

PERC Women's Conference STATEMENT ON GENDER ASPECTS OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

European Trade union women leaders meeting in Turin/Italy on 31 October 2008, gathered at the Founding Conference of the Women's Committee of the Pan-European Regional Council, representing 89 trade unions from 43 countries, organising over 30 million trade union women call on world leaders NOT to forget the plight of women when formulating measures to tackle the world financial crisis.

WE CHALLENGE the assumption that the consequences of this global financial crisis is gender neutral, when history shows that the most vulnerable groups are women, migrants, children and elders who are the first victims.

WE WARN European leaders of the risk of not focusing on the gender impact of the ongoing crisis, where many women will face insecurity and fear, and poverty – particularly against the background of spiralling food and fuel prices and access to public services.

WE CALL ON world leaders, governments and European institutions:

- to take urgent action to target immediate measures to prevent women and families falling deeper into poverty;
- to reaffirm the commitment to create healthy economies and just and equal communities through strategies for full and productive employment, including effective and comprehensive reform of the international monetary and financial systems;
- to change unfair trade rules and ensure that trade agreements are used as instruments for decent work, sustainable development and empowerment of the world's workers, women, the unemployed and the poor,
- to stress that the time has come to define a new model where people and planet will be more important than profit;
- to ensure that the priorities of the international financial institutions incorporate social and environmental concerns; particularly, loan and debt conditions, which force countries to deregulate labour markets, reduce public spending and privatise public services, must be stopped, warning that the mounting financial chaos is taking its toll on the real economy with sharply falling employment, which would "send" millions of women "back home";
- to affirm that every woman has the right to work, to good working conditions, pay equity and to sufficient income for her basic economic, social and family needs—rights that should be enforced by providing adequate living wages; including maternity rights at the highest possible level;

- to respect workers' freedom to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively, without threats and fear, with gender mainstreaming of the bargaining agenda and gender parity in representation;
- to strengthen and broaden social safety net protection by ensuring access to social security, pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity protection, and quality health care for all, and access to public services and measures which would enable reconciliation of work, family and private life;
- to create binding mechanisms for the promotion and enforcement of decent work, including core labour and environmental standards in trade agreements.