

GUY RYDER – SPEECH FOR 16 SEPTEMBER 2005, NEW YORK

(Your Excellencies, Co-Chairs of the 2005 World Summit, Distinguished Heads of State and Governments, Mr. Secretary-General Kofi Annan., ...Ladies and Gentlemen...)

I am proud to speak here today on behalf of the 145 million working men and women united in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ICFTU, and also on behalf of the World Confederation of Labour. I am proud to speak also as one of the spokespersons here for the GCAP, the Global Call to Action against Poverty, of which the ICFTU was a founding member.

Poverty and hunger remain the lot of billions of people worldwide. This is unconscionable and unsustainable. This is a time for you to show vision and leadership and the capacity to work together to implement the commitments you have made at the major UN Conferences and global Summits of recent years. As political leaders, you must recognize the need to foster global solidarity in order to advance commonly shared global objectives, and lend full support for the achievement of national development priorities.

We reiterate the call of GCAP: “Wake up to poverty”. Urgent solutions must be found. The right policy choices are possible, are within our reach, and MUST be adopted at this Summit, in order to turn the situation around, and bring about a virtuous cycle of growth with equity.

First and foremost, we need an enabling global policy environment as called for by MDG8. By that, I mean of course fair trade, more and better aid, debt cancellation and debt relief, and a new, strong social dimension to the policies of the international financial institutions and the WTO.

We need effective national-level policies with a focus on pro-poor, gender sensitive growth strategies, on participation of civil society including trade unions, and on respect for workers’ rights and human rights in general.

And globally and nationally, we need a strong focus on the Decent Work Agenda as the most significant way out of poverty, as called for by the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. Decent work, carried out on a basis of respect for fundamental workers’ rights, provides the empowerment that women and men need to improve their living standards, to participate in decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods, and ultimately to work their way out of and escape from poverty.

The United Nations system, including the ILO with its body of norms, provides the social pillar of the multilateral system; as the anchor for establishing policy coherence. It must be strengthened, not weakened.

Therefore, the proposals in the Secretary-General's report to deepen UN effectiveness through a revitalized ECOSOC and Security Council, a new Human Rights Council and a new Peace Building Commission, and other proposals, must all be fully supported by Member states. As tough as negotiations can be on these issues, they should not be shelved. The process is much too important to be dropped now. Those parts of the reform agenda that have not been agreed for the Outcome Document of this Summit should be tabled for further discussion during the 60th General Assembly Session. And they should be negotiated in good faith with a view to achieving "win-win" outcomes for the benefit of the peoples of the planet.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through these, and all the issues raised in his report "In Larger Freedom", the Secretary-General reminds us of our responsibilities - today global responsibilities - to stand together against poverty and exclusion, against arms spending, and instead to stand together for peace-building and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

As we weigh today the urgent need to act on these critical challenges of the 21st century, let us ponder also the dire consequences of inaction: a world no longer secure and fit for passing on to our children..

At this time of deep insecurity and conflict in the world we should recall that social justice remains the surest guarantee of universal and lasting peace. Joining together to achieve that justice is our best contribution to making sure that we and our children can live in a world free from poverty, desperation and conflict in future years. Let us all rise to the challenge.

The UN has known its greatest successes, and won its lasting authority from those occasions when its member states have risen above narrow self interest to the uplands from which the vision of a better common future becomes clear. This Summit must be one such occasion. It is in your hands to make it so.

I thank you.