



Open letter to Barack Obama

Trade union centrals hand in letter to the president Barack Obama

Ricardo Patah, president of UGT, and presidents of other trade union centrals (Força Sindical, CUT, CTB, CGTB and Nova Central) handed an open letter to Barack Obama, president of the United States, during a lunch at Itamaraty, in Brasília, on March 19.

Among the issues that were discussed in the letter, are the commercial relationships between the two countries - in which the trade union centrals criticize the "unfair barriers to the entrance of Brazilian products in the USA" - and the solidarity to the public servants of the state of Wisconsin, that currently are making protests against restriction measures of union activities.



The document emphasizes the unbalance in the commercial relationship between Brazil and the United States. "Brazil holds a growing commercial deficit with the USA, that went from US\$ 4,4 billion in 2009 to US\$ 7,7 billion in 2010, a 75% raise. Such situation is a result, among other reasons, of a forced depreciation of the American dollar and an imposition of unfair barriers in the US to Brazilian products, especially ethanol, steel products, tobacco and orange juice".

"We demand the prompt removal of all commercial barriers against such products, what would, at a short term, reposition the commerce between our countries in more just levels, making the commercial balance to reach for a balance", the union centrals demand.

"Brazilian unionists express "their solidarity to public servants from Wisconsin and other States and to American unions in the fight against the restriction measures towards union activities and collective bargains approved by local parliaments" and ask for "respect towards the decrees of ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention 151 that, although not ratified by USA, is a world reference and an important guarantee to the rights of public servants for their full freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom of expression and manifestation".

And they make a plea for peace and for concordance - "we join forces with women and men that, all over the world, profess an international policy of peace, of human rights, of disarmament, of non-intervention, of self-determination and sovereignty of countries and people". And they end claiming "the end of the economic embargo against Cuba, measure that imposes huge suffering and privation to the people of that Caribbean island".

Negotiation Forum with trade union centrals

Leaderships from UGT and the main trade union centrals of Brazil had their first meeting with the president Dilma Rousseff.



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Despite the tensions caused in the battle with the government concerning the minimum wage (which was established in R\$ 545 last month), the president of UGT, Ricardo Patah, considered the meeting an "excellent" one, since it made possible to create bonds with representatives along with the Federal power.

Government will adjust IRS chart in 4,5%

The main item negotiated in the agenda was the agenda of the IRS chart. Unionists ask for 6,47% - accumulated inflation of 2010. However, the government established a 4,5% level and unofficially announced that will use this percentage this year.

UGT hopes that, next week, during the official announcement, a higher increase would come. "The president explained to us that the percentage is established based on projections of a future inflation. We asked that a policy identical to the corrections such as the valorization of the minimum wage should be adopted. But we hope that there is a gesture from the president to consider the inflation of last year. I think it will surprise us the next days and offer a higher percentage", said Patah. He said that Dilma was "touched" by this subject and that she will use this occasion to bring up this issue along with her economic staff.

Topic of the next meeting will be Brazil's deindustrialization

Another item reinforced in the agenda by trade union centrals and the president Dilma Rousseff at the meeting was the deindustrialization of Brazil. The first "forum" among the parts, that will take place within a month, will have the purpose of debating this issue. The government proposed to present, on this date, economic policies that favor the national industry. The goal is a counterpart to the increase in the competition of imported products.

"We had a Chinese December. From December to the Carnival, 40% of the sales were Chinese baubles", complained Patah, from UGT.

The president Dilma Rousseff recognized, while making a comment on the relationship of Brazil with China, that Brazil imports "a lot of junk" and basically exports commodities.

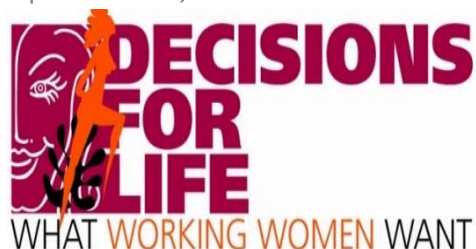
Another reason for commercial unbalances is the strong valorization of the real compared to the American dollar. The president made sure to emphasize to the unionists that the government is on the alert and listed the measures adopted to restrain the fall of the American currency.

Investments in education were emphasized by Dilma and supported by Patah. They would be a way to stimulate the development of a niche to compete with the Asians, that act in several areas. Among them, auto parts, textiles and commerce.

Young workers: Decisions for Life

The campaign "Decisions for life" aims towards young women (with ages that range from 15 to 29 years old) that work or are looking for a job, in eight large professional groups of the service sectors. The campaign is part of a larger campaign from the **International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)**, "Decent Work, Decent Life for Women", and was conceived to help meeting the MDG (Millennium Development Goal) number 3: "Promote gender equality and empower women".

The campaign "Decisions for Life" takes place in 14 developing countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and CIS. **ITUC** is in charge for the global management, in a partnership with UNI Global Union, the WageIndicator Foundation and with the Amsterdam University.



The Brazilian campaign is led by a coalition of six trade union confederations (**UGT**, CUT, Força Sindical, CTB, CGTB and NCST), that also exceeded the expected goals. DIEESE, Inter-union department of Statistics and Studies, was hoping to reach 500 women in call centers. After a year since the campaign had been launched, it had reached 2209 women in these centers and as for cashiers and workers of that sector, the goals were widely surpassed.

At the end of the campaign (June 2011), the method and the best practices from the Decisions for Life campaign will be integrated into policies, programs and activities concerning gender issues of ITUC.

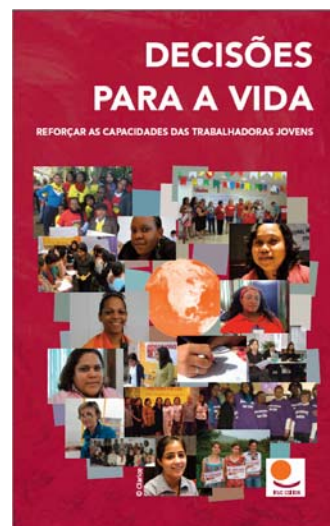
The campaign Decisions for Life aims to reinforce the capacity of young people to make decisions, providing them the information they need and showing that they do have options. It's about the help that women can give each other in a structured way, through a union movement, and it tries to:

- organize young women
- develop their ability to lead and negotiate
- place more women in positions of decision
- help women to negotiate more specific gender clauses in collective bargaining
- help women to impose changes in the laws of their countries, such as the ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions, including Convention No 183, concerning maternity protection
- to give confidence to women in order for them to be able to look for better job opportunities

A preliminary overview

It reached over 90.000 women, out of which 30% have joined the union movement. This campaign has a strong potential to multiply this number. A significant raise in the number of young women who joined unions in Brazil (5.000) and in Indonesia (15.000) might be observed.

Gender-related clauses in collective agreements have also increased: in Brazil, 50 new collective agreements containing gender-related clauses are being negotiated; South Africa has 5 new collective agreements that include clauses on sexual harassment and parental rights; in Indonesia, gender-related clauses were negotiated concerning wage equality and maternity leave in two plants of food products, that include 1.200 women.



World Consumer Day

The deputy **Roberto Santiago**, vice-president of UGT, made comments on the World Consumer Day, after defending consumers at the chamber.



The Federal Deputy Roberto Santiago (PV party-SP) has assumed, a week prior to Carnival, the presidency of the Committee of Defense of the Consumer at the Chamber. Santiago is one of the founders and vice-president of UGT and explains that the economic growth created new actors who have access to credit, a range of consumers who significantly raised the number of leading actors that stimulate the economy. And that is why it is essential to set boundaries for the adjustment of this dynamics.

"Economy is a living being and consumers are more aware of their rights. This will be my fundamental role at the Consumer Rights Committee", he advances.

Among the issues that will be taken to the Congress this year, we may find the creation of a committee of jurists, created by José Sarney, president of the Senate, to update the Code of the Consumer Rights mainly concerning the credit, the overleveraging and the electronic commerce.

Solidarity with Japan

UGT sympathizes with the tragedy of the Japanese people and receives their gratitude UGT, from Brazil, shows its solidarity with the Japanese people concerning the tragedy that struck that country. It is appalled by its tragedy and shows its unrestricted solidarity by being at the disposal of Rengo - Japanese Trade Union Confederation, aiming to support the Japanese workers and people.

Nobuaki Koga, president of Rengo, answered and thanked: "We were extremely encouraged by the warming messages and offers of donations received by our brothers from international union organizations."

"We went through an unprecedented situation of devastation and I fear that it will take us a long time to get back on our feet. It's still not clear what will be the damages in the affected areas and we are still gathering information. In the meantime, the death or disappearance of over 10 thousand people was confirmed."

Spanish unionists visit UGT

The Spanish union leaders Manuel Zaguirre (Manolo), director of Sotermun, and Javier de Vicente, secretary of USO (Union Sindical Obrera) International Relationships Department, accompanied by Laerte Teixeira da Costa, vice-president of UGT, visited, on March 02, the head office of UGT, where they were received by the president Ricardo Patah and other directors from this institution.



The unemployment crisis that affects nearly 4,8 million workers in Spain was one of the topics that the Spanish leaders went through. "The labor situation is terrible and it affects mainly the young population. Nearly 41% of the young people are unemployed", informed Javier de Vicente.

"The General Union of Workers (UGT) reaffirms its historic commitments to the working class, while seeking to expand its methods of action, with ethics, courage and the certainty that Brazil can be better and more just. " Ricardo Patah – UGT's President
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