



21 November 2014

Seafarer and docker union leaders warn EC over Euro ports plans

A meeting of key ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) member union decision makers in London issued a strong warning to the European Commission (EC) today over the future of the continent's ports.

Docker and seafarer trade union leaders meeting at the ITF's fair practices committee steering group called for a drastic re-examination of the EC's handling of the vital national and international resources. Terje Samuelsen, Europe chair of the ITF dockers' section and chair of the European Transport Workers' Federation dockers' section, explained: "The EC's latest response to the early and justified demise of their ports packages seems to be to actively foment infringement procedures against ports where social dialogue between employers and unions is working well. We don't know whether it's sour grapes or a desire to smuggle in a new port package under another name, but it's putting the whole model of successful and productive dialogue at risk.

He promised: "Dockers across Europe will continue to ram home the point to the EC that 'if it isn't broke, don't fix it'."

Today's resolution of the ITF fair practices committee steering group, which brings together dockers and seafarers' unions from across the world, is as follows:

The ITF's Fair Practices Committee Steering Group meeting in London on 20th - 21st November 2014:

NOTES the persistent attempts to erode the job security and working conditions of dockworkers in Europe;

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NOTES the infringement procedures that have been, or are about to be, initiated against a number of European governments, including in Spain and Belgium, to challenge the existing rights of dockworkers;

REGRETS that over the past few years, a climate fuelling complaints against port labour organisation schemes has been created in Europe;

CONDEMNS the direct and indirect attacks on the right to, and scope of, collective bargaining in the sector;

EXPRESSES its grave concern over the complete lack of transparency and accountability of the process by which such infringement procedures can be initiated, whereby anonymous complaints can be made via a website;

CHALLENGES misinformation about well-organised ports in Europe, which contrary to allegations by some parties, are cost effective, efficient and have a high rate of productivity, making sizeable contributions to the economy both at the national and European levels;

PLEDGES its continued support for European dockworker unions who are fighting for their members' livelihoods and rights;

CALLS ON the European Commission, European governments and employers to act transparently and in good faith, and to desist from actions that would undermine workers and their unions who are key social partners as well as the social dialogue in place at national and European level; and

CALLS on the European Commission, European governments and employers to instead focus on addressing the combined impacts of insufficient cargo growth, automation and overcapacity in European ports, and to work with unions to minimise the social consequences of this.

ENDS