2022 - THE YEAR FOR A BOLDER VISION AND DECISIVE ACTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The book “The Good Ancestor”, published by leading public philosopher Roman Krznaric in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been translated and has attracted attention all over the world. Krznaric states that considering the future is equivalent to being a good ancestor for future descendants. He also warns that we tend to focus only on the present and that there is a lack of long-term thinking with regard to the future.

It has been two years since the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc globally. The year 2022 should be the year for us to take serious and decisive actions based on the lessons learnt from COVID-19 towards building a peaceful, equal, inclusive and sustainable world.
Paradigm shift to address the twin challenges of climate change and the pandemic

The future of the planet amidst the climate emergency is high on the agenda before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, certain measures have been taken to reduce the efforts towards addressing climate change on the grounds of prioritising responses to the pandemic.

For the trade union movement, the twin global challenges of climate change and the pandemic must be tackled with equal urgency. Both global problems have adverse impacts on the jobs, livelihood and lives of the working people. Both climate change and the pandemic have underscored and deepened the existing inequalities in our societies. For instance, the failure to raise climate ambition in the recent climate conference and the starkly unequal vaccine distribution that heavily favours rich countries have and will continue to leave millions of vulnerable people behind.

Neoliberal economic policies that emphasise short-term growth and widen inequality gaps have been reinforced in the middle of the climate emergency and the pandemic. In this crucial time, the world rather needs inclusive and climate-friendly development policies that prioritise the welfare of the largest number of people and the sustainability of the planet. We need to ensure that the development paradigm shifts towards the direction of inclusive and sustainable growth.
A world free of nuclear weapons

The postponed Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is scheduled to be held in 2022. The international community has the urgent task of eliminating the increasing risk of nuclear weapons in order to prevent future generations from becoming involved in a nuclear war.

The ITUC-Asia Pacific welcomes the joint statement issued by five nuclear powers at the beginning of the year on the prevention of nuclear war and the avoidance of the arms race. However, it must be recalled that these nations have continued to neglect their obligations under Article VI of the NPT, aimed at reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons. At the Review Conference, all states must reaffirm their decisive pledge to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and must agree on an effective framework to embody Article VI, based on past agreements.

Rebuilding crumbling democracies

A year ago, we witnessed a scene that symbolised the decline of democracy. A large number of mobs attacked the United States Capitol, resulting in bloodshed.

Asia-Pacific is no exception. In Hong Kong, the freedom to appeal for democracy was withdrawn following the application of the National Security Law. In Myanmar, the result of the democratic election was undermined by a coup, resulting in an unprecedented human rights and humanitarian crisis in the time of the pandemic, no less. In Afghanistan, the progress in the democratisation process has been extinguished. In many other countries, leaders do not champion the voice of the people. Trade unions, the largest democratic intermediary in society and legitimate representatives of the working people, have been suppressed in Asia-Pacific, the second worst region for the working people.

Despite the shrinking democratic space, trade unions will continue to organise and build workers’ power to defend rights, freedoms and democracy.
A global approach –
the legacy of trade unions

There are many issues that cannot be dealt with by individual countries alone, such as the aforementioned issues of climate change, arms race, and decline of democracy. International cooperation is a key principle in the modern world, necessary to maintain and promote internationally shared values such as democracy, human rights, equality, tolerance and solidarity. In an era of increasing competition and tension between states, it is imperative to expand opportunities for creating diverse, just and sustainable solutions to global challenges through solidarity and cooperation among people and among nations.

A global approach forms part of the legacy of the trade union movement in world history. The ITUC-Asia Pacific will continue to play an important role in building a peaceful, equal, inclusive and sustainable post-COVID world.