 International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

World Congress

Berlin, May 2014

 TUC report on ITUC Congress 2014

The third quadrennial [World Congress of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)](http://www.ituc-csi.org/sharan-burrow-re-elected-as-ituc) was held in Berlin from 18-23 May 2014. Previous congresses were held in Vienna (2006) and Vancouver (2010). The TUC was represented by a delegation of seven: Rosa Crawford, Billy Hayes, Diana Holland, Sally Hunt, Frances O’Grady, Mohammed Taj and Owen Tudor. Steve Turner was unable to attend due to union business. The delegation met the ITUC’s requirements of gender balance and inclusion of at least 10% of delegates under 35. Owen Tudor acted as a member of the Standing Orders Committee.

Overall, the Congress was attended by over 788 delegates from 161 countries, with as many again attending as observers and advisers: there was a 3% decline in the proportion of women delegates, largely and surprisingly due to shortfalls in the European delegations. There were 331 women delegates, or 42%. However, 19% of delegates (148) were under 35.

The Congress was designed to be paper-less, and the [website](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/) includes all the Congress documentation, news and other materials. In addition, this was the first ITUC Congress which involved large-scale web-streaming and tweeting, and there is a lot of material about the Congress on YouTube and Twitter. The German confederation DGB acted as hosts for the event.

Policy

The Congress adopted several policy documents:

* a fairly short Congress Statement: [Building Workers’ Power](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-3co-e-5-congressstatement-en-210x297-01-2.pdf);
* three Frameworks of Action on [Union Growth](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-3co-e-6_a_-uniongrowth-en-210x297-01-2.pdf), [Sustainable Jobs, secure incomes and social protection](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-3co-e-6_b_-sustainablejobs-en-210x297-01-2.pdf), and [Realising Rights](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-3co-e-6_c_-realisingrights-en-210x297-01-2.pdf);
* an [Emergency Resolution](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/3co_e_6_d_-_resolution_on_turkey.pdf) on the Turkish mine disaster; and
* a statement from the General Secretary on [Ukraine](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ukraine_statement.pdf), put forward and agreed by the Congress as a result of a failure to agree a common position by the Ukrainian and Russian affiliates.

The Frameworks of Action set out in bulleted lists at the end the main areas of work that the ITUC will carry out over the next four years, and these will be brought together into a coherent work programme by the ITUC General Council in December.

The Congress Statement and the frameworks are in line with TUC policy and the delegation voted in favour of all of them as well as the emergency statements, but there were a number of areas where the TUC sought amendments during the process of drafting and agreeing them:

* on **climate action**, the TUC submitted wording that listed some of the key elements of a ‘just transition’ strategy, and more challenging targets for reducing artificial temperature increases, both of which were incorporated on p9 of the Congress Statement;
* on **the Middle East** and **Western Sahara**, the TUC called for these to be seen as liberation struggles rather than aspects of the Arab Spring, and these issues were addressed in greater detail on pp10-11 of the final Congress Statement than in the drafts, in line with Congress policy;
* on **LGBTI rights**, the TUC submitted wording in the drafting process which added sexual orientation (and gender identity) to the list of discrimination which the ITUC would challenge, and at the Congress itself submitted a formal amendment to the Congress Statement and the Realising Rights Framework of Action calling for the ITUC to “encourage affiliates to defend workers suffering such discrimination” and “encouraging national centres to defend LGBTI workers from discrimination at work and fight criminalisation generally.” Although there was no opposition to the amendments, Billy Hayes [spoke in the plenary debate](http://www.tuc.org.uk/ituc-lgbti-speech) on the Congress statements to move them, so that the points were not lost in debate;
* on **financial transaction taxes**, although they were mentioned in the Congress Statement, the TUC ensured that they were also listed as an issue for campaigning work in the Sustainable Jobs Framework of Action;
* finally, the TUC added **Korea** to the countries on the ITUC watch list for abuse of workers’ and trade union rights.

Elections

The main election at the Congress was for the **General Secretary**. The TUC had nominated Sharan Burrow to be re-elected, but there was a second nomination (from only two very small national centres in one country) for Jim Baker, the Secretary of the Council of Global Unions which brings Global Union Federations together with the ITUC. Each candidate was invited to address Congress and a secret ballot then took place, with each affiliate’s voting strength being on the basis of affiliated members. The TUC cast its vote for the candidate we nominated, and Sharan Burrow was re-elected by 99 million to 15 million for Jim Baker.

 Elections for the **Deputy General Secretaries** were uncontested: Wellington Chibebe (originally from the ZCTU, Zimbabwe) and Jaap Wienen (originally from the CNV, Netherlands) were re-elected. And four auditors were also elected: Kjell Ahlberg LO, Sweden; Freda Oosthuysen COSATU, South Africa; and Robert Roach AFL-CIO, USA.

At the Congress, the ITUC **General Council** for the next four years was elected, with Sally Hunt and Frances O’Grady re-elected as titular members. Jack O’Connor from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Owen Tudor are the first substitutes, and Gail Cartmail and Gloria Mills were re-elected as second substitutes. At the General Council meeting immediately after the Congress, Frances O’Grady was elected as a member of the **Executive Bureau**, with Owen Tudor as first substitute and Sally Hunt as second substitute. Frances O’Grady was also re-elected as a Vice-President.

The General Council that met after the Congress elected Joao Antonio Felicio from CUT Brazil as **President**, with the TUC’s support, and also elected Maria Carvalho Francisco, UNTA, Angola and Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, LO Sweden, as **Deputy Presidents**. Karl-Petter will chair the Human and Trade Union Rights Committee and Maria will chair the Solidarity Fund Committee. During the Congress, the ITUC **Women’s Committee** met to elect a successor for Diana Holland as chair, and elected Gladys Branche from the Sierra Leone Labour Congress teachers’ union, who is well known to many in the British trade union movement.

On and off the fringe

During the Congress debates, [Mohammed Taj](http://www.tuc.org.uk/ituc-taj) spoke for the TUC in the plenary debate, calling for a political strategy for the global movement; Sally Hunt took part in a panel session on pensions and workers’ capital; Diana Holland chaired a session on women’s participation in unions and work; Rosa Crawford read a poem to start a debate on violence against women, and several members of the delegation intervened from the floor in sub-plenaries on [health and safety](http://www.tuc.org.uk/OHS-ITUC-hayes) (Billy Hayes), [trade](http://www.tuc.org.uk/ituc-ttip-speech) (Sally Hunt), organising in the informal sector (Diana Holland), workers’ rights (Owen Tudor) and [migration](http://www.tuc.org.uk/ituc-migration-taj) and discrimination (both Mohammed Taj).

Guest speakers at the Congress included [Gordon Brown](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/plenary-session-21-may-2014), in his role as UN ambassador for education, who met afterwards with Mohammed Taj; and Abdes Ouaddou, the former Fulham footballer who was trapped in Qatar, who led off a section on the ITUC #rerunthevote campaign about the Qatar World Cup 2022. The ITUC took the opportunity to launch its [Global Rights Index](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/new-ituc-global-rights-index-the) on countries which abuse workers’ and trade union rights and conducted an [online poll](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/amazon-s-jeff-bezos-wins-ituc-s) to find the ‘worst boss in the world’, ‘won’ by Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

With the encouragement of the LGBT Committee, the TUC co-sponsored a fringe event on LGBTI rights called ‘Speaking out for LGBTI members, oppressed at work and in law’ to draw attention to our amendment and initiate a discussion with others about how to encourage other trade union movements to learn from union experiences around the world to be more open in their support of LGBTI members. The fringe meeting was co-sponsored by Education International and Public Services International, and chaired by Diana Holland. Shane Enright from Amnesty International and Chidi King, acting director of the ITUC equality department spoke alongside EI and PSI speakers.

On the Tuesday of Congress, Billy Hayes spoke at a rally convened by the US and German communication workers’ unions (CWA and Ver.di) outside the offices of Deutsche Telekom, calling on the company to recognise unions in its US operations. Frances O’Grady took part in a [web-streamed discussion](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/congress-live-panel-debate-the) with Rich Trumka, AFLCIO President, on the future of unions, and recorded a [video message](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/official-speeches-from-leaders-of-901) (along with leaders of all the ITUC affiliates) about the situation facing workers in the UK (1:07:00 in)

The TUC held a formal bilateral with Rengo Japan, covering union strategy, collective bargaining and political developments, in particular common experiences of post office privatisation. It was agreed to continue the TUC and Rengo’s close working relationship, and to hold a formal bilateral meeting in 2015 (probably in the autumn) in Japan. Informal events were held between the TUC delegation and those from the AFLCIO, from the ACTU and NZCTU, and the ICTU.

Frances O’Grady took part in a bilateral between the AFLCIO and ETUC about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which resulted in a [joint statement](http://www.etuc.org/press/ttip-must-work-people-or-it-won%E2%80%99t-work-all#.U47n5E1OV1s) on the issue headed “TTIP must work for people or it won’t work at all.”

To launch the ITUC campaign for [Unions4ClimateAction](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/union-leaders-announce-their), Frances O’Grady [committed the TUC](http://www.tuc.org.uk/unions4climateaction) to concrete steps to improve the position of unions and the government in the UK. Diana Holland was also able to demonstrate the TUC’s commitment to increasing women’s participation in union leadership by announcing the [TUC’s endorsement](http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/count-us-in-congress-commits-to) of the ITUC ‘Count Us In’ campaign. The TUC delegation all took part in an Amnesty International photo action in solidarity with Bahraini teacher trade union leader Mahdi Abu Dheeb.