



# global worker

## FEATURE

Unions and Colombia's peace process

## CONGRESS REPORT

IndustriALL 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in Rio de Janeiro

## INTERVIEW

Valter Sanches, new General Secretary

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**We will continue our relentless struggle to organize and defend workers in 2017, taking on the responsibility given to us by Congress.**

**Valter Sanches**  
General Secretary



# Welcome to **global** worker

**2016 is drawing to a close, and we can look back on a year filled with action. In my first months as General Secretary since Congress in October, IndustriALL has joined solidarity actions for Korea and the victims of the Mariana disaster in Brazil, as well as condemned deadly accidents in the world's most dangerous industry, shipbreaking, in Pakistan.**

The powerful IndustriALL 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in October, gathered more than 1,500 trade union delegates from more than 100 countries. They voted on a renewed action plan for the organization, and together with updated statutes we are in an even better position to fight for workers' rights around the world.

Our Congress was an opportunity to show a fraction of the work that has been ongoing since the creation of IndustriALL in 2012. Using IndustriALL's five goals, affiliates showcased and discussed building strong unions, confronting global capital, defending workers' rights, sustainable industrial policy and precarious work. Pages 10 – 19 display some of this.

Congress adopted a number of solidarity resolutions, reaching out to unions around the world and showing our support. On pages 6 – 7 you can read more about the peace process in Colombia and the role unions play in bringing stability to the Latin American country.

Unions in South Korea are struggling against government attacks on labour rights. President Park, implicated in a corruption scandal, has attempted to make changes to Korean labour law that include permitting firing without due process, cutting wages for senior employees and allowing more outsourcing. Delegates in Brazil adopted a solidarity resolution supporting the struggle against the crackdowns.

IndustriALL offered further solidarity to trade unions in Korea during a global union mission in November. We joined a staggering one million people on the streets of Korea's capital Seoul in a mass mobilization, calling for the immediate release of all workers imprisoned for trade union activities.

In early November we highlighted a tragic anniversary. It was a year since a dam at a mine in Mariana, Brazil, owned by BHP Billiton and Vale, broke. The toxic mud spill killed 19 people and caused lasting damage to the environment. IndustriALL joined hundreds of demonstrators for a rally, promising to hold the companies

accountable and ensure that this could never happen again.

Climate change is a union issue. Last year's climate conference COP21 in Paris was widely publicized and the outcomes include the necessary ingredients for a successful accord. A Just Transition for the industry is incorporated, and as unions we need to ensure that both workers and the environment are included. COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco, comes a year later and the discussions continue with a strong union presence determined to show the way to a sustainable economy.

We will continue our relentless struggle to organize and defend workers in 2017, taking on the responsibility given to us by Congress.

I look forward to carrying on the fight.  
A luta continua!

**Valter Sanches**  
General Secretary



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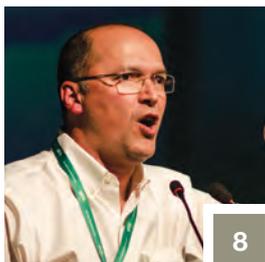
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## globalworker

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## WORKERS AT NISSAN USA FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Together with actor and activist Danny Glover, French and US trade unions joined forces with IndustriALL and French parliamentarians on 12 October in Paris, to call on Renault-Nissan to stop the anti-union practices at the Nissan plant in Canton, Mississippi.



# IndustriALL stands with Lula

ADD YOUR NAME TO #StandWithLula

## TRADE UNIONS STAND WITH LULA

Some 300 trade unions at the IndustriALL Global Union 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in Rio de Janeiro unanimously endorsed a resolution supporting former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva and condemning the attacks on the working class in Brazil.

The democratically elected President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, was ousted by a right wing coup under Michel Temer in May this year. Since then, workers' rights in the country are being eroded and the persecution of Lula has intensified.

**"The de facto government is reversing all we have achieved in the last 12 years. It has no respect for democracy, women or youth. We must defend our rights. We need your support,"** said Lucineide Varjão, president of Brazilian affiliate the national chemical workers federation (CNQ/CUT) in proposing the resolution.

Since coming to power, Temer has begun to cut back social programmes in Brazil and installed an all-white, all-male cabinet, last seen in 1979.

**"What we have seen with the current government of Brazil is the social rights of workers being destroyed. There is a proposal for labour reform to be voted on in Congress that would generalize outsourcing, which will hinder the rights of workers. We need to have the solidarity and support of all unions in IndustriALL,"** said Jaoao Paulo Da Costa Cunha from Brazilian metalworkers' union CNTM.

Speaking at the opening ceremony at IndustriALL's Congress, Lula said:

**"We were making real progress in Brazil, creating good jobs, building a powerful, sustainable economy. But the coup by the right wing threatens to undo all of this.**

**"We need to take advantages of democratic spaces that are still open to us. We need to fight for the rights we have won, and demonstrate to the world that we can do things differently."**

IndustriALL affiliates at Congress resolved to join the ITUC campaign to defend former President Lula for the legal abuses perpetrated against him in Brazil, as well as to denounce the powerful vested interests that seek to limit his freedom of political action.

Lula was born into poverty and became a metalworker at the age of 14. As a leader of the ABC Metalworkers union, he led a wave of strikes in the 1970s that saw him being imprisoned under the military dictatorship. He was one of the founders of the Workers Party in 1980 and went on to become Brazil's most popular president, introducing social changes that lifted 30 million out of poverty and promoted a thriving economy.

His personal approval ratings when he left office in January 2011, were the highest ever recorded in Brazil at more than 80 per cent.

However, his popularity is a threat to neo-liberal forces in Brazil who have embarked on a relentless campaign to undermine him. In the past year, Lula has been forced to give testimony five times to the Federal Police and the Federal Attorney General's Office. In March this year he was forcibly and illegally taken from his home by to give a statement.

There have been 38 search and seizure warrants at the homes of Lula, his family, employees of his institute and his associates. State agencies have leaked details of his banking and tax records to the press, as well as those of his family, the Lula Institute and his public speaking

## profile

Country: **Brazil**

Text: **Léonie Guguen**

[www.brasiljustopratos.com.br](http://www.brasiljustopratos.com.br)

company. He has had his phone tapped and communications over the internet accessed, and so have his family and even his attorneys.

Despite no evidence of any wrongdoing by Lula, the Temer-backed Public Ministry is pressing ahead with charges against him and his wife in relation to the corruption investigation into state-oil company Petrobras.

In October 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Committee announced it will examine allegations that Sergio Moro, the lead judge in the Petrobras investigation, had "violated Lula's right to privacy, his right not to be detained arbitrarily and his presumption of innocence."

A new movement of unions, political parties and civil society, called **for a just Brazil for all and for Lula** has been established with the aim of restoring democracy and ending the political persecution of Lula.

Lula remains the favourite to win a Presidential election in 2018. However, if he were to be found guilty of corruption, he would be unable to run for office.

To sign up to the ITUC campaign and stand with Lula go to:

 [www.standwithlula.org](http://www.standwithlula.org)



## feature

Country: Colombia

Text: Walton Pantland

Photos: IndustriALL



Supporters rallying for the nation's new peace agreement with FARC stand under a banner reading "for peace" during a march in Bogota, Colombia, November 15, 2016. REUTERS/John Vizcaino

# ENDING CONFLICT IN A POLARIZED SOCIETY: COLOMBIA'S TRADE UNIONS MOBILIZE FOR PEACE

**After five decades of civil war, a peace treaty was rejected by a narrow majority of the population in this deeply divided country. Colombia's trade unions are determined to help build a just peace, working with civil society to achieve a settlement that begins to heal the deep wounds.**

**Despite the peace agreement being defeated by voters, both the Colombian government and FARC have announced that they will not return to war. A revised peace treaty has been negotiated and a new agreement has been published, which will be voted on in Congress.**



To end the conflict between the government, right wing paramilitaries, and the major guerilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the government of President Juan Manuel Santos began negotiating a peace deal with the leaders of FARC in 2012.

In a ceremony that included UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon, US secretary of state John Kerry, and a dozen Latin American leaders, President Santos and FARC leader Timoleón "Timochenko" Jimenez signed a peace agreement in September 2016. Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for achieving what was hoped to be lasting peace.

During the negotiations, ex-president Alvaro Uribe, responsible for years of violence in Colombia, campaigned against the peace agreement. President Santos put the agreement to the electorate in a referendum in October. Polling showed a healthy majority would approve it, but the result was a shocking rejection of the treaty by 50.2 per cent of voters, on a low turnout of just 37.4 per cent.

The roots of the conflict lie in the development of agribusiness in Colombia, when peasant subsistence farmers were forced off their land to make way for private companies. Established in 1964, as a response to the wave of political violence after the assassination of the liberal President Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (El Bogotazo) and following attacks by the Colombian government on villages, FARC's original aim was to use a short, sharp campaign of guerilla warfare to spark a general insurrection and revolution.

The conflict dragged on into a brutal war of attrition for half a century, escalating under the presidency of César Gaviria Trujillo, 1990-1994, with the creation of paramilitary groups. The Years of Terror under Uribe's administration in

2002 – 2010, were a violent period for rural communities, trade unionists, social activists and guerillas. Backed by the CIA, Uribe hired death squads, Escuadrones de la Muerte, to train the paramilitary, army and self defense groups, who were responsible for the deaths of thousands.

FARC responded with kidnappings, ransom demands and drug trafficking, putting a toll on the civil and rural communities. Some of the worst violence took place in strategic economic sectors and regions where IndustriALL has affiliates, such as the oil, mining and extractive sectors. **Colombian trade unions have much at stake in supporting the peace agreements and rebuilding society.**

## UNIONS BUILDING PEACE



Colombia's trade union movement is fighting hard to build peace, and a historic, restorative justice that transforms society.

Fabio Arias Giraldo from the trade union centre, Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), believes the peace agreement was rejected because of the strength of the right and extreme polarization in Colombia:

“Political polarization in Colombia is very strong, and the vote is the result of this polarization. The most reactionary forces of the country maintain a strong presence in different sectors of society, and unfortunately, this is the result.

“We believed that it was impossible that this could happen, but it did. It corresponds to a rightward shift that started with Uribe. 13 years ago he began a polarization in the country that had to do with the problem of political violence, which has marked many people and has left too many victims. There's a reaction against that.”

Giraldo argues that the low turnout and lack of enthusiasm for the deal was due to neither party being popular with the electorate:

“The two parties that signed the agreement are not very well perceived by the vast majority of the population. And there is much opposition to the political violence that FARC has generated, as well as a lot

of dissatisfaction with the government for all the measures they took against civil society.

“So both situations were combined and, unfortunately, Uribe made a deceptive speech. He stressed how harmful the violence was, what it had meant to the victims, and he added a number of religious components. This combination became very destructive to the chances of endorsing the peace agreements in Colombia, and it defeated us.”

Cesar Loza Arenas, president of IndustriALL Global Union affiliate oil and gas union USO, says:

**“We cannot give space to the enemies of peace. Peace is a right for all Colombians, as it is for workers. And we support peace. It doesn't mean that we agree with the politics of the government but when it comes to peace, we are all united.”**

Giraldo says:

“The Colombian people and especially the youth have not given up. There is a wide social mobilization in Colombia. We have now realized, even those who voted “no”, that we made a serious mistake, and we have taken to the streets.

“So now, not a day passes without strong mobilizations in the streets, telling the government and the “no” people that we cannot miss this opportunity to achieve peace.



**“The national mobilizations, the support from the international community and the support we give internally from the trade union movement will help us to overcome this impasse and achieve peace, which the vast majority of those who live today in Colombia have never known.”**

During IndustriALL 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress in October, 1,500 delegates unanimously passed a solidarity resolution regretting the result of the referendum. Congress called on the Colombian government and FARC leaders to continue their efforts to negotiate peace and to guarantee respect for individual and collective freedoms.



Speaking in support of the resolution, Pablo Santos of IndustriALL affiliate the energy workers' union SINTRAELECOL said:

“We are calling for a responsible solution to obtain peace. Millions of people have been displaced and thousands of people, including trade unionists, have been killed. Now is the time to extend solidarity.”

**“This resolution shows that we have backing from the global union movement, telling us workers in Colombia to keep going. We are not alone in the fight,”** said Loza Arenas.

**FARC is viewed as a terrorist organization by Colombia, the US, Canada and the EU, and as a legitimate opposition group by a number of countries in South America. The politics of FARC is originally Bolivarian, a peasant guerilla of Marxist - Leninist orientation.**

**For its part, right wing paramilitary forces, the Colombian army, police and security services have been heavily involved in large-scale human rights abuses. In the 1980s, FARC abandoned guerilla warfare for electoral politics, forming the Union Patriótica (UP) party with a number of left wing groups and trade unions. The UP performed well in elections, but 5,000 members, including a number of electoral candidates, were assassinated.**

**Approximately 220,000 people were killed between January 1958 and December 2012. The violence in Colombia has resulted in 4,000 assassinated trade unionists, seven million displaced people, and over 600,00 forced disappearances.**

- 1 Fabio Arias Giraldo, CUT, Colombia. *IndustriALL*
- 2 Cesar Loza Arenas, USO, Colombia. *IndustriALL*
- 3 Pablo Santos, SINTRAELECOL, speaking at IndustriALL Congress. *IndustriALL*



# VALTER SANCHES

## GENERAL SECRETARY OF INDUSTRIALL GLOBAL UNION



I think our action plan with our five strategic goals pinpoints our many challenges and the goals are all interrelated. But when we see these terrible accidents in the shipbreaking, mining or garment industry, we see the most cruel face of corporate greed.

## interview

Union: **IndustriALL Global Union**

Country: **Brazil**

Text: **Léonie Guguen**

Photos: **IndustriALL**

On 5 October 2016, Valter Sanches from Brazilian union CNM/CUT, was elected General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union. Sanches, a former metalworker and life-long trade union activist, will lead IndustriALL for the next four years.

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### Can you tell us a little about your upbringing in Brazil?

I was born in South Brazil in Paraná in the countryside. When I was six years old, my family, like many in Brazil, had to move to Sao Paulo after the terrible freeze in agriculture during the 1960s. Most people lost everything, as we did.

Like many Brazilians I started working at 16 years old. A year later, I joined a mechanical engineering plant as a machine worker. In 1985, when I was 21, I moved to Rolls Royce working as a technician, later moving to Mercedes Benz as a production engineer.

## When and why did you get involved in union activities?

I became a member of a union as soon as I started at the engineering plant when I was 17 years old. We were living under a dictatorship so **I had a strong urge to fight against injustice and the lack of freedom during those times, as well as the economic problems.** The end of the dictatorship was followed by a succession of neo-liberal governments, which brought a lot of problems for workers, so getting involved with the union came naturally.

The first elected position I had was for the internal health and safety commission, which is obligatory under Brazilian legislation. I was later elected to the Works Council at Mercedes Benz in 1992 and I got re-elected plenty of times.

## You have a degree in geography from the university of Sao Paulo – how did you fit that in?

When I was 20 years old, it was rare for a factory worker to go to university; it was a very narrow oriented society. There was a big bottleneck and few vacancies for the millions of people who wanted to go to university. In Brazil, it's more common for people like me to do a night course and work in the daytime. So that's what I did. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to work in a factory for the rest of my life or whether I wanted to do something in research or with geography.

However, militancy was in my blood so I thought that, even if I was putting my career second, I would be more useful if I remained in the plant and got more involved in the union fighting for workers' rights and social justice. I got a national position at CNM/CUT in 2003 and then had several more positions there, including general secretary and at the end, international secretary.

## How would you describe your union career so far?

**My whole life I've been breaking through barriers.** I was the first Brazilian in the World Works Council; I was in the working group that negotiated our global framework agreement at Daimler (Mercedes Benz's parent company) in 2002; and then I was the first Brazilian and I am still the only non-German on the supervisory board at Daimler. And now I am the first general secretary of a global union from the Global South in the history of IndustriALL and its predecessor organizations.



## Why is it relevant for IndustriALL to have a leader from the Global South?

Of course every affiliate wants to have someone who is well qualified, is democratic, and who is in constant consultation with them, so those are the main requirements.

But being from the South means that I bring other experiences. In the past, most of those responsible for global unions were either from Europe or North America. It's not that they don't have the sensibilities for developing countries but it's an additional experience when you actually live in those conditions - under a very anti-union environment, under dictatorships or neo-liberal governments, under severe repression, under precarious working conditions driven by multinationals corporations and their supply chains.

## What challenges are IndustriALL and its affiliates facing?

I have been a trade unionist for most of my life and I think there are a lot of challenges in the world to be addressed. I was involved in international solidarity work for a long part of my time in my union so I decided to take on the challenge.

I think our action plan with our five strategic goals pinpoints our many challenges and the goals are all interrelated. But when we see these terrible accidents in the shipbreaking, mining or garment industry, we see the most cruel face of corporate greed.

Precarious work is a major challenge. Even in Germany, with the best working conditions in the world, capital finds a way to sneak in precarious work in the form of contractors and agency work.

**We have to build stronger unions to combat precarious work,** otherwise there will be many job losses in countries that won't be generating quality jobs elsewhere. So we must help unions to get stronger, to build membership, to get better training for workers to do their jobs. We have to act in solidarity every time one of us is under attack.

On top of everything, we are in the middle of a technological leap (Industry 4.0) that will affect, and is already affecting, all industry. In the near future, entire sectors will disappear. Some others will arise but they will most probably generate far fewer jobs. That's why we must strive for sustainable industrial policies in countries and in the regions. We have got to get as strong unions as possible so that we can demand that governments give us a seat at the table to get good industrial policies and resist the power of transnational companies.

## How do you think IndustriALL needs to develop over the next four years?

We have to make some improvements in our structures, in our regions and the whole work of IndustriALL so that we can better serve our affiliates. In the last period, IndustriALL delivered lots of good things and had many successful campaigns. The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh has been a great success, setting up a legally binding structure to inspect and remediate more than 1,600 garment factories in the country.

The Rio Tinto campaign has brought together affiliates from operations around the world, demanding that the mining giant engage in dialogue with the unions. While we still have more work to do, the Rio Tinto campaign has forced the company to make real changes, replacing some anti-union mine managers and opening the door for our affiliates to organize more of their worksites.

And I would say that our many trade union networks in multinational companies are another achievement. However, we can better communicate and consult with affiliates when it's an issue that affects them and benefit from their input.

Crucially, we need to use the strength that we have in our trade union networks and our global framework agreements to make multinational companies accountable for their supply chains. We also need to help the unions that organize the supply chain workers, that's really where most of the precarious work lies.

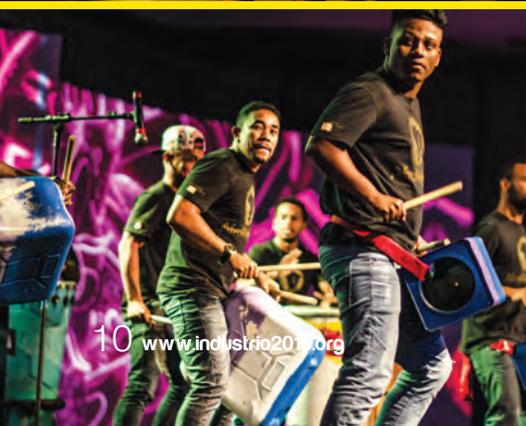
# IndustriALL 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
3-7 October 2016

## congress report

Country: Brazil

Text and photos: Cherisse Gasana



1,500 delegates from all over the world gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Three exciting days of Congress - from the colourful opening with President Lula's speech getting standing ovations to discussions, elections and solidarity resolutions.

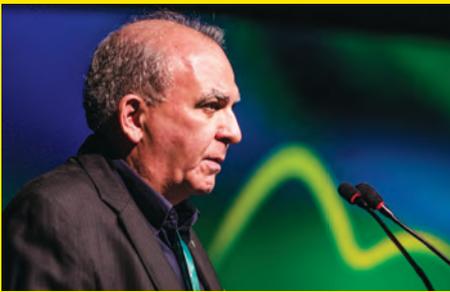
Each Congress session was themed after one of IndustriALL's five strategic goals. Union representatives and one employer took to the stage to show delegates actions taken to build stronger unions, defend workers' rights, confront global capital, promote a sustainable industrial policy and to fight precarious work.

## OPENING CEREMONY



### **BERTHOLD HUBER, IndustriALL President 2012-2016**

"We are a union federation based on the principle of mutual solidarity. We stand together, we are friends and allies. We do not let anyone down whether he or she works in the mining, chemical and energy, textile and garment, metal or electronics industry, or whether he or she has a permanent or precarious or atypical job or works in the informal sector. Unity makes us strong. It is only together that we can move things forward. This also means that IndustriALL is only strong when everybody advocates for it."



### **MIGUEL TORRES, President CNTM/ Força Sindical**

"There are many different threats from politicians and business people trying to break union power. To face such challenges, the Brazilian union movement has made a huge effort to advance an alternative, to increase average income and guarantee education for all.

We greet all delegates in the name of unity, so that we can consolidate and advance the global union movement to confront capital. We must show the unity of all workers!"



### **PAULO CAYRES, President CNM/CUT**

"Democracy is a right that is non-negotiable.

After 38 years of struggle we have been able to change our country. We have been able to lift 36 million people from absolute poverty. But the rich cannot accept this and will continue to try to undo the work we have done.

Comrade Lula is the one who brought about all the change, and he is under attack. We need to defend him."



### **LULA DA SILVA, President of Brazil 2003-2011**

"I joined the labour movement in 1969 when I was 24. By 1972 I was a rank and file delegate. I became president of my chapter of the Brazilian metalworkers' union in 1975. In 1980, I was banned by the military regime, because of the strikes we organized.

Why am I telling you this? Because the struggle goes on. The struggle will go on for a long time, if we are not careful.

We were making real progress in Brazil, creating good jobs, building a powerful, sustainable economy. But the coup by the right wing threatens to undo all of this.

I say with pleasure and pride: another world is possible."



### **AFRO LATA from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro**

In 1998, a young group from Vicar General, a favela in the north of Rio met and formed a band. Despite the lack of conventional percussion instruments, they started playing with broomstick pieces, oil cans, barrels and plastic buckets. Self-taught, they learned percussion completely intuitively. Proving that music is a truly democratic art; the Afro Lata group was born.



# Youth in Action

**A vibrant intervention from  
Juventud en movimiento - Youth in Action!**

80 young trade unionists from Latin America, Germany, Russia, Japan and Austria made a surprise entrance into the Congress hall with tambourines, banners and flags chanting "I am IndustriALL".



“

Jyrki Raina, IndustriALL General Secretary 2012-2016

**Young people are both the present and the future of the labour movement. Unions need to give them space to develop as future union leaders.**

On 3 October a Youth Event was held to ensure active participation of young trade unionists from all over the world. It also provided a platform to plan an intervention at the Congress plenary.

Participants discussed the need to provide training for young people, creating opportunities for youth within trade union structures and the creation of affirmative and specific policies for youth.



VIEW

# BUILDING STRONG UNIONS



Organizing and retaining members is IndustriALL's number one priority.

Strong industrial unions are the basis of bargaining power and legitimacy as the global voice of working people. Through organizational development, IndustriALL builds strong, united, democratic, independent, representative and self-sustaining trade unions throughout the world.

**MARTIN LINDER**, Unionen, Sweden

"In 2010, Unionen was losing members and something needed to be done. We decided to shift focus from problem solving to improvement provider. With the help from superheroes and traditional advertising, we made people see that being a member of a union can give you superpowers."



**BENEDICTA MOHAPI MAMAKALO**, IDUL, Lesotho

"Textile and garment is the main industry in Lesotho. Five different unions used to organize the 40,000 workers in our small country. But despite dynamic trade unionists, the workers' conditions have not improved in years. But with the support of IndustriALL, the three biggest unions in Lesotho started to work together. A joint campaign on maternity leave led to its extension from one to four weeks."



**RANE VIDYADHAR**  
SMEFI, India

"The SMEFI has gone from zero to 20,000 members in the last ten years. 10,000 members were gained from 2012, when IndustriALL was created. The organizing focuses not only on India, but is now expanding to Bangladesh and Pakistan where more than 50,000 workers in shipbreaking are waiting for our union support."



**PATRICIA FORD**  
Unite the Union, UK

"We have a new commitment to build union power and IndustriALL has a key role on the global level."



**SANJAY VADHAVKAR**  
SMEFI, India

"It is really important to have regional cooperation: unions in India need to come together with unions in Korea and Japan."



**INGRID NANCY APRIL**  
MANWU, Namibia

"We have the same motto wherever we are in the world: an injury to one is an injury to all. No political party will improve our lives. Only union struggle will do that."



**RENOUD GAGNE**  
UNIFOR, Canada

"Bringing unions together through merger is not easy, but it is worth it."



VIEW



# SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Industry is a key driver of jobs and development for national economies and the foundation of good living standards. IndustriALL is calling for strong industrial policies that advance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

IndustriALL will not leave decisions about the future of our industries, our jobs and our planet to multinational companies and market forces. We will take action to promote our vision of sustainable industries and industrial jobs to governments and employers. Through IndustriALL we make the voice of industrial workers heard!

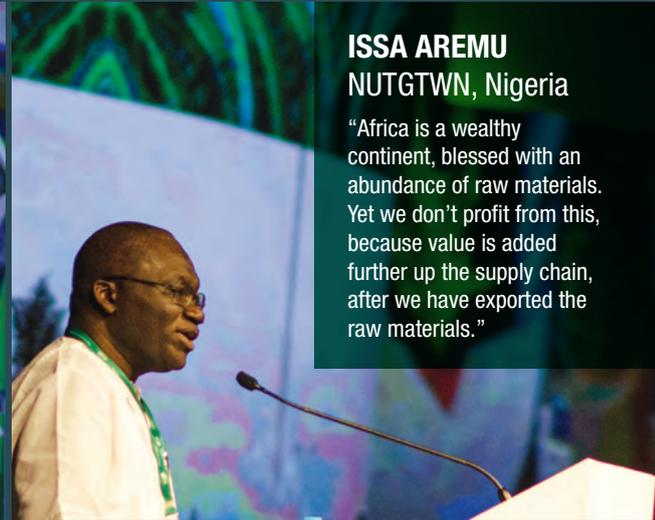
**RALF BARTELS**  
IGBCE, Germany

“There are no jobs on a dead planet, and there is no sustainable development without peace and security. There are no energy reforms with bankrupt companies and jobless workers. Thus, we struggle for a planet with global warming limited to two degrees Celsius or less. We struggle for peace and social security. We struggle for energy reforms that lead workers to environmentally friendly jobs and to jobs that are more decent as well.”



**ISSA AREMU**  
NUTGTWN, Nigeria

“Africa is a wealthy continent, blessed with an abundance of raw materials. Yet we don’t profit from this, because value is added further up the supply chain, after we have exported the raw materials.”



**ULRIKA JOHANSSON**  
Unionen, Sweden

“Around half of all jobs will disappear due to the rise of robots, what it shows is that a number of occupations are more susceptible to automation than others. Many of these jobs will not disappear, but change in character and nature.

A famous example is how bank tellers were affected by the introduction of ATMs. Rather than becoming unemployed, the bank tellers shifted to becoming salespeople of financial products.”



**CLAUDIA BLANCO,**  
SINTRACARBON, Colombia

“The future is in all our hands. The action we take now will influence the kind of world our children will live in. Together, we can transform our industries to bring dignity, security and sustainability to all.”



**KHALID HOUIR ALAMI,**  
SNTP-CDT, Morocco

“Fewer jobs and precarious jobs are major challenges in the process of transition. We must challenge it.”

**SASCHA ERNST, PRO-GE, Austria**

“Young people must be able to find work in a dignified manner. Education and training are essential, we want to make policy and decisions, and young people must be respected.”

**TAKAHIRO NONAKA, JEIU/JCM, Japan**

“Artificial Intelligence is a major challenge to create new jobs. We need to make sure it brings benefits to people.”

**CHARLOTTE UPTON**  
Unite the Union, UK

“The crisis in the steel industry in the UK is caused by the government. Industrial strategy for the UK should train to build skills, bring back supply chain and generate social value.”

**PAOLO PIRANI, UILTEC-UIL, Italy**

“Fear of the future is holding us back. It leads to regressive protectionism. We must embrace the opportunities of the future and seize this chance to demand a better balance.”



VIEW



# CONFRONTING GLOBAL CAPITAL

IndustriALL makes the voice of workers heard globally, building power to influence the global companies and institutions whose decisions and policies affect the lives of working people.

Affiliated unions organize along the supply chains of multinational corporations, and hold them accountable for salaries and working conditions of all the workers who create their profits, consistent with their responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

## TONY MAHER, CFMEU, Australia

“IndustriALL has had a number of campaigns. The campaign against Rio Tinto, the mining giant, is the flagship. The campaign has been far-reaching, professional and tough.

Rio Tinto is changing. We do have dialogue with the company. But we won't let them off the hook until we are convinced that the change is fundamental.”



## CAROLINE BLOT FGMM-CFDT, France

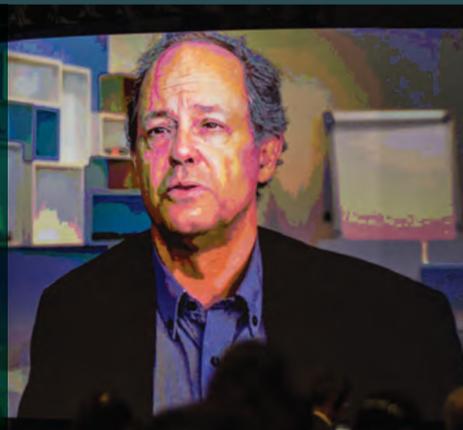
“IndustriALL has negotiated 48 global framework agreements. These don't prevent problems from arising, but they provide a mechanism to solve them.”



## JEAN-CHRISTOPHE SCIBERRAS

Head of Group Industrial Relations & Social Innovation, Solvay, addresses the congress in a video message:

“We believe in social dialogue, trust and transparency. Being challenged by an independent organization can only bring us further. For us IndustriALL is a strong challenger. If we cheat they will know. We talk, we exchange, and together we improve.”



Affiliates took to the stage, saying:

“We hold C&A responsible” “We hold Kik responsible”  
“We hold Uniqlo responsible” “We hold all brands responsible”



## VUYISANA KONZANI NUM, South Africa

“We need unity in the fight against capital. United as workers of the world. We have nothing to lose but our chains. We have a world to win.”

## EVERALDO DOS SANTOS, CNTM/FS, Brazil

“Capital is borderless. Our solidarity should be as well.”

## BENJAMIN GRUSCHKA, IG Metall, Germany

“Our international work, using our collective bargaining power, is a very effective way of representing workers in multinational companies. But we need global union structures.”

## ELLY ROLISTA SILABAN F GARTEKS SBSI, Indonesia

“With five unions we made a freedom of association agreement. We need to develop a framework of global governance to implement global agreements. No more double standards, no more competition, no more playing off workers against each other.”

## NAZMA AKTER SGSF, Bangladesh

“For us, everyday union work is confronting global capital. We are fighting to bring better working conditions for workers in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Accord has a very positive impact, not only in safety and health, but it has also improved the environment for organizing.”



VIEW



## DEFENDING WORKERS' RIGHTS

IndustriALL is a fervent defender of workers' rights and employs all possible means to exert pressure on the companies and governments that violate them.

When faced with attacks on workers and unions, IndustriALL's global strength is used in targeted actions by affiliates and in strategic alliances with related organizations and other campaigners.

The goal is universal recognition of workers' rights to freedom of association, collective bargaining and to strike, safe and healthy workplaces and an end to all forms of workplace discrimination.



### MICHELE O'NEIL, Textile Clothing and Footwear Union, Australia

"Australian unions heeded the call for solidarity by IndustriALL affiliate FTZGSEU on behalf of the fired workers. We publicly campaigned and had many of Ansell's glove and condom customers demand Ansell respect workers' rights. We protested at Ansell's head office and at their Annual General Meeting of shareholders. And we told Ansell leadership we would not give up the fight."

### SQ ZAMA from India, spoke on behalf of ANTON MARCUS, FTZGSEU Sri Lanka

"That support forced Ansell's CEO to sit down and negotiate with us for the first time ever. We were able to reach an agreement with Ansell and the fired strikers are returning to work."



### LEANNE FOSTER USW, USA

"Workers must see themselves reflected in the work of IndustriALL. Representation alone does not mean diversity. We come from male dominated unions, and we need to take special efforts to improve the position of women."

### EMILIO MICELI FILCTEM-CGIL, Italy

"We organize millions; there are no other organizations like ours. We have a unique opportunity and responsibility to fight for a better way."

### ADNAN SERDAROGLU Birleşik Metal-İş, Turkey

"Democracy is an illusion in Turkey. The rules of the game keep changing. We have a state of emergency, a situation where the lion buys TV channels and reports that zebras are attacking lions."



### MATS SVENSSON, IF Metall, Sweden

"IF Metall is supporting the global campaign to defend workers' rights in South Korea. We've lobbied the South Korean embassy in Sweden and sent solidarity delegations to South Korea. And we're ready to do more."

### SEONGSANG KIM, KMWU, Korea

"South Korean unions greatly appreciate the support that IF Metall and IndustriALL affiliates around the world have offered in this struggle. We have a long hard battle ahead of us, and we appreciate your continuing support."

VIEW



# STOP PRECARIOUS WORK

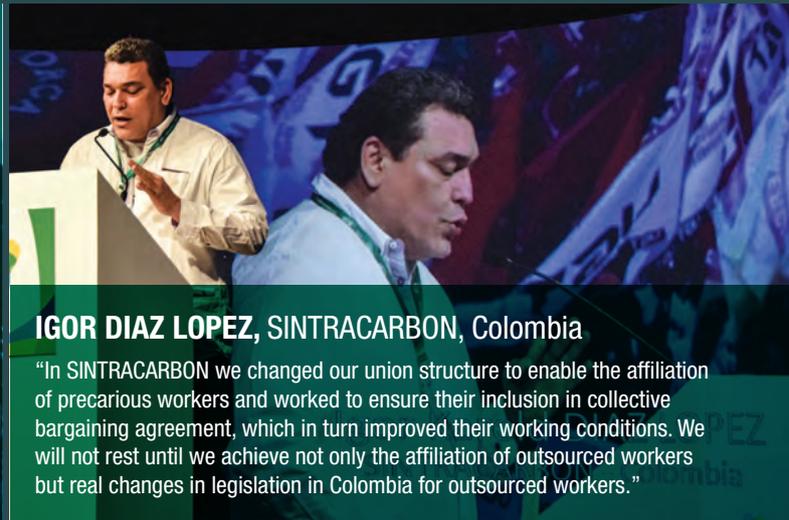
IndustriALL is campaigning to raise awareness on how precarious work undermines workers' rights and has a big impact on the whole society.

Through organizing, bargaining, campaigning and fighting legislation, campaigning to STOP Precarious Work in all its forms is a priority and will continue until all workers have access to a secure job with all their rights protected, including the right to join a trade union.



**LANA PAYNE**  
UNIFOR, Canada

“Our bargaining program contains an important directive to bargain away contract work by lifting the floor for our members in low-waged and precarious jobs and by enhancing stability, security and work-life balance for our members across the industrial spectrum.”



**IGOR DIAZ LOPEZ, SINTRACARBON, Colombia**

“In SINTRACARBON we changed our union structure to enable the affiliation of precarious workers and worked to ensure their inclusion in collective bargaining agreement, which in turn improved their working conditions. We will not rest until we achieve not only the affiliation of outsourced workers but real changes in legislation in Colombia for outsourced workers.”



**MARIA CARMO, CNQ/CUT, Brazil**

“I started outsourcing work through a cleaning company. My salary was half than that of my colleagues. I was getting sick from inhaling the gasses of the materials. Everyday I could be given a different time to work. I couldn't plan my social life, study or have a family life.

With my union I've recovered my self-esteem. All workers should have the same benefits regardless if they are contract or permanent workers. And they all need to be unionized.”

A group of affiliates shouted together “**nao nao nao a precarização**” (no no no to precarious work). The new STOP Precarious Work logo was unveiled as they all march through the Congress hall.



## STOP PRECARIOUS WORK AT RIO TINTO

To mark the World Day for Decent Work hundreds of photos were shared on social media of Congress delegates holding a banner calling on mining giant Rio Tinto to STOP Precarious Work at all their operations around the world.



**MAYRA JIMENEZ, FUTRAZONA-CTU, Dominican Republic**

“Precarious work seems to be the rule in Central America. Unions must demand that our governments promote decent work and stop serving business that makes the rich richer and the poor, poorer.”



**RICARDO DOS SANTOS, CNM/CUT, Brazil**

“When we work together we can do a lot to fight precarious work. Today we are here with many unions across the world fighting to stop precarious work. Unity is what the world needs to challenge the attack from the right which is removing our rights.”





# fighting forward



**JYRKI RAINA**  
General Secretary 2012-2016

“We have launched a new era in global union solidarity. We need the greatest possible unity to fight capital. The workers of the world do not need 600 different unions: unions need to unite their forces for the benefit of workers. We need to build real industrial muscle.”

## INDUSTRIALL 2<sup>ND</sup> CONGRESS IN RIO ELECTED A NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS



**JÖRG HOFMANN**  
IndustriALL President

“Your commitment has made this Congress into a very lively exchange. We, the trade unions of IndustriALL, have established a very good action plan.

We must become the counterweight to global capitalism.”



**VALTER SANCHES**  
IndustriALL General Secretary

“All our action plan points are related; we can’t talk about fighting precarious work without talking about union building, confronting global capital and defending workers’ rights.

We see that precarious work always finds a way, even in Germany, which has the highest standards of all.

The only we can move forward is to help strengthen our unions in the region.”



**JENNY HOLDCROFT**  
IndustriALL assistant general secretary

“Confronting global capital is one of the most important parts of our action plan. We

heard that global capital seeks to optimise profits. We heard that trade agreements are affecting workers’ rights.

We need to protect the interest of workers. We need union tools to work. We have no global architecture for unions to work. It is up to us to build it. We are successfully building global framework agreements. We are truly proud of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, we need more agreements like that.

We will continue to fight and we will win!”



**ATLE HØIE**  
IndustriALL assistant general secretary

“It is unfortunate that we have to defend fundamental workers’ rights, rights that we

won a long time ago. But solidarity works.

I expect many of you will request the support of IndustriALL when your rights come under attack. We will support you. At the same time, I ask that when we request your solidarity, you will extend it too.”



**KEMAL ÖZKAN**  
IndustriALL assistant general secretary

“The old ways of thinking about industrial policy, not taking into account

the social and environmental impacts, will no longer work.

Every discussion on sustainable industrial policy must include a plan for a Just Transition.

There will be changes, whether we act or not. However, if we do not demand measures to ensure a Just Transition, we are guaranteed an unjust one. If a sustainable future is our goal, a Just Transition is the bridge that will take us there.”

## GUEST SPEAKERS



**GUY RYDER**  
ILO, Director General

“The formation of IndustriALL was good news for the world’s workers.

This Congress is meeting in

traumatic circumstances. We have a global economy that has lost the capacity and will to grow, since the financial crisis of 2008. And there is more bad news coming our way. This means mass unemployment, and young people will be the first victims.

Let us reflect on our challenges. This is a moment when every act of the democratic process brings with it the realisation that what was once unthinkable is now possible, and in some cases happening. Economic collapse has brought social crisis and grave political dangers.

As our economy changes, the future of work must be decided by us, not for us.”



**SHARAN BURROW**  
ITUC, General Secretary

“The global economic model is broken, and the rich and corrupt are on the move.

Right here in Brazil

we have a coup, against the work of our brother, former president Lula. Lula’s legacy, the union legacy, is being torn up right now.

In supply chains, millions of workers have no chance of decent work without us. There is a hidden workforce, making up 90 per cent of workers in supply chains. This model is broken. Enough is enough. We demand an ILO Convention on supply chains. We demand the rule of law.

We have released a global scandal report: Samsung Exposed. This is one of the most evil examples of out of control supply chains. We have corporate capture of the state: workers’ rights are being attacked at the behest of capital.

Jyrki, you are a great union leader and a great friend. I wish you all the best.

I welcome the new leadership team, who are great brothers and sisters.”

## CONGRESS ADOPTED A NUMBER OF SOLIDARITY RESOLUTIONS

### SOUTH KOREA



#### Emergency resolution on South Korea

The president of IndustriALL affiliate Korean Metal Workers Union (KMWU) Sang Gu, told Congress that the government is removing laws protecting workers and calling it labour reform. Workers and unions are under attack, and the South Korean government is not adequately guaranteeing freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining agreements.

Congress participants were given red headbands and endorsed the resolution in true Korean style!

### COLOMBIA



**PABLO SANTOS**  
SINTRAIECOL  
Colombia

“We call for a responsible solution to bring peace. The Nobel committee has taken the decision to

award the Nobel Peace Prize to President Santos. It is major step to recognize the efforts towards peace. We have millions of people displaced, and hundreds of people including trade unionists assassinated. We unanimously support this resolution. The moment of solidarity is now.”

### FORD



**ANNE DONNELAN**  
AMWU, Australia

“For many years, Ford plants had high levels of unionization. Ford has taken the decision to reduce car making in Australia.

We cannot be silent about the closure of Ford in Australia – it is devastating. The automobile industry has provided jobs to thousands and thousands of workers and many of those jobs will be lost. I call upon you to support this resolution based on the principles of our global solidarity for Ford workers and their families, and a collective condemnation of the neoliberal thinking of the governments.”

### VOLKSWAGEN



**KRISTYNE PETER**  
UAW, USA

“160 skilled trade workers at the Volkswagen plant voted to join the UAW. However, Volkswagen refused to recognize

the union. The company refuses to comply with its own global framework agreement with IndustriALL. It refuses to comply with US labour law. This case has the potential to impact all workers in all unions across the world.”

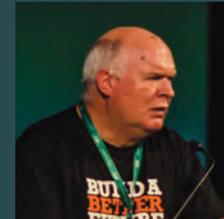


**TONY BURKE**  
Unite the Union, UK

“VW must immediately stop stalling and start talking. If it’s acceptable to negotiate with

workers in Germany, how can they refuse to negotiate with UAW workers in America? Valter, you must put them on notice that we will revert our agreement with VW if they don’t negotiate with workers in Chattanooga.”

### CARLTON-UNITED BREWERIES



**ANDREW DETTMER**  
AMWU, Australia

“The union boycott of CUB products has resulted in a significant loss of sales. This resolution asks for your support to

condemn the actions of InBev and solidarity for the reinstatement of the 55 CUB maintenance workers.”

### BRAZIL



**LUCINEIDE VARJAO**  
CNQ/CUT, Brazil

“Workers in the world are facing serious attacks. In Brazil the coup government is implementing an agenda that removes

rights and social benefits. What we have achieved in the past 12 years is being reversed by the government coup. This government does not respect democracy, women, and youth. Rights should not be reduced; we need your support!”

# profile

Union: **Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran (UMMI)**

Country: **Iran**

Text: **Walton Pantland**



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## FREE AND INDEPENDENT TRADE UNIONS FIGHT FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS IN IRAN

In October, the Union of Metalworkers and Mechanics of Iran (UMMI) became the first affiliate from Iran to join IndustriALL. The affiliation is a significant step in a country where unions are persecuted and trade unionists imprisoned.

The Iranian free and independent union movement fights for fundamental labour rights, despite repression, imprisonment, executions, and extrajudicial murder.

UMMI was originally formed in 1960. After 1983 the union was forced to operate underground for more than two decades, but since 2005, it has operated openly. Although not officially recognized by the state or employers, UMMI represents a considerable number of workers in vehicle assembly, components factories, steel plants and detergent companies.

The union is not able to operate openly in the workplace, as workers suspected of being union members are dismissed and arrested. Despite this, the union is able to mobilize workers, who are inspired by UMMI's independence, militancy and resistance.

Iran is ruled by an authoritarian theocratic regime, and is considerably behind international standards on labour rights. **It has yet to ratify the core International Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining.**

In theory, workers have the right to organize, but union organization in the workplace is not allowed. Strikes are suppressed by the security forces, militia and riot police. Earlier this year, 17 workers from the Agh Darreh gold mine in West Azerbaijan were publicly flogged for protesting the firing of 350 of their colleagues.

Iran was ruled by a Western-backed monarch, the Shah, until the revolution of 1979. The revolution had leftist and anti-imperialist tendencies aspiring for fundamental reform of the economic, social and political order, and was supported by general strikes in the oil industry and many other sectors. Many Iranians hoped it would improve the lives of ordinary people.

Islamists took control of the movement under Ayatollah Khomeini, who promised socio-economic

reforms. These promises were betrayed, and independent workers' organizations were repressed, leading to UMMI operating underground.

The government has a monopoly on workplace organization, and the labour ministry supports the Workers' House of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It sponsors pro-regime Islamic Labour Councils, tripartite organizations containing worker and employer representatives and government appointees. It is nominally a national labour centre, affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions, but is in reality controlled and funded by the Iranian government.

Islamic Labour Councils manage industrial relations and discourage industrial action, operating as instruments of the state in the workplace. They are hugely unpopular in the Iranian labour movement and violently oppose independent trade unions.

UMMI leader Maziyar Gilaninejad says:

**"In the thirty years that these institutions have been active, they have been controlled by the ministry and have no independent function. They are not worker organizations as they are ideologically exclusive - belief in Islam is a pre-condition of membership. They are state-controlled religious organizations. They have never done anything positive for workers."**

Iranian workers face a new challenge: the influx of foreign capital and further liberalization of the labour market. Since the revolution, Iran has faced sanctions and international isolation. But after the country signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – also known as the Iran nuclear deal – with the great powers, sanctions have been lifted, and foreign companies are investing.

To make the country more attractive to investors, the government has moved to further weaken labour law and remove protections for workers. On 15 November workers' representatives and trade union activists protested against these changes outside the Iranian parliament (Majlis) in Tehran.

All independent trade unions participated in the protest, called by the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company. UMMI has said that the removal of minimum protections for workers is the



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red line which, if crossed, will be confronted by the determined response of the Iranian working class.

Gilaninejad says:

"If the government keeps conceding to finance capital, we will not benefit from foreign investment. The IMF wants Iran to provide cheap and deregulated labour for foreign investors. Iran's government has created special trade and commerce zones that are excluded them from coverage by the labour law.

"Will the influx of foreign investment lead to the import of modern technology into the country, or would we continue fastening nuts and bolts only?"

**"Taking Iran's free and independent trade unions into the family of the global movement is an important step for the country's workers. International affiliation will help to strengthen UMMI's position in Iran, and offer protection to its members,"** says Kemal Özkan, IndustriALL assistant general secretary.



1/2 Independent trade unions protest outside Iranian parliament against plans to amend labour law. *IndustriALL*

# TRANSFORMING HOW WE ORGANIZE

From its creation in 2012 IndustriALL Global Union has put special efforts into organizing. It is an indispensable part of all union programme, campaigns and activities.



global worker special report

At its 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress, IndustriALL Global Union defined its mission as building union power and defending workers' rights in its sectors. Increasing union membership and getting members more active in their unions are among the most important activities IndustriALL promotes and supports.

The task is enormous. According to the International Trade Union Confederation at the global level only 7 per cent of workers are organized in free and independent trade unions.

## REDISCOVER ORGANIZING

Before focusing on organizing, Finnish Metalworkers' Union faced the dilemma of an inactive and dwindling membership in a rich European country. By the 1970s trade unions had been instrumental in improving labour standards and had achieved a binding national collective agreement across the metalworking sector. 40 years later, the union's position was much less strong.



**ASLAK HAARAHILTUNEN**, head of organizing at Finnish Metalworkers' Union, Metallityöväen Liitto r.y.

**"In 2012, our Congress decided to focus on organizing. We started from small-scale campaigns at 20 to 30 work sites to get the basic message of unions across."**

The union started with a mapping exercise. One of the first discoveries at the smaller sites was that conditions did not meet the standards in the national agreement. The union decided not to act in the traditional way, which meant sending a union representative from the national headquarter to demand the employer to immediately deal with violations, or if not go to court. Instead the union helped workers set up an organizing committee and elect shop stewards, so that the local union could lead the fight themselves.

Teaching the workers and finding out what they wanted to change was a challenge. An important discovery was that the workers' concerns in the workplace often differed from issues covered in the collective agreement.

Haarahiltunen says that things that seemed minor, like the date when salaries are paid out or the number of parking spaces, could actually become key issues, allowing workers to decide themselves on the priorities and run powerful organizing campaigns around those priorities.

Organizing is not an easy task and the availability of resources and a dedicated union leadership are decisive factors. Haarahiltunen says that is needed from the start, as so much can go wrong.

For the Finnish Metalworkers' Union, the organizing drive has resulted in a more active membership and 13,000 new

## special report

Text: Alexander Ivanou

Photos: IndustriALL

members, around ten per cent of the total union membership.

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB) is facing declining union membership and power in North America.

According to Tyler Brown, executive director of the industrial sector at IBB, only seven per cent of private sector workers in the US are unionized.

"IBB Construction locals in the western United States agreed to start an organizing fund that will allow hiring around 15 new organizers within the next year or two. It is a pilot project, but if it proves successful it can be used in other parts of the United States."

Boilermakers are successfully revitalizing organizing in both the US and Canada. The union is using new legislation issued by the US National Labor Relations Board, allowing them to enter into facilities and organize smaller groups of workers.

Traditionally, the industrial sector allowed only for organizing of the entire facility, which meant that a majority was needed for unionization. Under the new conditions, the union can start organizing from smaller groups with the aim to expand the union later.

## ORGANIZE TRANSNATIONALLY

In 2015, German union IG Metall decided to put more resources into organizing transnationally. Many German companies, particularly in the auto industry operate on a global level and employ more people abroad than in Germany. Maintaining union power in those companies requires building strong unions wherever they operate.

IG Metall joined forces with US union United Automobile Workers and the metalworkers' union VASAS in Hungary. Together they developed a fast track communication system enabling them to and help partner unions to organize workers at German companies abroad. The project focuses specifically on auto suppliers in southern USA and western Hungary.

Through the project, trade unions in the US and Hungary will get support in their organizing drives at German-owned auto companies, and at the same time IG Metall helps to ensure it has a strong union partner at German auto companies' operations abroad.

### INDIA

In 2015, 19,200 new workers in the steel, mining and energy sectors were organized, using trainings on union building, workshops on occupational safety and health, rallies and gate meetings.

### ZAMBIA

IndustriALL's union building project aims to increase and better target organizing. In 2015, this resulted in 8,440 new members.

### INDONESIA

In 2013, Indonesian affiliates organized some 12,000 members in the metal sector. In 2014, thanks to the organizing project over 15,000 members were organized, and through the Organizing sustainable metal and mining unions project another 6,500 new members joined IndustriALL in 2015.

### KYRGYZSTAN

IndustriALL affiliate Mining and Metallurgy Trade Union of Kyrgyzstan (MMTUK) has recruited 12,000 workers since 2008. By a targeted approach to organizing, membership has gone from 8,000 to 20,000. One component of the organizing was a string of one-day training and consultancy workshops organized by IndustriALL regional office.



## ORGANIZE WITH INDUSTRIALL

Based on affiliates' experience, IndustriALL has developed a set of key principles for unions to practice as a basis for successful organizing:

- Build strong union structures
- Be democratic and transparent
- Include all types of workers in your organizing work
- Cooperate and coordinate with other unions
- Don't compete with other unions to organize the same workers
- Become self-sustaining

These principles are helping to guide IndustriALL organizing work, including support for IndustriALL organizing projects. IndustriALL

runs organizing projects around the globe, primarily in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Focus is on encouraging and enabling affiliates to develop a permanent organizing culture and to run their own organizing programs.

All projects are aimed at action and unity building, while cultivating an inclusive organizing culture involving women, non-manual, youth, precarious workers and migrants – parts of the workforce that unions have historically marginalized or ignored but which they must focus on in order to stay relevant.

In 2014-2015, IndustriALL projects helped affiliates organized over a quarter million new members into their unions.



**SÖREN NIEMANN-FINDEISEN**, trade union officer at IG Metall, Germany.

"We see a power shift in what we do and it is time to organize on a global scale."



**WASSILA NAFTI EP CHERNI**, Tunisian General Labour Union.

In many countries union organizers and activists face tremendous challenges in their work, and women are increasingly taking a lead role in fighting back.

A strong and dedicated union activist for the last 14 years, Wassila Nafti Ep Cherni, from the Tunisian General Labour Union, UGTT, was dismissed three times before the Arab Spring started. When offered a blank check from the employer to quit her job, she rejected it by saying:

"Who is going to defend workers if I leave?"

Listen to organizing stories from around the world.



# profile

National Centre: **Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU)**.  
FESTU is affiliated to the ITUC

Country: **Somalia**

Text: **Walton Pantland**

**As Somalia emerges from a long civil war, unions face the challenge of organizing in a society where the rule of law is weak.**

## ORGANIZING IN A FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT



**Omar Faruk Osman is the general secretary of FESTU. Osman is also general secretary of the National Union of Somali Journalists, and an executive committee member of the International Federation of Journalists.**

The rule of law broke down in Somalia with the outbreak of civil war in 1991. The country has stabilized in the past few years, with a federal government formed in 2012, but the country is still dominated by armed groups and politicians who believe that they are above the law. Al Qaeda affiliate Al Shabaab, and other jihadi groups, stage terror attacks in attempts to seize power back from the government.

It is extremely difficult to organize unions in an environment where the rule of law is weak, and there is a severe security crisis. Union activists operate in a dangerous environment and cannot rely on the law to protect them. Their only leverage is collective action and international solidarity.

**“Although the Somali constitution guarantees the right to organize and to protest, the government uses the security situation to undermine trade unions and civil society. Union meetings are often restricted, citing security concerns, and several have been violently broken up by security forces. If workers in a company try**

**to form a union, the employer can hire a militia to intimidate or kill union leaders,”** says Osman.

As a long time union activist, Osman is accustomed to danger: Somalia is the most dangerous country in the world to be a journalist, with 38 journalists killed since 2012. He narrowly survived an assassination attempt a year ago during a terror attack on a hotel where a union meeting was taking place, and the FESTU office has been bombed.

Unions operate under a climate of fear, and there are rumours that there is a death squad hunting down trade union leaders. This is unsubstantiated, but the rampant violence in the country is a perfect cover, and creates an environment of fear and paranoia that makes organizing very difficult.

As general secretary of FESTU, Osman stresses the importance of international solidarity:

**“In such a fragile environment, what matters is international pressure. Our politicians care more about their image with world leaders than the plight of their people.**

“Putting political pressure on international institutions, and international diplomats, to act in the interests of defending internationally recognized labour rights, including union rights, is very important.”

Despite the security situation, the Somali economy is performing well, much of it based on trade with the Gulf. The civil war, and the subsequent collapse of the state, meant that entrepreneurs were able to profit from previously nationalized industries.

Somali investors from the diaspora bought up infrastructure, and since 2012, multinational companies have moved

in. The energy and telecommunications sectors have grown rapidly as companies form consortiums. Somalia has valuable untapped natural resources, including large reserves of uranium and natural gas. As peace returns to the country, the economy is expected to grow fast.

But with large profits to be made, there are attempts to restrict workers' power. The government has created a petroleum company, and recently tried to form its own trade union to bypass legitimate representatives.

IndustriALL has been working with Norwegian affiliate Industri Energi to support the creation and development of a union in the petroleum sector. A new union called the Somali Union of Petroleum & Gas Workers has been established. The union was accepted as an affiliate of IndustriALL at the executive committee meeting in Rio de Janeiro in October 2016. The work of developing the union is ongoing.

The trade union movement sees itself as protecting the needs of the people against profiteers:

“Multinationals want to invest in Somalia, and we have serious concerns that they will exploit the very fragile situation in our country,” says Osman.

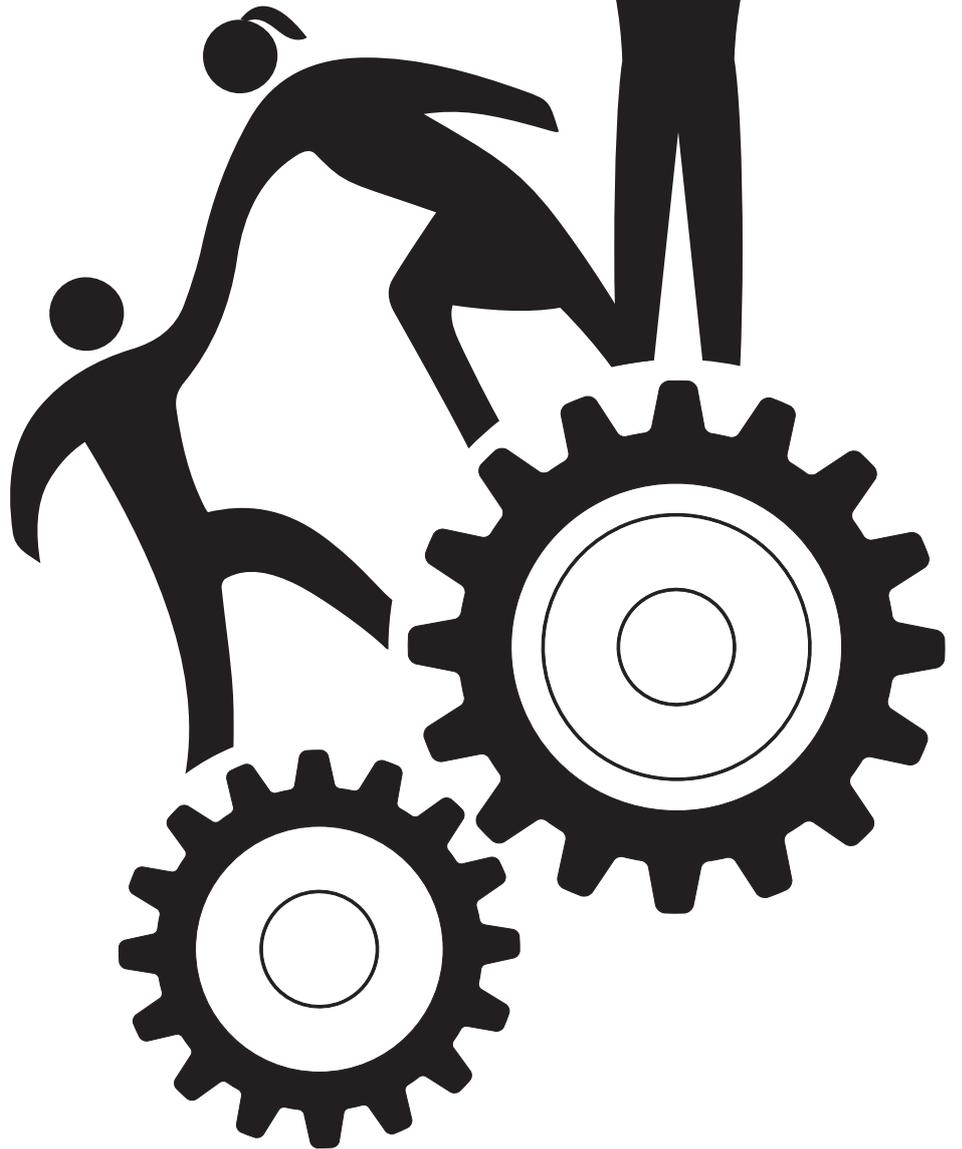
**“Our unions want to be involved in any discussion with multinationals from the outset, so that we are clear that whatever is happening reflects the interests of our people.”**

### IndustriALL affiliates:

- National Electricity Workers Union of Somalia
- Somali Tailors & Textile Union
- Somalia Union of Petroleum & Gas Workers

**TAKE  
ACTION**

**BOSS**



**PRECARIOUS  
WORK**

