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STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

Pursuant to Rule 3(d) of the Rules on the Consultative Status of Non-Governmental Organizations with the Agency^{1/}, the Director General is circulating the attached written statement by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

^{1/} INFCIRC/14.

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF
FREE TRADE UNIONS

1. At the outset, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), representing 60 million workers throughout the democratic world, wishes to convey its best wishes to the Agency, and expresses its satisfaction with the steady progress it has achieved during the past years in fulfilling the various tasks for which it was created.

2. In the statement which we made to the General Conference at its eighth regular session in 1964, we wrote:

"The ICFTU, considering the bridging of the economic and social gulf between the industrialized and non-industrialized countries as the problem No.1 of the second half of this century, will use its influence to further the development of international aid and solidarity which are as important preconditions to the fulfilment of this task as are scientific and technological progress, including those in the field of nuclear energy."^{2/}

From a comment in the statement of the Director General we have learned that this gulf has been even more widened by the increased application of nuclear devices in the industrialized countries.

3. It has been made clear at previous sessions of the Conference that the non-industrialized countries of the world lack conventional energy reserves and that only economic nuclear energy would enable the developing countries to meet their immense energy requirements in order to be able to catch up with the living standards being enjoyed in the industrially advanced countries. In this connection, ICFTU assesses highly the positive role the Agency has been playing not only in providing technical assistance to the developing countries and in serving as a clearing-house for scientific and technical information, but also in co-operating with other bodies and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to work out sets of recommendations on radiological protection in all its aspects which in many countries at present form the basis of relevant national legislation.

^{2/} GC(VIII)/INF/78, para. 2.

4. While we value highly the fruits which have resulted from the peaceful use of nuclear energy, we should at the same time like to address our frank appeal to the Conference by drawing its attention again to the following points.
5. In the statement we made to the Conference in 1965 we expressed the view that:

"The almost perfect record of health and safety which nuclear industry so far enjoys in many countries is partly due to public control of the vast majority of nuclear installations and to their running on a non-profit-making basis. We express our concern that when nuclear installations come under private ownership and are integrated into normal commercial activities, it might not be easy to enforce adequate measures against hazards inherent to the nuclear industry. Therefore, we must be fully cognizant of the fact that the burden of responsibility for adequate radiological protection will grow heavier and more difficult to shoulder for this Agency as well as for all others concerned and last but not least for the free trade unions."^{3/}

In 1968 the International Metal Workers Federation (IMF) passed a resolution, which shows some aspects of being aware of problems which will face us in the future. The following is an extract from the resolution:

"The IMF :

"Notes that the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes is continuing to make great progress:

"Directs attention to the marked development of uranium mining, of nuclear facilities in research and industry, where sources of ionizing radiation and radioactive materials are being increasingly used for a multitude of purposes:

"Notes also that together with the enormous development of new electronic products has come the possibility of dangers to both workers and consumers from excessive radiation:

"Demands most emphatically the effective protection of all workers and consumers from the hazards of the atomic and electronic age and to this end

"Requests that competent institutions of the United Nations such as the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency undertake appropriate continuing investigations into working conditions in uranium mining

^{3/} GC(IX)/INF/84, para. 8.

and in other industries whose workers are or may be exposed to risks of radiation, for the purpose of establishing international safety standards and revising them in the light of new discoveries:

"Urges all countries to observe rigorously all safety standards and provisions and to work in active co-operation with the International Labour Organisation whose activities in this field should be continued and intensified."

6. We are of course fully aware of the fact that the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organization and the International Commission on Radiological Protection, as well as the Agency, have already worked out a set of recommendations which at present form the basis of relevant national legislation in various countries. We also note with satisfaction from the present report of the Board of Governors^{4/} that, with the general development of atomic energy, the Agency has been developing or is intending to develop specialized activities in this field, such as the preparation of standards for the safe operation of research and power reactors, detailed technical manuals on subjects such as the production of nuclear fuel, decontamination and protective equipment and the management and disposal of radioactive waste. We pay high tribute to the Agency for such endeavours and hope that in co-operation with the related specialized agencies of the United Nations, it will facilitate the development of research and activities in these specialized subjects. At the same time ICFTU for its part, pledges that it will use its best endeavours at the international level and also, through its affiliated organizations, at the national level to strive for safety measures.

7. A further point of importance is the continuous effort towards complete and controlled disarmament. ICFTU's executive has stated in relation to this problem:

"The ICFTU

"(a) Stresses that the unabated continuation of the arms-race constitutes one of the gravest perils to world peace, and reaffirms the position of the international free trade union movement that all efforts must be made to arrive at a general and complete disarmament under effective international inspection;

^{4/} GC(XII)/380.

"(b) Appeals to the peoples of the world to work unceasingly for peace and universal disarmament to that the organization of a secure world-order under the aegis of the United Nations may become an attainable objective."

In regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, ICFTU has welcomed and supported the Treaty, which gives an indication of a chance to limit and to reduce the danger of nuclear warfare. ICFTU has made it very clear that:

"(c) The treaty will acquire its full significance only if it is accompanied by guarantees for the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy by non-nuclear countries and by a commitment of the nuclear powers to abandon all kinds of nuclear bomb testing and to strive for further nuclear disarmament."

8. ICFTU, having been fighting and continuing to fight for peace, freedom and elimination of hunger and poverty, expresses its heart-felt wishes for the success of the present session of the General Conference, which is meeting in Vienna to further the contribution of atomic energy to the peace, health and prosperity of the entire world. At the same time, ICFTU pays its tribute to the assembled Government representatives, scientists and experts for their sincere efforts, and pledges that it will use its influence at the international level, and, through its member organizations, also at the national level to strive to eliminate the dangers that are inherent in this new source of energy. Bearing in mind that this Conference, working in an atmosphere of goodwill and co-operation, depends to a great extent on the international political climate, we hope from our heart that the wisdom and the responsibility towards mankind of every nation in the world will facilitate our march in the direction of complete and controlled disarmament throughout the world.

