have been 12 ITF general secretaries in the federation's 112-year existence. The current incumbent, David Cockroft, is British. As well as British, others have been Belgian, Dutch, German and Swiss. The longest-serving has been Dutchman Edo Fimmen, from 1919 to 1942.

4 was the number of non-European countries with unions affiliated to the ITF in 1923. They were Argentina, Canada, Palestine and the US. Before then, only one non-European union, representing US seafarers, had been affiliated. Today, there are ITF affiliates in 148 countries.

1942 The funeral for the legendary ITF general secretary of the inter-war years, Dutchman Edo Fimmen, was held in Mexico City 19 December 1942. He

has died five days earlier in Cuernavaca, where he had been convalescing. Fimmen led the ITF from 1919 and was especially active in battle against fascism in Europe in the 1930s, organising underground activities in Germany and Italy and actively supporting the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War. The Mexican Confederation of Workers placed the urn containing his ashes in its headquarters in the Mexican capital. His remains were eventually taken to the Netherlands in 1950.

3 is the number of cities where the ITF's headquarters have been located before moving to London in 1939. They were Amsterdam, Berlin and Hamburg. The Amsterdam office was vacated in 1939 at the start of the Second World War.

7 There were representatives from seven countries at the meeting on 27 July 1896 in a hotel in London that led to the creation of the ITF – initially called the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers. Those present were from unions in Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Sweden and the US.

Right: Part of a portrait of former ITF general secretary Edo Fimmen by Marie de Roode-Heijermans. See "1942".



ITF 42ND CONGRESS
MEXICO CITY 2010

DAILY NEWS

No.3

Saturday/Sunday 7-8 August 2010

What's on this weekend

SATURDAY

Inland navigation section conference: Don Diego 1 & 2, 9.30am-1.30pm.

Dockers' section conference: Don Diego 3 & 4, 9.30am-5.30pm.

Railway workers' section conference: Don Alberto, 9.30am-5.30pm.

Film: Hidden Dangers of Toxic Gas Containers (produced by FNV): Don Alberto, 1.15pm-1.45pm.

Fisheries section conference: Don Diego 1 & 2, 2.30pm-6pm.

Organising Globally workshop (English): Don Diego 3 & 4, 6pm-8.30pm.

HIV/AIDS workshop (Spanish): Don Alberto, 6pm-8.30pm.

SUNDAY

Urban transport committee meeting: Don Diego 3 & 4, 9.30pm-12.30pm.

Joint dockers' and seafarers' meeting: Don Diego 1 & 2, 9.30am-5pm.

Tourism services section conference: Don Alberto, 9.30am-12.30pm.

Film: On the union organising project in the LAN airline in South America: Don Alberto, 1.15pm-1.45pm.

Labour and the future of the aviation industry meeting: Don Diego 1 & 2, 2pm-5.30pm.

Quality public services meeting: Don Diego 3 & 4, 2pm-6pm.

Organising Globally workshop (English): Don Diego 3 & 4, 6pm-8.30pm.

Organising Globally workshop Spanish/Portuguese: Don Alberto, 6pm-8.30pm.

HIV/AIDS workshop (English): Don Diego 1 & 2, 6pm-8.30pm.



Pledges of support at Mexicana press conference

At a packed lunchtime press conference (above) during Congress on Friday, unions representing pilots and cabin crew in the troubled Mexicana airline said that they were in discussions with management in an effort to guarantee the future of the airline.

ASSA cabin crew union general secretary Lisette Clavel (right) reported on these developments to the civil aviation section conference on the same day.

The company – which is the official carrier for Congress – went into administration a week ago and has cut some routes and flight frequencies. At the press conference, transport workers from Argentina, Germany, UK and the US pledged their solidarity with Mexicana workers.



We back British Airways cabin crew

From front page

been victimised by BA: shop stewards and other members had been dismissed and others had been disciplined.

"This is the harshest attack on a union since the 1980s... Unite is spending millions of pounds to fight BA. If we don't get a fair deal, this will impact on unions across the country." He urged unions to back an emergency motion calling for continued solidarity action to support BA cabin crew and demanding that BA enter into constructive negotiations with Unite in order to reach an agreement.

In her opening speech, Carla Winkler of the US-based IAM and chair of the ITF civil aviation section, highlighted how crucial unions' organising work in the airline alliances was in disputes such as BA. She commented: "The alliance work is critical if you look at the situation in British Airways. This company has targeted the Unite union as the first union that the Europeans can go after."

She said that if the company could destroy Unite, this made other unions extremely vulnerable. "We have to be mindful of what is happening at BA because it's the first target that the alliance is going after."

Gabriel Mocho, ITF civil aviation section secretary, stated that the BA dispute was "a very important struggle that we are fully supporting in the ITF."

Delegates stand up for trade union rights at UPS in Turkey

Turkish workers' struggle to defend their union rights at UPS in Turkey prompted a standing ovation at the road transport workers' section conference on Friday. Delegates went on to back a motion in support of the union.

Kenan Öztürk, president of the Turkish road transport union TÜMTIS, who was addressing the conference, said that so far more than 140 workers had been dismissed by UPS. The dismissals, he said, were sparked by an organising drive at the company.

Under Turkish law, a union must be recognised if 50 per cent plus one of the workforce are members; the dismissals were a union-busting measure to ensure that the threshold could not be reached. He also reported that shots had been fired against workers on the picket line.



Kenan Öztürk addresses a UPS solidarity rally in Taksim Square, Istanbul, on 31 July.

Öztürk urged delegates: "We need more solidarity. UPS is a US-based company. We're asking for solidarity from the US as well as from the rest of the world. If we can reinstate our workers we will become a recognised union."

He added: "All other workers in Turkey are looking to see what will happen in the UPS strike."

The dismissed workers were being supported financially by TÜMTIS, which was a difficult task. "But we will continue to support them even if we have to sell our head office building," he said. Inspired by the workers' courage, delegates stood up to applaud Öztürk.

Eduardo Chagas, general secretary of the ITF's European arm, the ETF, who joined the workers on the picket line during a delegation visit, stated: "This is

not just UPS that is at stake; a defeat could have much wider implications. The union fears there may be mass dismissals."

He urged delegates to send financial contributions to the ETF, which would be forwarded to the workers. The money would pay for food, basic needs and transport to the picket line.

Meanwhile, Jan De Jong, FNV Bondgenoten, Netherlands, proposed that one day in the year be set aside for international action outside UPS offices in as many countries as possible. He suggested even "a small action at UPS to disturb the logistics system and draw some media attention".

Civil aviation workers have been urged to back cabin crew at the British Airways (BA), where a dispute has been raging since the beginning of the year.

Speaking at the ITF civil aviation section conference on Friday, Sean Beatty, a BA cabin crew member for 21 years, a representative for UK union Unite and chair of the ITF cabin crew committee, outlined the dispute over the imposition of new working practices.

He told delegates that Unite cabin crew members, who had already agreed to measures to save the company £90 million (US\$140 million), had rejected BA's proposals four times; the company was not interested in proper negotiations. "It was their way or no way."

He added: "The chief executive's desire is to break the union. It's not about money. By BA's own admission, the strike has cost the company £200 million – it's an attempt to break trade union solidarity in our country."

Beatty described how cabin crew members had

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Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport: a brief guide

Running to more than 7,000 words (in English), the theme document for Congress, **Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport**, sets out a detailed and ambitious ITF strategy to help unions act globally to face the challenges of the 21st century. Here we offer readers a compact guide to the document's key points.

Privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation have put unions around the world on the defensive. Employers have been able to casualise, outsource and transfer work offshore. Governments are undermining union rights and working conditions are under attack. Matters have been made worse by the global economic crisis, which has hit jobs and incomes.

Unions must respond to these developments by building their strength and defending their rights. Additionally, they must promote public services, including investment in public transport and transport infrastructure.

The challenge of climate change also points to the need for an economic model based on sustainability and social solidarity, not neoliberalism. Public transport has to play a central role in greening the global economy. Equally, a regulated fisheries industry is vital for food security.

“We will press for progressive solutions to the global economic crisis and for enhanced global labour standards. Countries where action is needed to defend or improve trade union rights will be identified.”

The ITF believes that secure jobs with decent working conditions and transport systems that serve the public good and which are socially and environmentally sustainable are complementary and achievable goals.

In a globalised world economy, transport workers occupy a key position, whether in sectors such as freight distribution or urban public transport. This places a special responsibility on the ITF to present a clear vision of how unions can be made stronger and how the interests of transport workers around the world can be advanced.

The strategy to achieve these aims is contained in Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport under three headings:

- building strong unions – the Organising Globally programme adopted at the 2006 Congress (see box);
- fighting for union rights and labour standards;
- campaigning for sustainable transport.

The ITF will also identify strategically important

Organising Globally: the projects

To advance the Organising Globally agenda – and drawing on the experience of the ITF's longstanding flag of convenience campaign and other examples of international solidarity and cooperation – the ITF will develop various projects over the next four years. These include:

- protecting the rights of cross-border transport workers, for example in the civil aviation, road transport and inland waterways sectors, with at least one project in three different regions under way by 2014;
- assisting workers in precarious or informal transport work in at least three regions;
- delivering global and regional union networks in at least eight major multinational transport companies;
- coordinating organising projects with affiliates in at least three global transport hubs/corridors and at least two global and two regional logistics supply chains;
- promoting strong international union networks in at least four major global or regional passenger transport multinationals and three major airline alliances.

NB: A series of Organising Globally workshops begins today. See listings on front page.

countries where global benefits would be gained from assisting unions to build their independence and strength. Special programmes to support union organisation will be implemented in at least three such countries.

There will be programmes to identify the issues of concern to young transport workers and to integrate these concerns into all the projects being pursued over the next four years.

In addition, at least three special projects will be devised for each of the following:

- mapping the employment of women transport workers;
- implementing an organising campaign among women transport workers;
- introducing capacity-building schemes in workplaces with precarious labour practices for women.

ITF campaigning will be strengthened by working with fellow global unions as well as with NGOs and human rights and other civil society organisations to achieve the objectives of Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport. We will press for progressive solutions to the global economic crisis and for enhanced global labour standards. Countries where action is needed to defend or improve trade union rights will be identified. And the aim of environmentally and socially sustainable transport will be pursued, with the promotion of public transport a priority.

Download the full document at: www.itfglobal.org/congress2010/congress2010-3060.cfm

My Congress

Delegates say what Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport means to them.

Joseph Maurer is president of the Czech cabin crew union.



“It's easy: organising. Either we build unions or we die. It's as simple as that. Last night I was talking with some colleagues and we all agreed. We don't need any more resolutions, we need to get active in the workplace. Our top priority is

Wizz Air, a low cost airline which also operates in Poland and Hungary. And obviously Ryanair is important for all of Europe. We are lucky because we can access EU funds for this work. The ITF has expertise that we need. I want to find out more about how they built unions at LAN, a low-cost carrier in Latin America. I think there will be some important lessons for us – we don't want to reinvent the wheel!”

Sylvia Tatra is the international secretary of Vida, Austria.



“For me it is very similar to the ETF (European Transport Workers' Federation) conference last year. I think it's very important that transport is sustainable. But it's difficult for us to favour a particular transport mode. Our union covers aviation, inland

navigation, rail, and also road workers. At the ITF climate change conference they were saying that rail is the greenest and should be promoted, but don't know yet how this will affect road transport workers. Perhaps we need to look at retraining schemes. I'm not sure. It's also very important that we focus on organising. In Austria we need to unionise temporary workers and also bring more women into the union. We need to work with ITF networks too. Our main source of power is the European Parliament, so I want to meet other trade unionists face to face so that we can work together across Europe.”



Gulay Erdogan and Özlem Keles are both air traffic controllers in Turkey. They are members of the BTS union.

GE: It's important to be well organised in the industry and that we make global connections.

OK: There is a rapid development in the aviation sector. In this section of the trade union, we have to make long term strategic plans to organise. Capitalism has been making strategic plans over the past 30 years – we need to counteract their effect.

GE: We always resist and oppose capitalist strategies, but instead of that, we should find solutions. We need strong and well-organised unions that define the problems of workers and fight for rights.

OK: We should create an environment that says to workers: “We are all on the same side”. All workers' interests are the same and the most effective way of promoting this message is face to face.

Joe Fleetwood is general secretary of the Maritime Union of New Zealand.



“It's the right theme. If unions are strong you can make transport sustainable. But the main issue is being able to deliver. In New Zealand we have a flourishing offshore drilling industry. No one wants another disaster like BP, but when the green groups say ‘end offshore drilling’ we get

uneasy. Our members have jobs on the offshore platforms and supply ships. We will oppose corporations who wreck the environment, but we're not comfortable with driving the industry out of the business. So there are two sides of the coin. One thing the ITF needs to remember is never to sell itself short. Of all the global unions, the ITF is the one with horsepower. It's the horsepower of the global unions. We have to be able to fight when we need to. And when you are fighting for workers, you'll never go wrong.”

Brian Gallagher is a tugs delegate for the Maritime Union of Australia.



“It's about getting ourselves together as one. I think it's pretty clear to the MUA. It's bred into our blokes. You do your mapping and you build from there. It's really important that we communicate these messages properly. Maybe we should have more time for questions in our meetings. I've

been a seafarer for 31 years and this kind of thing is second nature. But when you're having a few beers at the end of the day a few questions come out and you realise some people are still a bit unsure. Some of our delegates were sceptical we could do anything concrete on climate change. But I said: ‘Look, you do your mapping, you study it, then you put forward your case to the boss’. I said, look at our port practices convention. We don't go flat out on the river anymore, we go slow to save fuel and keep pollution down. Maybe we should look at how to build green policies into our collective agreements as well.”

“We will oppose corporations who wreck the environment, but we're not comfortable with driving the industry out of the business. So there are two sides of the coin.”



Seafarers' 'bill of rights' on course to be ratified

Cleo Doumbia-Henry (pictured left), international director of labour standards at the International Labour Organization, told the seafarers' section conference on Friday that the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) was on course for ratification.

She reported that 10 countries had so far agreed to ratify the 2006 convention, which is known as a “bill of rights” for the world's 1.2 million seafarers.

The MLC consolidates and updates more than 65 international labour standards for seafarers adopted over the previous 80 years.

Doumbia-Henry described the MLC as a new kind of convention, as it “has teeth” and incorporated procedures for implementation.

In order to come into force, the MLC has to be ratified by at least 30 countries representing one third of the world's gross tonnage. So far, 10 had done so, said Doumbia-Henry, accounting for 46 per cent of world tonnage.

Another guest speaker at the conference was Giles Heimann, secretary general of IMEC (International Maritime Employers Committee), which negotiates on seafarers' pay with the ITF.

During a question and answer session he assured delegates: “IMEC will not stand for any seafarer not receiving their pay on time every month and will take drastic action when that occurs.”

Organisers of a series of ITF workshops on HIV/AIDS (beginning today) hope to get the message across that challenging the stigma among some transport workers towards fellow workers living with the virus is a key part of the strategy for combating the disease.

The three workshops (one each in English, French and Spanish) will hear personal testimony from HIV positive Kenyan docker Francis Ruwa, who spoke movingly about his experience at the opening plenary session of Congress.

The short ITF-produced documentary film, “Story Telling, Challenging Stigma”, will be screened. Time will also be set aside for participants to share their ideas and experiences.

ITF HIV/AIDS coordinator Asif Altaf says that one of the key objectives of the workshops is to extend awareness and activity beyond Africa and South Asia,

HIV/AIDS workshops will tackle workplace stigma

“It is now time for affiliates in other regions like Latin America, the Caribbean, Arab countries and South-East Asia to take more interest in strategies to confront the disease and to challenge discrimination at the workplace.”

where for some time unions have been active in tackling the epidemic. “It is now time for affiliates in other regions like Latin America, the Caribbean, Arab countries and South-East Asia, where HIV/AIDS has not been an issue for transport unions or where talking about the subject was taboo, to take more interest in strategies to confront the disease and to challenge discrimination at the workplace.”

He also points out that HIV/AIDS is a particular problem for transport workers. In a number of African, Asian and Eastern European countries, HIV prevalence is higher among transport workers than in the general population, especially among long-distance drivers on major transport corridors.