



# Rome Declaration

# **XVIII CONGRESS OF WFTU**

## **6-8 MAY, 2022, ROME, ITALY**

### **ROME DECLARATION**

Qualifying with multiple unique features, the 18th Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) held in the capital city of Rome, Italy on 6-8 May 2022 has been a historical international working class event.

Representing 93 countries, 430 registered delegates participated in the Congress. 330 (77%) participated physically while 100 (23%) participated virtually from all over the world.

In compliance with the decades old rich practice and in adherence to the principle of working class democracy as enunciated in the Constitution of WFTU, the Congress has democratically elected a Presidential Council (PC) in which new Cadres have been elected for the first time.

The PC has representation from 50 countries representing all the five Continents. The same percentages for the new Secretariat and the new Financial Control Committee are as follows: Secretariat countries: 10 , FCC counties: 7.

The composition of the delegates in the Rome Congress of the WFTU shall be remembered for grass-root trade union cadres with spirit of working class courage, conviction, simplicity, sacrificing, and class-oriented militancy. The Rome Congress was truly internationalist, class-oriented, democratic, open, multi-color, workers' Congress. These are lessons learnt and enriched in course of the long seventy six years of class oriented revolutionary struggles conducted by the WFTU affiliates and cadres worldwide led by the leadership of WFTU against the barbarity of capitalism.

99 delegates took the floor. In course of the deliberations by the delegates, the picture captured represented the difficulties that our movement has been facing in their countries. The Congress got the message once again that every small or large class struggle, local, regional, national or international, is part of the global system of the workers' struggle. Constructive self-criticism and criticism featured in number of speeches have greatly enriched the deliberations. This, after all, shows a genuine



workers' characteristic that reminds us of the inevitable role of the Detachment and Vanguard in revolutionary overthrow of the capitalism under the leadership of working class.

It is noted with grave shock that our Congress was held in an unprecedented socio-political conditions for the action of the international trade union movement, while it was called to overcome difficulties that we had not faced in the past. The Coronavirus Pandemic has snatched the precious lives of so many of our class brothers and sisters around the world. Further, it has also hampered the organization of our conference: travel restrictions, increased travel costs, unprecedented load for conference logistical infrastructure to enable digital participation delegates.

Moreover the delegates had to confront the restrictions imposed by Embassies and state bureaucratic regulations. These are just some of the challenging factors prompting us to ensure the befitting success of our Conference in order to prepare our cadres for the great class battles in the offing. The fighting working class led by WFTU carried out courageous battle despite multifarious odds and gave a resounding answer to those who would like to see a Congress that would not be worthy of the size and importance of the WFTU.

Also necessary to note that, the WFTU Congress took place in the background of a dangerous international geopolitical and economic development. The deep and deeper depth of the systemic crisis of capitalism, which even bourgeois analysis cannot hide, shows an even greater intensity of exploitation of the working class inflicting further impoverishment, shocking rise in unemployment and the capitalist class onslaught on the workers' achievements, democratic freedoms and trade union rights.

True to their capitalistic class dishonesty, the bourgeois class is trying to mislead the people with orchestrated campaign hiding the real cause of the crisis. They are projecting Coronavirus Pandemic as the sole cause of the crisis. The Pandemic may have contributed in the timing and depth of the crisis. But the basic cause lies in capitalist system itself. The real causes of this crisis must be traced in the laws of the capitalist mode of production, in the large over-accumulated capital that could not be recapitalized or reinvested, thus hitting hard the capitalist class in their unlimited profit greed.

Capitalist class Governments and the Agents of bourgeoisie in the US, EU and Japan are making major state interventions attempting to revive the capitalist economy by pursuing an expansionary Fiscal Policy. The truth is, however, that no capitalist maneuver can sustainably address the crisis. At best there can be totally temporary breathing space ultimately leading to a deeper crisis.

On the other hand, once again the burden of the crisis is being shifted to the shoulder of the workers. The people are called upon to pay for the new loans and to shoulder the burden of all the anti-labor, anti-people policies which designed to reduce wages, impose layoffs in bigger numbers and crush social security rights. In fact, in the beginning these measures come as temporary emergency measures but they become permanent later on. Shockingly, for the capitalist camp, however, the crisis is an opportunity to notoriously push forward their anti-worker schemes.

Take for example the issue of so-called "green growth", which is designed to impose financial burden the people on account of expensive electricity, so-called flexible employer-employee relationships, green indirect taxes and new burdens on peoples' families, in order for the state to support new profitable green investments of business tycoons.

Imperialist antagonisms between imperialist alliances and also between states within these alliances for control of markets, energy sources and transportation routes are intensifying creating danger of imperialist wars involving Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and Southeast Asia to the Arctic. In fact, a special place in these imperialist antagonisms is occupied by the Indo-Pacific region where the main sphere of interest of the imperialist alliances is shifted. The risk of a generalized imperialist war is deepening and expanding.

The recent war and developments in Ukraine show that Europe is not safe either. All those who believed that the wars were only taking place outside Europe are proved totally wrong. On the contrary, what is proving to be clear is that the causes of the wars lie in the overturn in the international balance of power, as formed in 1991 with the dissolution of the USSR and the overthrow of Socialism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Moreover, the arms race shows exactly this situation, with global military spending exceeding - for the first time in history - \$ 2 trillion in 2021. In fact, an indication of our times reveals the intensity of competition and military aggressiveness and the changes in the defense doctrines in a number of capitalist states (a typical example is Germany a few years ago, more recently Japan). At the same time, NATO is aggressively conspiring to bring under its fold the countries which been described as "neutral" for decades, such as Sweden and Finland.

In fact, the relations of uneven interdependencies that characterize the imperialist system and govern the relations between all the capitalist states, are formed through a number of international and regional alliances, organizations and agreements that also indirectly reflect the correlation of power. In recent years, in addition to the most well-known organizations (e.g. UN, NATO, EU, OSCE, WTO, G7, G20), which are led by

the US, new ones have emerged.

The wider changes that are taking place at the economic level reflect the changes in the web of the international imperialist groupings. Thus, notable is the US leadership considers the current composition of the Group of Seven most powerful capitalist states (USA, Japan, Canada, France, UK, Italy and Germany) are turning obsolete and that Australia, South Korea and India are being dragged into new anti-Chinese alliance. For example AUKUS consisting of Australia-UK-US; QUAD composed of USA-Japan-Australia and India.

At the same time, the US government, utilizing the massive tax reduction for the capitalist class, is calling on US monopolies in new technologies operating in China to abandon it or return to the US, while making efforts to prevent China's expansion through the "New Silk Road" and its investments in third world countries. Sino-US competition is also what will determine future developments, with both sides trying to strengthen their own alliances.

Taking into consideration the international and regional big picture and keeping in view the foregoing facts, figures and formulations captured on the basis of the objective socio-politico-economic situation prevailing in the world, WFTU calls upon the working class and the militant trade union movement throughout the world to strengthen trade union organization, to intensify militant struggles of the working class, to resist the class onslaught of capitalism, to expose and defeat the machinations of imperialist forces.

The WFTU Congress, after discussion and open democratic dialogue, resolves the following immediate Priority Tasks.

## **THE WFTU TASKS**

Going through the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as we are about to celebrate WFTU's 80 years of life and action, the 18th Congress reaffirms the values of a class, democratic, internationalist and mass unionism with our tasks being:

1. The preservation and continuous strengthening of the unity of WFTU lines, which is fundamental so that our organization can continue playing its role as the most consistent and steadfast defender of workers' rights.
2. The safeguarding of the unity of the working class as a single, global, social class, in the struggle for social liberation from capitalist exploitation. In this struggle to overthrow capitalist slavery, the working class develops its broad social alliances with the peasants, the progressive intelligentsia and the self-employed.

3. The strengthening and deepening of the principles on which WFTU was founded upon, as a trade union organization that accepts and moves forward based on the principles of class struggle, democratic and trade union freedoms, for the defense of the right to organize and the right to strike. The WFTU follows and applies the values of democracy and direct contact with the workers, while respecting the operating principles of base trade unions.
4. The Right to Strike: WFTU recognizes the Right to Strike as a fundamental human right and is an essential part of Freedom of Association. The capitalist class at national, regional and international levels has taken an aggressive approach not only to violate this fundamental right but are actively trying to unarm workers and trade unions of this right. The WFTU will stand vehemently against these attacks and will defend the Right to Strike at all costs.
5. Internationalism and solidarity among all workers regardless of color, religion, gender, language and political preferences. In that, no employee and no sector can be left alone in its struggles and demands.
6. Since its foundation, WFTU has always been an anti-imperialist trade union movement, defending the right of every people to decide for itself, freely and democratically, on its present and future. WFTU condemns imperialist wars and imperialist interventions. It stands against Racism, Fascism and Xenophobia.
7. We promote in practice the equal participation of women and youth in the activities and operation of trade unions. We make sure they assume important positions of responsibility and we trust their role. We educate our members and leading Cadres to fight together, women and men, against socio-economic exploitation.
8. We want class-oriented, democratic, mass unions that will function as schools for social struggles for the emancipation of the working class. We want them to work collectively, always turning towards the base and the common worker. We want them to have a long-lasting and unwavering front against bureaucracy, elitism, careerism and corruption.
9. WFTU intervenes in international organizations in which it participates, promoting the positions of the class-oriented trade union movement and revealing the anti-labor character of organizations that violate their very own principles and reasons on which they were founded.
10. The entire organization of WFTU is dedicated on a daily basis to a constant action for improving the living standards of the toiling masses ensuring better wages,

secured employment, social insurance, culture and intellect. The satisfaction of the workers' CONTEMPORARY NEEDS is an ongoing goal for every country, sector, region and trade union.

- 11.Today, with all the technological progress and accumulated wealth, the standard for contemporary needs must always be set high. New technologies and digitization must be utilized for the improvement of the workers' life and not for the increase of profits. These contemporary needs, according to the way the class-oriented trade union movement understands them, unquestionably include the right to free health, decent housing, access to clean water, the right to safe, reliable and cheap public transport, and free public education for all children.

### **The Contemporary Struggle of the Working Class**

- 12.The capitalist mode of production, while sinking into crisis with its own contradictions, permanently seeks ways to maintain its hegemony. Given that the essence of its survival is marked by the appropriation of the wealth produced by the working class, the burden of the crisis always falls on the working class when the system enters into crisis.
- 13.Therefore, apart from its recurrent drops in rate of profit, especially from the 1970s onwards and the crises that followed, especially that of 2008/2009, the system accelerated a set of changes in the way, how and where to produce. Outsourcing, an intense technological and business increase, accompanied by a new division of labor marked by the dispersion of productive units, characterize the new era in the world of work.
- 14.In addition, seeking to weaken political resistance to this anti-workers attack, they are making labor legislation more flexible and deregulating the role of trade union representation. Overall, despite the large mobilizations, the result of this current stage is the precariousness of work and the awareness of a considerable part of our class.
- 15.The World Federation of Trade Unions and its affiliated Unions should not underestimate this new situation; on the contrary, they must study and confront with tactics and appropriate means, in particular, with the strengthening of political training and union work at the base.

In this context, the 18th Congress of the WFTU approves the following priority objectives for the next period:

## **Income - Wages - Remuneration**

1. We support and demand unfettered collective bargaining and the signing of fair and just Collective Agreements for full-time, stable work, with dignified wages. Collective Agreements should govern every country and every sector, meeting the demands of the workers. For example and as a minimum requirement, the workers' income in every country must be at least twice as much as the poverty threshold.

### **A 35-hour working week with no reduction in salary**

2. We are constantly fighting for a reduction in working hours and a simultaneous improvement in wages. WFTU's position is for a 35-hour, 5-day week which is immediately necessary and realistic. The next step should be a 7-hour, 4-day week of full-time employment, without reducing wages. According to the situation in its own country, each union should struggle to further improve working hours and guarantee decent wages. This is the only way in which the working class and all workers in general will receive a share of the wealth produced by labour and the profits yielding from the explosive development of technology and science in the production process.

WFTU strongly opposes part-time or undeclared work, labor slavery and lay-offs. With the implementation of tele-work, flexible forms of employment are further promoted, working hours are increased and stable and permanent work with rights is being challenged. We propose to develop a broad campaign for a 35-hour working day with no reduction in salary and launch it next October 03, 2022.

## **Social Security**

3. We demand public social security and pension for everyone, so that all workers in all sectors can enjoy full rights and insurance coverage. Undeclared and uninsured work constitutes a "casus belli" for the class-oriented trade union movement.

## **High Prices - Unemployment - Privatization**

4. These are also the results of capitalist barbarity of the 'enemies' of the trade union movement and the workers. High prices affect poor people, unemployment is "the fifth column" within trade unions, and privatizations present monopolies and multinational companies the opportunity to lay off workers and attack their vested rights.

Privatizations lead to the selloff of public wealth and give a great opportunity to



the monopolies and multinational companies to lay off workers, to attack their rights and gains and to deprive workers of free and universal access to social goods. The fight against high prices, unemployment and privatizations must be high on the priority agenda of WFTU's day to day struggles.

### **Immigrants - Refugees**

5. Imperialist wars create refugees and immigrants. The exploitation of the wealth of the Third World breeds poverty and immigration. One of the main priorities of the international militant trade union movement has always been the write-off of the foreign debt of Third World countries. At the same time, we defend the lives and rights of immigrants and refugees. We strongly oppose and fight racist and neo-fascist phenomena. For WFTU, the working class is united as a class.

### **Child Labor – Working during Pregnancy**

6. Children should be at school, playing with their peers. Child labor should be banned in practice – not just in words. For pregnant women, the international rules governing maternity leave, lighter work and banning lay-offs, should be implemented.
7. Health and safety at the workplace are matters of great importance for WFTU, as the workers must return to their homes and families safe and sound. We focus on the establishment and operation of health and safety committees in the workplace. Addressing the environmental crisis is also of great importance to WFTU, as we believe that it is caused by the ruthless speculative action of monopolies and multinational cartels. Poor people are drowning, burned and killed because of the consequences of this crisis: floods, cold weather, fires, and earthquakes.

### **An immediate dissolution of NATO**

8. WFTU opposes the waste of resources and money for military purposes. It also opposes the use of nuclear energy for military purposes and calls for an immediate dissolution of NATO.
9. We do not agree with the exclusions, discriminations, embargoes and sanctions imposed by the US, NATO and the EU against various countries, as they negatively impact the standard of living of low-income families, workers and poor, small farmers.

### **International Action Day of Trade Unions for Peace**

10. The WFTU Congress declares the 1<sup>st</sup> of September be observed as 'International

Action Day' of all trade unions for Peace. It is to recall that on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, Nazi Germany started the World War II.

11. Today again we are witnessing with serious concern the re-emergence of neo-Fascist and neo-Nazi forces posing real threat to the working class. It is imperative and need of the hour to mobilize peace loving people against imperialist war game for promoting and protecting peace. In this framework, the WFTU, its members and friends also celebrate and honor the 9<sup>th</sup> of May every year as the great day that marks the victory of the Peoples; the defeat of Hitler and the end of World War II.

### **A democratic and collective leadership system**

12. The WFTU and all of its leading bodies function in a democratic and collective way; the Presidential Council, the TUIs, the Regional Offices, the Committees of Women, Youth, the Legal Committee etc coordinate their actions and initiatives in order to promote the workers' struggles and follow the central directions of the WFTU. The Regional Offices and the TUIs can cooperate and coordinate their action whenever they consider it necessary.

### **Political cadres committed to the struggle**

13. WFTU is always alert and alive that we are judged by people for our action and effectiveness. All of our leading bodies, our cadres, all of us are watched by our class. We are committed without any compromise to fight for the cause of workers. Each cadre is being judged and tested primarily within his/her own country and sector. It is there that he or she will be tested whether he or she points out, promotes and supports the directions, positions and glorious banners of the WFTU.

### **Create an International Committee for Promotion & Protection of Trade Union Rights & Freedoms**

14. Unable to rescue itself from the iron clutch of ever deepening systemic crisis of capitalism, the capitalist class has resorted to barbaric attack on the working class and trade union movement. They are promoting precarious employment, depriving job security, worsening working conditions and demolishing the rights of the workers, particularly Right to Organise, Right to Collective Bargaining and Right to Strike Action.
15. The monopolies, multinational companies and governments of the capitalist world utilize new technologies to restrict trade union formation and their free functioning

as well as the democratic and individual freedoms of workers in society and in workplaces.

16. Nowadays technology driven onslaught of anti-worker surveillance and restrictions on free trade union and social action are added to the age old anti-trade union and anti-democratic cruel and violent repression by employers supplemented by state authoritarianism that even goes to the extent of organized murders of trade unionists.
17. The International Committee for the protection of trade union and democratic freedoms will gather evidence and present memorandums to International Organizations and will support the relevant initiatives of the leading bodies of the WFTU. It will also cooperate with the WFTU Legal Committee.
18. On the other hand, most employers do not apply all the necessary health and safety measures in the workplaces since they consider the health and safety of workers as a cost that leads to occupational “accidents”. The ILO estimates that some 2.3 million women and men around the world succumb to work-related accidents or diseases every year; this corresponds to over 6000 deaths every single day.
19. Worldwide, there are around 340 million occupational accidents and 160 million victims of work-related illnesses annually. The protection of workers inside the workplaces will also be among the tasks of the International Committee.

### **WFTU Funding**

20. The WFTU is based on the fees of its affiliates and the support of its friends. It has no other resources. For this reason, the Congress calls on all affiliated organizations to pay their fees. The financial support strengthens the financial self-reliance and the organizational development of the WFTU.

### **An integrated WFTU communication system**

21. The vast majority of media are controlled by multinational and monopoly interests. They are instruments and mechanisms of propaganda against the interests of workers and peoples. The militant unions must reveal the propaganda role of these media and at the same time find ways to get the truth and the real facts to the workers, taking advantage of all the possibilities of technology to break the monopoly of multinationals in information.

22. We decide that the WFTU Head Office should remain in Athens and that the location of the WFTU European Regional Office (EUROF) should be moved from Cyprus, where it was until now, to Italy.

Adopted at the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of WFTU  
At Rome, Italy: 07<sup>th</sup> May, 2022