

Uganda guards win G4S recognition

Affiliate ATGWU in Uganda has won recognition from Group 4 Securicor - target of a global UNI Property Services campaign. With help from UNI and the SEIU, the union signed the agreement on March 27 after a two-year struggle. "We hope we can penetrate other multinationals in the private security industry in Africa," said ATGWU's David Balirraine. G4S is the biggest employer in the sector in Africa with 65,000 workers in 18 states. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Defending jobs against Carrefour raiders

Commerce unions warn they will fight any attempt to asset strip Carrefour and endanger jobs and working conditions. This follows moves by private equity Colony Capital and French billionaire Bernard Arnault to build up a dominant shareholding in the world's second largest retailer. Colony Capital wants Carrefour to sell off its stores and rent them back - burdening the company and threatening long-term competitiveness. Carrefour employs almost 500,000 workers worldwide. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

Call for meeting with Citigroup

UNI global union has called for an urgent meeting with Citigroup to discuss the multinational bank's plans to cut and offshore more than 15,000 jobs. It's part of a global restructuring programme that will affect as many as 8% of the company's 327,000 employees. UNI warned the company that such drastic cuts will affect working conditions and service to the customers. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Union alliance in Donnelley goes for global agreement

A union alliance across the world's biggest printer - Chicago-based RR Donnelley - has been launched and a key aim is signing a global agreement to ensure labour rights around the world. Donnelley employs 60,000 people and the alliance will develop contacts with the company's growing workforce in China. Negotiations start soon on a European Works Council for Donnelley's European operations. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

Taking the global union message on to the streets of Mar del Plata



Youth lead march in Mar del Plata

Young union activists led a march that took the global union message on to the streets of Mar del Plata, Argentina. The second UNI-Americas Regional Conference adjourned early on 22 March to demonstrate in front of the city's cathedral. The conference agreed a platform for winning decent work, human and labour rights and social safety nets to build a more inclusive society in the Americas. Argentine Labour Minister Dr Carlos Tomada was among guest speakers at the conference. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)

Unions transforming the Americas

Unions in the Americas are building trade union power to transform the continent - that was the confident message to the closing session of the UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina from Ruben Cortina, UNI-Americas' new President. "We need a new democracy with more social inclusion and social cohesion. But if there is not trade union power it is difficult to fight for human rights," said Ruben. Rodolfo Benitez was re-elected Regional Secretary. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)



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Rabiadou Serah Diallo and Dr
Ibrahima Fofana

UNI solidarity mission to Guinée

A solidarity mission from UNI and UNI-Africa led by its President Napoleon Kpoh was warmly welcomed by Guinée unions on 12-13 March. Trade unions are playing a key role in the transition of the country from military dictatorship to democracy. As well as affiliates FESEBAG and SYNCOPEG, the mission met the leaders of the central trade union movement Dr Ibrahima Fofana and Rabiadou Serah Diallo, employers and representatives of civil society. At a press conference the UNI group congratulated the unions and their members for the successful struggle against the Conté dictatorship. (zakari.koudougou@uniglobalunion.org)

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UNI meets private equity giant Blackstone

UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings met with Blackstone President Hamilton James at the private equity giant's headquarters in New York. The meeting was the first opportunity for UNI to put union concerns over the growing wave of private equity buyouts. "We had a constructive dialogue and we now have to build on this first exchange in the future," said Philip. (philip.jennings@uniglobalunion.org)

Street vendors sit in raises profile in Iraq

The street vendors of Nasiriyah in Iraq have forced authorities to negotiate with them over new locations to set up their kiosks and carts, on which they depend to support their families. Scores of street vendors staged a sit-in and protest after being evicted from sites under a reconstruction plan. The street vendors were helped by the Union of Unemployed in Iraq with support from NGOs and the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions in Iraq - one of the more established trade union centres in the fragmented world of Iraqi labour. (raul.requena@uniglobalunion.org)

Bringing together service workers in ASEAN

Service workers unions in South East Asia are to step up their cooperation in a region covered by the ASEAN grouping of states. ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Council is to be launched, it was agreed at a service sector meeting in Kuala Lumpur facilitated by UNI-Asia Pacific. Services are the biggest sector in the fast developing region with moves towards a regional version of GATS and the liberalisation of aviation, tourism and health care. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Defending media workers in war zones

The dangers to media workers in war zones was highlighted at a recent conference held by media and entertainment Spanish affiliate FCT-CCOO. 1000 media workers have been killed in the line of duty in the last ten years and the Madrid event commemorated Spanish cameraman Jose Couso who died with other media workers when US troops fired on the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, April 2003. UNI MEI's Jim Wilson and Reuters News Agency's Rodney Pindar were among the speakers. (jim.wilson@uniglobalunion.org)

Private equity call to G8

Global unions are urging the Group 8 organisation of the biggest industrialised states to bring in new rules for private equity groups who increasingly buy up public companies. Unions want rules for greater transparency and tax changes to ensure private equity groups don't get an unfair advantage. A recent UK report on PE makes it clear that management buy-ins (as opposed to private equity supporting management buy outs) are more likely to cut jobs and lower wages. (philip.jennings@uniglobalunion.org)

Union alliances for UNI-Americas Electricity

UNI-Americas Electricity is launching union alliances in four key multinationals in the region following a series of Electricity meetings in Mar del Plata, Argentina. The target companies are Endessa and Iberdola (both Spanish based), Hydro Quebec of Canada and AES Corporation of the USA. The aim is to sign global agreements with these companies to ensure work and union rights wherever they operate. (fernando.mcmaster@uniglobalunion.org)

Unions for engineers to meet in Rio

The 4th World Conference for engineer and scientist organisations will take place on 21-23 May in Rio de Janeiro. It will be hosted by affiliate FISENGE, the Brazilian trade union for engineers. The conference will look at the place of professional associations in the 21st century and the role of engineers and scientists in a global economy. (gerd.rohde@uniglobalunion.org)

Deputy PM opens health and safety conference

The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, opened a conference to highlight the importance of health and safety in the service sector. The conference was co-sponsored by UNI-Asia Pacific, the Malaysian Institute for occupational safety and health and the ASEAN OSHNET Secretariat. More than 500 trade unionists attended along with 20 experts and practitioners from OSH Institutes in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Japan and the International Labour Organisation.

(uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)



Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister enters the Health and Safety conference in Kuala Lumpur

Declaration from unions and employers on temporary work

Unions in UNI-Europa and employers in Eurociett have agreed a joint declaration covering the growing Temporary Agency Work sector in Europe. The declaration affirms the positive role that agency work plays and re-affirms the balance between protection for agency workers and a positive role for agency work in the European labour market. It lays down equal treatment, access to vocational training, social dialogue and continuity of rights. The declaration is a contribution to the European Union's flexicurity debate. (bernadette.segol@uniglobalunion.org)

Big step forward in Nepal

The ten-month peace process in Nepal has achieved a major breakthrough with a new council of ministers that includes five from the Maoist rebel group. Popular protests including a strong trade union presence ended the autocratic rule of the King and led to talks with the Maoists. Polls are due on June 20 with the abolition of the monarchy promised if the king interferes in the ballot process. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Zimbabwe protests as crisis deepens

Unions from around the world condemned the latest repression in Zimbabwe where opposition leaders were arrested and many of them badly beaten for attending a peaceful prayer gathering. One man was shot dead. In Southern Africa unions urged governments in the region to use their influence to halt the deepening political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The ILO's Governing Body has called on the Zimbabwe government to drop charges against trade unionists and to set up an independent inquiry into the organised disruption of the central trade union. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Re-launch for Social Insurance in Americas

During the UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Mar del Plata affiliates in UNI's Social Insurance sector came together to discuss the re-launch of the sector in the region. Five unions outlined the challenges they face. It was agreed to compare situations, to set up a regional network and consider an action plan. (alke.boessiger@uniglobalunion.org)

Barclays look at ABN-Amro

The news that UK-based Barclays Bank is in preliminary discussions to buy Dutch bank ABN-Amro sparked speculation of rival buyers and predictions of a wave of super mergers across financial borders in Europe. Unions are closely monitoring the situation. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Global agreement message for top HR executives

Global agreements for global companies was the message UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings took to the Miami summit of the US's Association of Senior Human Resource Executives. He attacked rampant union busting in the USA where nine out of ten organising campaigns meet strong employer opposition and Wal-Mart for its anti-union efforts. He backed the Employee Free Choice Act that would streamline union recognition. (philip.jennings@uniglobalunion.org)

Workshop looks at migrants' rights

UNI-Asia Pacific was involved in a one-day workshop in Kuala Lumpur on 28 March to look at protection for ASEAN migrant workers and build collaboration between unions and NGOs. Also involved was the Task Force for the Protection ASEAN Migrant Workers. The meeting welcomed ASEAN's declaration on the protection and promotions of the rights of migrant workers, adopted in Cebu, Philippines, in January. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

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Austria's communications union at launch of "No Violence" stamp

No Violence stamp in Austria

An initiative by Austrian unions has led to a "Stop Violence to Women" postage stamp that was launched on International Women's Day. Statistics show that in Austria one woman in five is a victim of violence at least once in her life - in 95% of cases the perpetrator is a man from her close social environment. "The Austrian Post Office, in coordination with the Post and Telecommunication Workers Union, has given priority to the campaign against the causes of violence and in favour of respect for the lives of women," says the official release. (monique.marti@uniglobalunion.org)

Employers lobby to frustrate labour law changes in China

There is growing union concern at the work of western employer groups in watering down planned labour law changes in China. Aggressive lobbying is underway as China looks at reforms to its labour laws. The American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, which represents the big multinationals active in China, has already forced significant changes in contract, collective bargaining, severance and other rights guaranteed for Chinese workers under a law due to be voted on later this year by the Chinese National People's Congress.

UNITES involved in back office survey

UNITES India is collaborating in research on call centres being carried out by Scotland's Strathclyde University Business School and the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad. UNITES was launched by UNI to organise workers in call and back office centres, including off-shored operations from western multinationals. The aim of the research is to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of BPO professionals. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Governing Body welcomes Burma accord

The Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation has welcomed the understanding reached with the government of Burma (Myanmar) to help the victims of forced labour. The accord provides a mechanism for victims to seek redress without having to fear reprisals. Implementation has already begun and action has been taken in cases involving forced labour, says the ILO. (ilo.org)

International protests at Lidl's methods

Unions have accused German-based multinational heavy discounter Lidl of serious labour rights violations in several European countries. Affiliate ver.di urged the German government to intervene to ensure that Works Councils are set up in Lidl stores. Protests were held in Croatia, France, Italy and Romania - with some demonstrations covering joint border areas. UNI Commerce wants Lidl to live up to the BSCI code that the company has signed up to. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

EWCs worry employers

Unions - through European Works Councils - are pressing their rights to be consulted over major economic changes and it's worrying employers. This is one of the conclusions to emerge from a survey by employer friendly consultants, the European Work Group. Having failed to persuade the European Commission to extend the rights of the EWCs unions stand accused of trying to make the existing rules work more effectively to "actively challenge multinationals' behaviour and decisions". The consultancy is a bit late waking up to the role of EWCs, says UNI Finance's Oliver Roethig. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Thai unions make constitutional proposals

Thai affiliates and other unions have submitted their own suggestions for a new constitution that is expected to follow the return of the country to civilian rule. They include a commitment to encourage democracy and participation at work, to equal opportunities and access to education - and the rights of workers to meet and to organise. Enterprises important to national security should not be privatised. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Anti-violence spotlight

UNI-Americas Women are stepping up their campaign to stop violence against women. "Stop violence" wristbands were given to the 500 delegates, observers and visitors to the UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Argentina and the issue will be a key theme at next year's UNI-Americas Women's Conference. The Women's Committee also discussed a campaign to reverse the widening wealth gap in the Americas. (monique.marti@uniglobalunion.org)

Organising in Quebecor points the way

There was loud applause at the UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina when one of UNI's youngest affiliates presented its recently concluded agreement with print giant Quebecor in Peru. Only six months old Peruvian Quebecor union FGP is just one a number of organising successes generated by the on-going campaign to win a global agreement with the company. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)



Presenting Quebecor agreement in Peru:
Adriana Rosenzvaig, Alberto Valdivia
and Leonardo del Roy

Organising freelances in Spain

Freelances and the self-employed should join unions - that was the message that UNI's Gerhard Rohde took to a conference in Seville, Spain for Freelances. In Spain unions started to organise Freelances eight years ago and today there is a special organisation, UPTA - which organises a broad range of self-employed from truck drivers to consultants. UPTA General Secretary SR Fernandez called for links with similar organisations in other parts of Europe. (gerd.rohde@uniglobalunion.org)

Court delays Vodacom strike in South Africa

A strike by communications affiliate CWU in South Africa was halted by court intervention and hearings have dragged on. The CWU is seeking recognition at Vodacom (which is partly owned by Vodafone) and has recruited 1200 of the company's 4500 employees. UNI has urged the company to drop its anti-union activities and recognise the CWU. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org).

Union members no third party in Verizon

US telecom giant Verizon has come out in opposition to the Employee Free Choice Act that offers fairer routes to union recognition and which has passed through the House of Representatives. Affiliate CWA has demanded an apology from the company - that employs 97,000 union members - for calling the union a "third party". 60% of Verizon Business technicians have signed cards petitioning for recognition, as verified in card counts by elected officials in New York and Massachusetts - the streamlined method for determining representation supported in the Act. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

Americas backs calls to Wake Up Wal-Mart

The UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina approved a motion to "Wake Up Wal-Mart", the world's biggest retailer. Delegates backed workers trying to form unions at Wal-Mart stores wherever the fast expanding company operates in the Americas. In the USA affiliate UFCW has taken the campaign in Wal-Mart to communities. In Argentina and Brazil stores are organised. "They will get away with working non-union wherever they can," warned the UFCW's Sarah Meyer. (uni-americas@uniglobalunion.org)

Social partner role in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dr Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the High Representative and European Union Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, has urged social partners to play an increasingly important role in the country's reconstruction process as the international community scales down its presence. Commerce sector unions and employers could play a key role as this is the most genuinely privatised industry. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

Protests at pension changes at WH Smith

Britain's biggest union Amicus/T&G is planning a series of protests at moves by book and video retailer WH Smith to cut back its pension scheme. The company is one of many in the UK closing entry to pension schemes that give clearly defined pensions based on service and salary levels and replacing them with money purchase schemes that leave pensions at the whim of stock markets. (amicustheunion.org)

Daily challenges on equality in Mar del Plata

Humour was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Argentine Women's Network to get across the equality message at the UNI-Americas Conference in Mar del Plata. A woman (actually a blonde mannequin) in the hombre's toilet was just one surprise sprung by the Network along with stickers proclaiming that the men's loo is the only place the women of the Americas don't want to share. Other stickers, leaflets and door handle messages put across the equality theme in a continent where women only occupy 24% of managerial and executive places.

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Delegates listening at the UNI-Americas conference in Argentina

Solidarity includes rights of migrant workers

Unions in the United States are reaching out to the growing number of migrant workers - many of them without legal papers and most of them from across the global wealth divide in Latin America. The offer of union membership and links to help centres for casual workers were spotlighted by NALC's Jim Sauber in a presentation to the Solidarity debate at the UNI-Americas Regional Conference in Mar del Plata, Argentina. "Migrant workers are a source of strength for the trade union movement," said Jim.

(jim.sauber@uniglobalunion.org)

Growing youth space in the Americas

Unions in the Americas are being urged to involve more young members in their activities and decision-making - and to give them space to develop their own distinctive contribution to the development of the union movement. More than 50 young trade unionists attended a three-day seminar in Mar del Plata, Argentina on the eve of the UNI-Americas Regional Conference. (marcio.monzane@uniglobalunion.org)

Shoprite the focus of Swaziland mission

A mission visited Swaziland on 26 February and held discussions with UNI affiliates and the representative of multinational retailer Shoprite Checkers. It included UNI, UNI-Africa, South African affiliate SACCAWU, LO-TCO and SASK Africa. SACCAWU offered assistance to its Swaziland counter part SCAWU in securing agreements with Shoprite. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Recognition claims in UK telecoms

UNI communications affiliate the CWU has launched a recognition claim for all Cable & Wireless Field Services workers (except managers). The union has more than 50% membership among the group and is therefore entitled to recognition under UK labour laws for collective bargaining. Meanwhile Connect has applied to a government panel for recognition rights for 200 workers at Vodafone following the failure of negotiations. Vodafone currently recognises no unions on its UK home base. (cwu.org.uk and connectuk.org)

Financial education for customers

The European Commission organised a conference on Increasing Financial Capability to spotlight the need for high-quality financial education for consumers. The meeting also looked at best practices. The union perspective was given by Per Karlberg from the Nordic federation of finance unions NFU, who was invited by the Commission. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Polish security company spotlighted in Ireland

Irish affiliate SIPTU is raising with Allied Irish Banks the poor pay and working conditions of employees of a Polish security firm that provides services to Bank Zachodni WBK - 80% owned by AIB. This follows an approach from Polish affiliate Solidarnosc over the security company Solid Security, which has sacked 21 guards in Poland for joining a union since January this year. (christy.hoffman@uniglobalunion.org)

Network of commerce activists in southern Africa

UNI-Africa Commerce has carried out an assessment of an organising, campaigning and bargaining project in Southern Africa. The assessment brought together negotiators and shop stewards in multinationals operating in Southern Africa and launched a network to exchange information, experiences, news and to assist negotiations with their employers. Backing for the project came from LO-TCO, UNI, UNI-Africa and South African commerce affiliate SACCAWU. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

Immolation protest over free trade talks

A Korean trade unionist attempted to burn himself to death in protest at talks between the United States and Korea over a Free Trade Agreement. 54-year-old Heo Se-Wook is a taxi driver and a member of UNI affiliate KFPTU, which covers transport, public and social services. He suffered serious, third degree burns after setting himself on fire near the Hyatt Hotel in Seoul and was taken to hospital. 5,000 people took part in a candlelight demonstration in downtown Seoul to protest at the talks. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

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Global unions for global industries

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Austrian stamps carry "No violence to women" message

Above:
UNI-Américas delegates march through Mar del Plata
UNI-Américas staff

Below:
New UNI-Américas President Ruben Cortina of FAECYS Argentina



Signing a recognition agreement between Group 4 Securicor Uganda and affiliate ATGWU

Below: protest in Iraq by street vendors and their supporters



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