



# UMOJA

## NEWU COMMEMORATES NATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY DAY



NEWU march on National Health and Safety Day.

In Zimbabwe's metal sector, workers suffer can suffer from serious respiratory and skin ailments from exposure to fluids that are used extensively for lubricating and cooling during machining, contact with used fluids or inhalation of fine mist produced during processing.

There are not only risk and hazards in the formal sector; workers in the informal sector are also subjected to poor working environments, low safety and health standards and environmental hazards. However the National Social Security Services Authority (NSSA) has turned a blind eye to the needs of this vital sector.

The NSSA has also discriminated against the trade union fraternity on the right to compensation. The authority rejected claims from On September 13 in 2006, trade unionists injured or permanently disabled as a result of the police brutality unleashed on them at the 13 September 2006 ZCTU national protest.

Workers must make demands to ensure they are provided with adequate protective equipment. Employers also must put in place serious initiatives to create a safe working environment. Government must also play their role to ensure safety requirements are met and to move towards the direction of social security reforms as part for the decent work agenda.

The ZCTU firmly believes that work related accidents and ill health can be prevented through working together as social partners according to occupational safety and health standards.

Moyo said, "Only through effective collaboration can we achieve the aim of decent working conditions in Zimbabwe. Decent work can be only be a reality if we all commit ourselves to the promotion of occupational safety and health at work and the ratification of the ILO Convention 187".

Shinga Mushandi Shinga! Qina Sisebenzi Qina!

Article written by Miriam Chipunza, NEWU

**ZIMBABWE:** National Engineering Workers Union (NEWU) together with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) commemorated Health and Safety Day on 6 June 2011 under the theme 'Save Our Rights, Save Our Economy and Our Jobs.'

The day started with a March in the capital Harare with comrades singing songs of solidarity to remember the 427 miners who died on 6 June 1972 at Kandamana Coal Mine Shaft No. 2, Hwange in Zimbabwe.

This day is one which all Zimbabwean workers will never forget and such commemorations will continue to revive the spirits of workers that died at work as a result of poor safety standards. Many foreign investors and even some local investors are violating occupational safety and health standards, failing to promote decent work which has resulted in high statistics on injuries, diseases and fatalities at the workplace.

Japhet Moyo, the Acting Secretary General of the ZCTU and the General Secretary of NEWU, spoke of the impact of poor safety standards at work on the lives of workers and their families.

In Zimbabwe, work accidents are on the rise. In 2009 there were 3122 injuries and 64 fatalities registered and they increased in 2010 to 4410 registered fatalities with 90 being fatal. This increase shows a lack of observance of OHS protocols and systems in line with the 2006 ILO Convention 187.

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## WORKING IN THE SPIRIT OF UMOJA

### Steve Nhlapo IMF Regional Secretary

There is a Kenyan proverb that says, 'sticks in a bundle are unbreakable'.

As organised labour we are coming to understand the importance of true worker unity. The working world is a perilous place, now more than ever, as globally we struggle for economic recovery. Workers need the power of the collective to support them and some labour organisations have taken bold steps to strengthen themselves to meet this challenge.

At IMF Africa, unity has been a major focus of our recent work. We have encouraged our affiliates in Angola and Liberia to building strong united bonds between sister unions in their countries so that they can work together to stand up workers.

In Nigeria, IMF Africa has been working with several unions that have made serious commitments to merge. These unions have realised the only way that they can effectively represent workers in the new more challenging organising environment created by changes in their labour laws, is if they regain strength in numbers. This strength was lost when former IMF affiliate, Steel & Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria (SEWUN) split.

IMF African affiliates also showed our ability to offer regional solidarity. The response to call for support of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and South African Bridgestone workers was overwhelming. Workers were unfairly locked out and fighting to protect their right to collective bargaining. We were able to acknowledge and raise awareness of their struggle through these messages of solidarity.

We are also encouraged by the unity of workers in Swaziland, engaged in ongoing struggles with the government for democracy and the respect of labour and human rights. Trade unionists have been subjected to harassment and brutality by the police, attempts of the government to intimidate

them and suppress the rising discontent amongst the working class.

Faced with such a reality, the recently announced merger of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) and the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL) is welcomed news. The newly formed Trade Unions Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) hopes to hold its inaugural congress as early as August and will be better able to give a stronger voice to workers and the Swazi people in their struggle.

At an international level, the leadership of IMF, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and International Textile, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) have committed to the formation of a new federation that will unite industrial and manufacturing workers as a powerful global force capable of defending workers' rights.

In May, at a joint meeting, executives considered and adopted a series of proposals on the road to creating the new global union federation (GUF). The decisions focused on questions of governance, affiliation fees, regional and sectoral structures and voting rights in the new organisation. It was also decided that a working group would be established to prepare an action plan for the new organisation.

If approved by the decision making bodies of the three GUFs later this year, the founding congress of the new International will take place in Copenhagen from June 18 to 20, 2012.

As we go forward, let us keep on working together to find ways to build our unity because in unity lies our strength.

I sign off with more words of wisdom from Africa...

**'When spider webs unite,  
they can tie up a lion!'**



Joint IMF, ICEM and ITGLWF meeting of Executives in Geneva.

# BUILDING IMF COMMUNICATORS NETWORK IN AFRICA



Representatives of IMF affiliated trade unions from Central and South Africa gathered for a communicators' forum to discuss how they can improve communication work in their region and their national unions.

**KENYA:** Participants of the IMF regional communicators' forum for Central and South Africa gathered in Nairobi, Kenya on May 10 and 11 to discuss how to improve communications in their national unions and in the region.

During the seminar the participants, mostly young women, shared their experience on how communication work is organized in their unions and identified the existing challenges in their region. Unions from Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia attended the Forum.

Participants shared how the unions in the region use different channels to deliver their messages and communicate with their members. Many referred to the necessity of additional contact with their members and activists. Some participants identified the problem of lack of adequate training for their leaders, activists and rank-and-file members who often fail to effectively use the existing technical communication equipment. Also quite often activists are not reachable during working hours as their employer does not allow mobile phones at workplaces.

The trade unions use regular printed publications like magazines, newsletters, pamphlets and leaflets distributed by hand among their members. Some are even developing websites, however lack of resources is a serious problem to maintain this work at an ongoing basis.

The participants of the forum including also representatives of the leadership unanimously decided to give a strong commitment to build and develop their own regional communicators' network starting from the participants of the seminar and reaching beyond in order to exchange information about challenges for their unions and the ways to find adequate solutions. They also agreed to increase cooperation with the IMF regional office in Africa and supply the office with regular and timely updates on the work carried out by their respective unions.

During the forum the participants received information on existing system of communication in the IMF. Following the presentation of the IMF regional office about regional publication Umoja the participants committed to assist in its development.

In conclusion of the first day of the Forum participants viewed a series of short films from

the 2010 Geneva Labour Film Shorts Festival. Some copies of DVDs with the films were distributed among the participants to be used as training and education materials. The regional office also showed its own video materials made during the IMF global solidarity action in support of Mexican miners.

A short exercise on writing for the IMF website and an introduction to various communication resources was included in the Forum's programme. The participants also received an update about the process of creation of a new International between IMF, ICEM and ITGLWF and the related communication.

"I really enjoyed the brainstorming sessions, getting to know how other communicators work in their organizations and how best I can make use of the available communication tools that are at my disposal. I am encouraged to write solidarity messages and articles and that may come out in the Umoja or on the IMF Africa website." **Miriam Chipunza, NEWU, Zimbabwe.**

"I learnt a lot of things which were very new to me. I even learnt the way communication work can act as a tool to recruit members, increase solidarity and facilitate day to day activities, not only acting as something to entertain people." **Likele Shungu, TUICO, Tanzania.**

"I realized that in a union there are many channels in which communication can be done. Even though there are challenges in using some channels, I learnt how to tackle them... From the meeting I was taught how to write news and this made me feel good. I still have challenges in writing news but with practice I hope everything will go on well." **Janet Oguta, AUKMW, Kenya.**

"I learned that most stories and opinions have more than one side to them, and that there isn't necessarily always a right side. But the fact is that we are here to represent workers. So workers are always right as opposed to the employer. To that effect, union communicators must always bring to light every issue that relates to workers and the industry... I also liked that fact that there were some really intelligent strong women unionist within IMF affiliates that consistently offered interesting thinking points." **Sandra Hlungwani, NUMSA, South Africa.**



## BRIDGESTONE SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE OF ONGOING WORKER STRUGGLE

Workers at Bridgestone South Africa returned to work on May 19, ending an eight week lockout. National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) made the decision with workers after an unfavourable labour court ruling that deemed the lockout legal and with due regard to the hardships that the 1,200 workers endured during the lockout, going two months without pay.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** The drawn out saga with Bridgestone started during wage negotiations with the tyre sector in August 2010. Employers tabled for discussion the number of workers earning above the maximum for their grade known as red circled workers. In addition to an across the board increases, the parties also agreed to seek out a way to bring these workers back into the grade maximum. A wage retardation formula for red circled workers for the industry was agreed to with all parties except Bridgestone. The agreement reflected this, stating Bridgestone's position as a separate item in the agreement being challenged by NUMSA. On the basis of the agreement, NUMSA ended its month long strike with other employers and in good faith suspended the strike with Bridgestone, in order to the further negotiate with the company on its red circle worker position.

Bridgestone then announced that if NUMSA does not accept its proposal on wage retardation for red circled workers that it is not bound by the agreement in its entirety. This would mean that Bridgestone was not obligated to pay across the board wage increases under the agreement for all other approximately 1,050 workers and 'red circled' workers. Bridgestone also contested the right of the industry association to sign off on

the agreement on its behalf potentially undermining the institution of centralised bargaining.

The matter went to arbitration and despite requesting an expedited hearing on the matter, three hearings were necessary, beginning early in December 2010 and ending late February 2011. In his ruling dated February 22, 2011, the arbitrator found that Bridgestone was bound to the industry agreement signed by the employers association and should pay increases as stipulated in the agreement for non red circled workers and that NUMSA and Bridgestone should continue to negotiate an agreement of a retardation formula to be applied to those earning above the maximum for their grade. NUMSA made repeated attempts to engage Bridgestone to reach such an agreement and accept the industry-wide position on red circled workers. Bridgestone remained stubborn and on March 22, 2010, taking advantage of the slowdown in industry-wide demand as a result of the Japanese tragedy decided to take offensive action to force the union to agree to its unilateral position by locking out all of its 1,200 workers at both its plants.

At this point NUMSA sought solidarity support from its members as well as other unions in South Africa and abroad. IMF

African affiliates responded to the call and most sent letters of solidarity to NUMSA and called on Bridgestone to respect the central bargaining process. Several other unions outside of the region, notably some of those that organise Bridgestone workers in other countries, also sent letters to Bridgestone SA warning that they were ready to back NUMSA with actions at the company's plants that they organise.

NUMSA applied to the labour court for a urgent interdict to have the lock out declared illegal as the union was pursuing negotiations and there was no strike in action but the court ruled on a technicality that the lockout was legal because of the suspended strike. This award on the April 15, 2011 was unexpected as trade unions often suspend a strike in good faith to re-engage in negotiations, diffuse tensions between parties and alleviate pressure on workers during the long drawn out industrial action. The precedent setting award, deeming the lockout at Bridgestone as legal, undermines the use of strike suspension as a tool available to labour in the future. NUMSA is challenging this award, looking to take this for appeal.

NUMSA resumed the Bridgestone strike and organised a march to the Japanese Embassy on April 25 to demand their intervention on the Bridgestone lockout. The embassy responded to NUMSA saying that the Japanese government encourages all Japanese multinational companies to comply with labour legislation in the countries they operate but cannot intervene on a collective bargaining matter.

Striking workers also marched to Bridgestone plants in Port Elizabeth and Brits early in May demanding that the company honour the industry agreement with respect to red circled workers and end the lockout. Despite growing pressure at home and internationally Bridgestone refused to budge.



Workers sing and shout slogans as they march to Bridgestone in Port Elizabeth.

During the lockout Bridgestone SA refused to engage NUMSA, instead the company told workers that if they wished to return to work they would be expected to individually sign acceptance of their wage offer, effectively shutting out the union and undermining the right to collective bargaining. As the contentious issue affected a minority of the workers, those that are red circled, it was only a matter of time before the strain placed on workers through a lack of income would start to erode their resolve. The company also resorted to dirty tactics to attack their unity, which included threatening their jobs by bringing in former workers that had been retrenched by the company.

NUMSA recognised that when the labour court deemed the lockout as legal, the power balance shifted. The union decided that it was not going to give in quietly and put up a fight, which was an acknowledgement of the workers' that had got this far from strength through unity. The union symbolically took back the power by reinstating the strike and gave workers the chance to reinforce morale by marching their demands to the Embassy and Bridgestone.

While Bridgestone might have gained marginally for its profit line at the expense of workers, it has suffered a massive loss in terms of employee good will and industrial

relations in general, tarnishing the image of the company internationally. NUMSA has acted in good faith throughout this dispute and the extent of solidarity shown between workers has been impressive. Bridgestone workers know that was only the intransigence of management that resulted in their unnecessary suffering. They have not lost sight of the fact that the original strike achieved its objectives in the industry and for the vast majority of the Bridgestone workforce.

NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim acknowledges the fight put up by Bridgestone workers, "We thank our

members at Bridgestone who, together with their shop stewards, demonstrated solid unity for an extended period of time, resolutely fighting back against brutal union bashing by their employer. They have sent out a clear message, there are active committed union members at Bridgestone and NUMSA has effective organising power at these plants." He goes on to say, "Just because workers have gone back, doesn't mean the union and members accept the unilateralism of Bridgestone. Our struggle is not over, we are prepared to take on this exploitative employer again and again until we have victory for workers."



Workers march to Bridgestone in Port Elizabeth to hand over their demands.

## ORGANISED LABOUR PREPARES FOR INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE TALKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

**SOUTH AFRICA:** The United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is to hold its 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) in Durban, South Africa from 28 November to 9 December 2011. This is a government negotiations space where there is limited room for engagement by civil society.

Organised labour is working hard to raise awareness on climate change issues and ensure that their voices are heard not only at COP 17 but at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, known as Rio+20.

At the end of March 2011, a trade union delegation met with South African President Jacob Zuma. Included in the delegation was International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary, Sharan Burrow and President Sdumo Dlamini and General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi of Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Labour representatives requested President Zuma to use South Africa's position in

COP 17, UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability and the G20 to ensure that issues affecting workers are part of the agenda in the three forums.

"The current economic model is heading us towards more crises, unemployment and environmental degradation", said Vavi. "If we are serious about addressing the vulnerability of poor workers and communities, RIO+20 needs to shift from piecemeal commitments and deliver a universal social protection floor, which will ensure dignified livelihoods for all. The climate negotiations in Durban must support this effort through the protection of the poorest from a climate perspective: with ambition in terms of emission reductions and climate finance".

One of the main issues concerning labour is that changes towards sustainable consumption and production patterns can bring opportunities for decent and green jobs and better livelihoods but there also exists a real threat to jobs in sectors that would need to be transformed to lower

their carbon footprint.

In addressing climate change, the IMF has stood with other global federations and ITUC to advocate, among other things, a "just transition" seeking protection for workers in sectors that would be negatively affected. Workers and communities affected need adequate social protection and access to new opportunities. In addition, "just transition will require active labour market policies, income protection, retraining, awareness and capacity building for employers and trade unions, and investments at the local level in order to diversify the economy and create alternative income opportunities.

At last years climate change negotiations, COP 16 held in Cancun Mexico, organised labour successfully lobbied for the inclusion of the concept of "just transition" that has already had positive impact for the inclusion of worker related issues in subsequent negotiations, policy papers and programme development.

## UNITING METALWORKERS IN NIGERIA IN PROGRESS

**NIGERIA:** In April, the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) Africa Regional Representative, Steve Nhlapo, met with two trade unions and two staff associations representing metalworkers that have begun the process of merging, to offer support in an effort to bring Nigerian metalworkers back into the IMF family.

In 2005, the Nigerian government passed the Trade Union Amendment Act. One of the key changes for the labour movement was that union membership would now become voluntary. While such freedom is in principle to be welcomed, it was widely believed that the main aim of this change was to weaken the cohesion and unity of the trade union movement. Former IMF affiliate, Steel & Engineering Workers Union of Nigeria (SEWUN) fell prey to this strategy, unable to manage the challenges of organizational change needed for the union to recruit and organize workers, the union split in four along sub sector lines and was expelled from the IMF in 2008.

Recognizing the need to rebuild worker power through unity two of the emergent unions from SEWUN and two staff associations, made up of workers that were previously not allowed to join a trade union have come together to build one strong union. These parties have made significant progress, having already drafted a constitution. However, the Trade Union Amendment Act does not allow for a trade union to be registered to represent workers in a sector where a trade union already exists, requiring SEWUN to be deregistered.

This part of the Act is one of issues that the ILO has taken up with the Nigerian government, to ensure that workers have the right to form and join organizations of their own choice even if another organization already exists. In the report of the committee of experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in all member states of the ILO recently released by the ILO headquarters, attention is brought to this part of the act which is in violation of Article 2 of the Convention No. 87 of 1948 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize which states that workers have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choice without distinction whatsoever.

Despite this setback, the parties remain committed to a merger and in the meeting formulated a programme of collaboration which includes joint workshops for shop stewards. They have also agreed to joint plant visits and worker meetings as well as to establishing a joint approach to bargaining to strengthen the position of workers in the bargaining.

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## BUILDING UNITY IN ANGOLA

**ANGOLA:** To assist the two unions organizing metalworkers in Angola and strengthen their closer cooperation and mutual support, the IMF held a workshop in Luanda in April 2011, that was attended by union leadership and shop stewards drawn from 12 companies in the metal, chemical, electricity, energy and light industries.

In addition to building unity and strong solidarity between Federação Dos Sindicatos Das Industrias Metalurgicas, Extractiva, Energia E Quimica De Angola (FSIMEQ) and Sindicato Das Industrias Petro-Quimicas E Metalurgicas De Angola (SIPEQMA), the workshop also aimed at improving focus and basic skills of union officials and shop stewards on organizing.

Participants shared their experiences and found that they were not alone on issues. In fact most experienced the same key challenges in the workplace; no employment equity, wage disparities, occupational diseases, the use of subcontractors and retrenchments. Participants also discussed similarities in the two unions such as shrinking union membership, poor financial resources and the need for leadership and shop stewards training.

Participants discussed strategies to improve organizing including ongoing recruitment campaigns and joint training on collective bargaining. Participants undertook to build unity of workers in different plants and support to each other during disputes. In order to achieve this, participants recognized that communication between plants and the unions would need to be improved.

The unions also recognized the need for better cooperation with each other through joint activities which would build relations that would be useful for a possible merger in the future.

## IMF AFRICA LEARNS ABOUT LABOUR STRUGGLES AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN GUINEA

**GUINEA:** During a mission to Conackry, Guinea early in April 2011, a representative of IMF Africa met with union leadership and shop stewards of Forum intersyndical des societes minières et industrielles de Guinée (FISMIG) and visited some of the organized plants in order to better understand the labour movement in Guinea and challenges facing workers and the union.

Located in West Africa, Guinea has abundant natural resources including a significant share of the world's known bauxite reserves. It is also rich in gold, diamonds and other metals. Despite this a legacy of autocratic rulers has made Guinea one of the poorest nations in the world. Trade unions have been at the forefront calling for political reform in Guinea since the mid 2000's and have faced violent crackdowns by government,

during one such strike in 2007 resulted in over 100 fatalities. The trade unions were successful in motivating action to support demands for political transformation and in November 2010, after democratically held elections, Alpha Conde, supported by the labour movement, was declared the official victor.

Union plant committees in the mining and industry sectors created FISMIG in 1994. It is an independent trade union platform organizing across the country which brings together shop stewards and workers from mine and industry sector to discuss challenges faced by workers and unions identifying common issues and common approaches to deal with problems. Issues like job security, workers unity, minimum wage, social security, precarious work, trade and investment in the mine and industry are discussed. The

union has political and bargaining power to influence government and employers policies, through the full involvement of their membership base of 50, 000, 5,000 of whom are metalworkers.

Despite political unrest and the many problems that plague Guinea's economy, foreign investors have established their presence in the mining sector. South African mining companies De Beers and AngloGold Ashanti operate mines in the country. the world's largest aluminium producer, Russia's Rusal gets 40% of its bauxite needs from Guinea. Vale and Rio Tinto are also present with iron ore interests.

There are also massive developments planned for alumina refineries involving BHP Billiton, Alcan and others that will increase the number of metalworkers.

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## LIBERIAN UNIONS WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS A MERGER

**LIBERIA:** On the 18 April 2011 sixteen union leaders from the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) affiliate United Workers Union of Liberia (UWUL) and International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) affiliate Metal, Mechanical Electrical Communications and Allied Workers Union (MMECAWU) met in Monrovia to discuss the possibility of a merger and to develop a program of cooperation.

15 years of civil war left Liberia in ruins. Not only is there much work to be done in this post war era to re-establish infrastructure, the country is also engaged in nation building including revitalizing the educational, health, security, economic and governance sectors. For the last seven years Liberians have been consolidating peace, receiving support for development from the international community and making strides in securing foreign investment attracted by the countries abundant natural resources.

Whilst some multinationals like Firestone have been in Liberia for many decades, ArcelorMittal and BHP Billiton are the new kids on the block, with substantial recent investments in iron ore extraction. Historically, foreign companies that have been granted concessions have been expected to take care of service delivery to people in the area, in the form of housing, education and health services.



Participants of the Liberian merger talks.

This system still exists today and further disempowers workers to challenge employers as it is not only their jobs at stake but also their homes.

Organised labour has recognized that unity is needed for bargaining power to stand up to these multinational companies and meet the challenges to build worker rights, create decent work and improve the lives of workers. Liberia's two labour federations have united to form a strong single federation in the country. The forestry union and mining

union merged to create UWUL. Now, building on these successful mergers and encouraged by their benefit for worker power, UWUL and MMECAWU have agreed to work towards a merger.

At the April meeting, the unions formulated and signed a memorandum of understanding committing to form a joint committee to develop a programme of collaboration that would culminate in a merger within a 24 month period. Central to the joint work would be organizing workers of multinational companies.

# SWAZILAND DEMOCRACY STRUGGLE CONTINUES

April 12 marks the day that Swaziland declared a state of emergency in 1973, which is still ongoing 38 years later, making it one of the world's longest running state of emergencies, used to suspend the human rights and political freedom of the Swazi people. April 12, 2011 was chosen by pro-democracy campaigners for mass protests. Yet the protests planned for three days from the April 12 faced brutal crackdown by Swaziland security forces on anti-government protestors.

COUNTRY  
WATCH

**SWAZILAND:** Many leading trade unionists were arrested as well as other activists and journalists detained and some report of beatings and the use of rubber bullets to disperse crowds. Police and the army flooded the capital Manzini and the other major centre Mbabane, breaking up groups larger than three to prevent the mass action from gaining momentum. Road blocks were in place to prevent people from entering into the cities. A common tactic used by security forces was to round up protestors and drop them off in remote areas without any transport back to the cities. After the three days of action, the number of pro-democracy activists detained were estimated to be in the hundreds.

Protests on 18 March 2011 were far more successful in gathering momentum, when over 7,000 Swazi's, mostly workers, called for a change in government. They were protesting government's proposed 4.5 per cent salary cut for public servants as well as a freeze on annual increases, attempts to reduce the public wage bill as part of IMF conditions to qualify for budget support. Workers were outraged that they were expected to pay for the economic woes of the country especially in the face of extravagant flaunts by the monarchy.

Swaziland, ruled by one of the world's last absolute monarchs, King Mswati III, is in crisis. Revenue from the South African Customs Union (SACU) on which the fiscus is heavily reliant on, contributing 76 per cent of the government's income in 2009, dropped significantly by about two thirds in 2010 and is expected to continue declining over the next decade.

The need for external funding to bail out the government means that economic reforms are inevitable. The Swazi government claimsthat funds to pay civil servants are running out quickly. Workers have clearly shown that they are not prepared to bear the brunt of these reforms. Actions have continued in May, in particular the teachers union has been well organised in pushing for immediate reforms.

On 16 June 2001, a meeting of the newly formed Trade Unions Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA)

## Swaziland Democracy Campaign (SDC) Public Rally

Popular campaign for mass action and global solidarity for democracy in Swaziland!



Graphic from a poster of a rally held in Johannesburg.

was disrupted by police and ten trade unionists arrested. This attempt to intimidate unionists to prevent them from raising issues on the political situation in Swaziland as well as labour rights violations at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva did not work.

Workers' delegates of the ILC urged the government to address the human rights crisis, noting workers could not meet, march or use the media freely.

"Today we are called to a meeting, tomorrow we are arrested," explained one Swazi worker delegate, adding the social dialogue taking place "is nothing more than a PR exercise organized by the government" to give the impression human and trade union rights violations are being addressed.

### Contact IMF Africa Regional Office

156 Gerard Seketo  
(corner Gwigwi Mrwebi)  
Newtown  
Johannesburg 2001  
South Africa

P.O. Box 31016  
Braamfontein 2017  
South Africa

Tel: ((27/11) 492 0301/2/3/4  
Fax: (27/11) 492 0293  
E-mail: aro@imfmetal.org

International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) represents the collective interests of 25 million metalworkers from more than 200 unions in 100 countries. The IMF is a federation of national metalworkers' unions, a union of unions at the world level. The IMF head office is in Geneva, Switzerland, where worldwide activities are co-ordinated with a network of regional offices.

