Going Global, WageIndicator Conference

Amsterdam, April 16.

Launches by Agnes Jongerius, chairperson Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions

I have a pleasant task today.
I have to give presents away.
Brand new presents, all three of them.

The first is the Decent Work Check.
It is a website by that name: Decent Work Check.
It allows you to compare your personal situation at work with what the law says how it should be.
And you can compare your personal work situation with what the international conventions say how it should be.
By comparing you also test your own knowledge about your labour rights.

The Decent Work Check makes abstract conventions and laws concrete.
Because you want to know what your labour rights mean in practice.
You want to know what you may claim.
And what protection you have when things go wrong.

The international trade union movement campaigns for decent work.
Actually October 7, 2008 has been proclaimed Decent Work Day.
The Decent Work Check can help get the idea across over the next 6 months.

Decent work is the best way to fight poverty around the world.
Work comes of course first.
Lack of work means poverty for most of us.
Therefore everyone should have a job.
Not just any job.
But a job that brings enough money for a decent living.

And on the job itself 'decent' means a few things.
Healthy and safe circumstances.
No discrimination because of gender, marital status, race or religion.
You have a real say in work related matters.
Everybody has an equal chance to develop themselves.
Trade unions are allowed to function.
And if something goes wrong there is a minimum of social safety.
All this together amounts to decent work.

I would say: check it out, to begin with in the Netherlands and South Africa.
Because the first Decent Work Checks are ready in these two countries.
The Decent Work Check for India is already under construction.
And given funding many national Decent Work Checks will follow, I am sure.

So here you are, all of you national Wage Indicator teams.
Adopt the Decent Work Check and make it work for your people back home.

Demo - www.decentworkcheck.org

The second present I may give away is – how did you guess – a website.
It is aptly called work indicators.
Because this is what it does: indicate key figures from the world of work.

They deal with ratio's such as:
labour force as a percentage of the total population;
unemployment rates;
percentage of women in technical professions;
the employers' contribution to social security;
injury rate at work;
the richest and poorest 10 percent;
average wages;
etcetera, etcetera.

The indicators offered on Work Indicators so far are just a beginning.
Many more work indicators can and will be brought online.
The underlying statistics are made operational in close cooperation with Peter Peek, thanks Peter.
And thank your assistants from the University of Geneva.
We should credit Peter for more.
It was actually him – while still working at the ILO headquarters - who came up with the idea of a so called 75 countries WageIndicator Program.
And look at us: we are almost half way that target already!

I think Work Indicators is a practical tool in the hands of labour market specialists, academics and policy makers.
So it is to a representative of the policy makers that I formally and with great pleasure present the work indicators.

Demo - www.workindicators.org

Now I come to the third and last present I may give away.
Guess what? Wrong: a book.
It is called: Bargaining issues in Europe.
Subtitle: comparing countries and industries.
On the book cover it says: based on the highly innovative Wage Indicator web-survey on work and wages.
It demonstrates the very promising possibilities of this new tool for social research.
And if I may add in my capacity as vice-president of the International Trade Union Confederation ITUC: the possibilities for trade unions.

A few words to explain what I mean.
The study that I hold in my hand ranks 13 industries across 9 EU-member states.
Its focus is on low pay.
It asks: who is affected most and in what sectors?

The ranking is done according to:
* working time;
* pay;
* training;

* collective bargaining coverage and
* stress due to work.
All these aspects are part and parcel of trade union core business.

The study clearly points to 3 industries where workers are most vulnerable:
* hotels/restaurants/catering;
* agriculture;
* wholesale/retail.
Also it points out that mostly women are paid low, as well as workers with long working hours.

This kind of information can be used by trade union officials who prepare the next round of collective bargaining.
Precisely at the level where the agreements are concluded: that of industries.

I think you see what I mean with trade union posibilities.

Therefore 'Bargaining issues in Europe', this book, should be dedicated to the trade union movement.
But being vice-president of ITUC I cannot possibly hand the book over to myself.
Besides, I hold it in my hands already.
It is for me to give it away. But to whom then?

Fortunately Paulien found a last minute solution by talking Olga Olshankaya through the red tape at the Dutch embassy in Moscow, the visa department in particular.
Olga, you represent the 35 million strong Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia.
And with the help of the ILO Office in Moscow you will export the Wage Indicator.
You will bring it to the whole Russian speaking world, using your trade union channels.
This makes you the perfect person outside Europe to receive the first copy of this book.
Please share our experience with Wage Indicator.

Moreover I would like to present a copy of 'Bargaining issues in Europe' to a second person from outside Europe.
May I call to the floor from DIEESE, Brazil's highly respected research institute, representing all national trade unions, Paolo Roberto Valle.
Paolo is project leader of the successful Meusalario in Brazil.
He is presently engaged in the further extension of Wage Indicator in Latin America.
Hopefully our experience with Wage Indicator in Europe can be of some service to you as well.