



ITF House  
49 – 60 Borough Road  
London SE1 1DR

**Telephone** +44 207 403 2733  
**Fax** +44 207 357 7871

国 Federación Internacional De Los Trabajadores Del Transporte  
際 Fédération Internationale Des Ouvriers Du Transport  
運 Internationella Transportarbetarefederationen  
輸 Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation  
劳 International Transport Workers' Federation  
連 Международна федерация транспортников  
التنظيم عالمياً، النضال من أجل حقوقنا

To all ITF Dockers' Affiliates

Circular No: 041/D.13/2009

D/FL/ah

30 March 2009

Dear Friends,

**Dockers' response to the global economic crisis document and presentation**

During the Dockers' Section Committee which was held in London 16-17 March 2009, the delegates and a large number of advisors and observers noted the presentation of the Section Secretary on the economic crises. Following the presentation the group was divided in to smaller work groups to discuss the matter further. Each work group tackled a specific issue relating to the crisis.

A strategic response of the section was drafted bringing together the different ways on how this challenge can be dealt with. The Committee feels that it is necessary to distribute it amongst all our Affiliates as the crisis is a global issue and is affecting us all.

As requested, please find attached the presentation of the Secretariat and the Dockers section's response to the Global financial crisis document.

Please note that the data included in the presentation were correct at the time of writing but might have evolved since.

Moreover the section will take up the tasks that were set by the Committee and are investigating how to proceed with the study on the micro and macro economic role of ports. We will also collate and analyze the information we got from your completed questionnaires and will not hesitate to share this information with you as soon as it is available.

We look forward to receiving information about the repercussions of the crisis on the workers, your port and your union, which we will circulate amongst all our members. We are aware that GNT's are taking drastic measurements in certain ports and are laying off workers. It is imperative that we share information so that we can all go forward together, better and stronger.

Yours fraternally,

The Dockers' Team: Alexandra, Sharon and Frank

Encl: Dockers section's response to the Global financial crisis  
The Global Economic Crisis presentation, DSC 16-17 Mar 09

## DOCKERS' SECTION RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

The Dockers' Section's response to the global financial crisis comprises three elements:

1. Engaging GNTs and other port employers to manage the impact of the crisis together;
2. Union organising, bargaining and campaigns at the local level supported by ITF coordination at the global level; and
3. Cross-sectional cooperation to strengthen unions across the transport chain.

The impact of the crisis on precarious, women and young workers should be identified and addressed as an integral part of the Section's and unions' strategies.

### **1. Engaging GNTs and other port employers to manage the impact of the crisis**

#### Key messages

The following key messages need to be communicated to GNTs and other port employers, supported by credible research analysing the contribution of ports to the economy, and an effective press campaign:

1. The global financial crisis is limited in its duration;
2. Ports are essential to national and global economic revival as they are primary economic generators;
3. Trained and skilled labour is essential to the productive and efficient delivery of port services; and
4. Maintenance of a skilled and productive workforce will accelerate the commercial opportunities in emerging markets following recovery.

#### Engagement with employers

Given the above, the ITF and port employers need to manage the impact of the global financial crisis together by addressing the following two key issues:

- Mitigating the immediate effect of the global financial crisis on the workforce; and
- Realising government financial support to maintain fundamental port infrastructure.

#### *Mitigating the immediate effect of the global financial crisis on the workforce*

1. The retention of skilled labour under existing CBA and labour standards must be a priority; and
2. There should be an agreed use of mechanisms to smooth the impact of the crisis on labour. Key measures to achieve this:
  - Review overtime policy with an emphasis on sharing the available work
  - Provide retraining opportunities

- Use available leave / holidays
- As a general principle, eliminate outsourcing and contractors as the first measure of labour reduction. However, the local conditions of ITF affiliates needs to be take into account
- Voluntary redundancy should be a last resort, with the opportunity to be re-employed following a recovery
- Early or phased retirement where appropriate

### ***Realising external financial support to maintain fundamental port infrastructure***

Unions should support employers in seeking financial support for ports from governments in appropriate conditions. Such financial support should be channelled into:

- Training
- Skills development
- Practical measures to support long-term commitments to re-employment

### **Implementation process**

1. The ITF should carry out a study analysing the micro and macro contribution of ports to the economy to support our key assertions.
2. The ITF should communicate with the major GNTs as soon as possible. This communication should first be in writing followed by face-to-face meetings.
3. Develop a supporting press strategy.
4. Regional follow-up: mapping; development of a regional communications strategy utilising the POC Database which includes circulating company-based union contact lists and information sharing; and communication with the regional management structures of the GNTs.
5. Develop MOUs and joint communiqués with GNTs on responses to the global financial crisis.
6. Initiate joint actions with the GNTs to gain external financial and political support from governments.
7. If no meaningful response is forthcoming from the GNTs, develop appropriate global campaigns and activities.

### **Timing and resources**

- The above steps should be taken as soon as possible
- Resources need to be made available to deliver the above strategy. This is the responsibility of both the ITF and its affiliates

## **2. Union organising, bargaining and campaigns**

The Dockers' Section notes that the global financial crisis was cause by capitalism and greed. However, dockers' unions remain in a strong position despite the crisis because employers and governments need skilled port labour to run efficient ports. This labour will be especially important to the recovery and future economic growth.

## Organising campaigns

The financial crisis creates a number of organising opportunities which unions should take advantage of:

- Unite different unions in the same port facing the same challenges and avoid competition leading to a race to the bottom
- Unite unions between ports to avoid inter-port competition
- Organise non-union workers who are bearing the brunt of the crisis into unions to protect them and to prevent the erosion of working terms and conditions

## Alternative bargaining strategies and promoting mitigating measures

- In contract negotiations, maintain and work to improve conditions rather than the dollar value
- Resist employers using the crisis as an opportunity to reduce conditions and outsource jobs
- Share wealth amongst workers by reducing overtime
- Protect superannuation funds
- Transfer displaced workers to alternative jobs
- Encourage inter-port transfers
- Consider voluntary redundancies not to reduce other labour categories
- Take opportunities to lift unions' image in the media and community

## Supporting members

- Re-educate members to change our attitude to think and act collectively e.g. share out what remains, especially of the dollar value
- Address the fear and uncertainty of workers to help unite and strengthen the rank and file rather than let employers use it
- Opportunity for members to understand better what was negotiated in their contracts
- Assist with financial advice and debt management

## ITF support

- The ITF should prioritise and take a leading coordinating role to organise multiple and yellow unions in ports
- The ITF should coordinate and distribute information on the impact of the crisis in ports around the world with the help of its affiliates

### **3. Cross-sectional cooperation to strengthen unions across the transport chain.**

- The dockers will continue to support the seafarers in their fight for ITF acceptable standards and agreements.
- The dockers request that the "non-seafarers' work" clause is respected and that and that all national agreements have a similar clause.

- There is a need for strong trade unions across the transport chain and in particular in the road transport in order to deliver cross section solidarity.
- Dockers will endeavour to support workers in the other means of transport. However competition between the different modes of transport is not in the interest of any workers and might lead to a race ending up at the bottom
- Special attention to lesser protected groups of workers
- Notwithstanding that we work along the same transport chain, workers should respect the discrete nature of each job and resist from doing work that was historically and traditionally done by a specific group of workers.
- The Dockers request that existing clauses that are part of collective agreements which protect their job and safety are fully implemented and respected at all times.