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**PERC Women's Conference**  
**Statement adopted in Turin**  
**31 October 2008**

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Women could be forced out of the workplace and 'back home' by the global financial crisis, say women trade unionists representing 30 million women workers in 43 countries across Europe. A statement on the global financial and economic crisis was adopted by the founding women's conference of the International Trade Union Confederation's pan-European regional council – stretching from the Azores to the Russian steppes. British trade unionists Gloria Mills (Unison) and Julia Neal (Association of Teachers and Lecturers) were delegates at the conference, along with Elena Crasta from the TUC.

The statement challenged the assumption that the crisis will affect everyone equally, and stressed that women would bear the brunt of the damage to jobs, living standards and social protection.

## **Gender aspects of the financial crisis**

European trade union women leaders meeting in Turin, Italy on 31 October 2008, gathered at the Founding Conference of the Women's Committee of the Pan-European Regional Council, representing 89 trade unions from 43 countries, organising over 30 million trade union women call on world leaders NOT to forget the plight of women when formulating measures to tackle the world financial crisis.

WE CHALLENGE the assumption that the consequences of this global financial crisis is gender neutral, when history shows that the most vulnerable groups are women, migrants, children and elders who are the first victims.

WE WARN European leaders of the risk of not focusing on the gender impact of the ongoing crisis, where many women will face insecurity and fear, and poverty – particularly against the background of spiralling food and fuel prices and access to public services.

WE CALL ON world leaders, governments and European institutions:

- to take urgent action to target immediate measures to prevent women and families falling deeper into poverty;
- to reaffirm the commitment to create healthy economies and just and equal communities through strategies for full and productive employment, including effective and comprehensive reform of the international monetary and financial

systems;

- to change unfair trade rules and ensure that trade agreements are used as instruments for decent work, sustainable development and empowerment of the world's workers, women, the unemployed and the poor,
- to stress that the time has come to define a new model where people and planet will be more important than profit;
- to ensure that the priorities of the international financial institutions incorporate social and environmental concerns; particularly, loan and debt conditions, which force countries to deregulate labour markets, reduce public spending and privatise public services, must be stopped, warning that the mounting financial chaos is taking its toll on the real economy with sharply falling employment, which would "send" millions of women "back home";
- to affirm that every woman has the right to work, to good working conditions, pay equity and to sufficient income for her basic economic, social and family needs—rights that should be enforced by providing adequate living wages; including maternity rights at the highest possible level;
- to respect workers' freedom to form and join trade unions and bargain collectively, without threats and fear, with gender mainstreaming of the bargaining agenda and gender parity in representation;
- to strengthen and broaden social safety net protection by ensuring access to social security, pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity protection, and quality health care for all, and access to public services and measures which would enable reconciliation of work, family and private life; and
- to create binding mechanisms for the promotion and enforcement of decent work, including core labour and environmental standards in trade agreements.