

Trade Union Major Group  
CSD13 Interactive Dialogue 12 April, 2005 – Afternoon Session  
Theme of Sanitation:

- Access to basic sanitation and hygiene
- Wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse

Intervention by Gemma Adaba – ICFTU Representative to the UN

Thank you Chair.

The Trade Union Major Group welcomes the opportunity to participate in this interactive dialogue. We are pleased that the Chair's Intersessional report recognizes the experience of workers' organizations in promoting occupational health and safety, including through worker education and awareness-raising on sanitation in the workplace. And indeed, through our Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committees, we have been implementing educational programmes jointly with employers, and focused on sanitation and hygiene as an occupational and public health issue which links workplaces to healthy community environments. To meet the Millennium Development Goal related to sanitation, we would envisage the scaling up of interventions on education for sanitation and hygiene, targeting the linkages between workplaces and communities. Workers trained through OHS programmes could therefore become advocates for adequate sanitation facilities in the workplace, the community and in schools. Such advocacy needs to incorporate a gender dimension, calling for gender-segregated facilities which create safe environments for girls at school, and for women at the workplace. We would envisage a scaling up of our partnerships with employers to implement such education programmes, and also with the ILO and UNEP.

Chairperson, on the issue of waste water management, we have a concrete example of work accomplished by trade unions, which we would like to present here. One of the primary problems with waste water is the harmful substances it contains. Assessing the quality and health risks associated with waste water is an important component of waste water management. The International Chemical and Mineworkers' Federation (ICEM) has used its expertise in dealing with hazardous chemicals to address this issue. Coordinating efforts among a number of trade union specialists in occupational health and safety, the ICEM has established a Global Harmonization System (GHS) for the classification and labeling of chemical substances. To take this project further, what we need now is for the GHS to be codified into international law and implemented.

A third area we would like to mention is the adequate provision of sanitation infrastructure and services as public goods, using a rights-based approach which guarantees access to quality public services to all, including poor communities. This implies adequate financing of public expenditures, and so the scaling up of investments for sanitation should be linked to the financing for development agenda, prioritizing a number of mechanisms for mobilizing resources: increased ODA (Official Development Assistance), substantial debt relief, the IFF (International Financing Facility) mentioned by the UK in their intervention, and other innovative sources of financing such as the currency transaction tax and eco-taxes.

The trade union major group would therefore like to commend these concrete proposals for the Chair's draft decisions:

- Codification and implementation of the GHS as a waste water management tool;
- Scaling up of OHS Educational programs focused on sanitation and hygiene
- Scaling up of financial investments to sanitation infrastructure and services as a public good, through fulfilling the commitments of the Financing for Development agenda.