Speech Jaap Wienen, Deputy general secretary ITUC at DISK Congress 12 February 2016, Istanbul, Turkey.

Dear friends, leaders and members of DISK!

I am standing here with mixed feelings.

A Congress is always the ultimate expression of our trade union democracy and gives you the opportunity to express yourself in a free way, to define your policy and make it public, and to elect your own leaders.

But today in Turkey , all these standards of free and independent trade union work, are no longer guaranteed!

Your Government is using terrorism as an excuse to limit the freedom of speech, the freedom of trade union meetings and demonstrations , and the freedom of press.

Of course this reminds all of us to the black pages in your history , the period of dictatorship in your country, a period that should never, never return!

Trade unions will never accept a limitation of their fundamental rights, the right to organise, the right to collective bargaining as instrument to defend the rights of your members.

A Government that limits the rights of workers undermines democratic rights and violates international labour standards.

DISK can always count on the solidarity and support of the International Trade Union Confederation and its 180 million members in more than 160 countries all over the world.

Together we will continue to raise our voices against all attacks against democracy, against injustice and against inequality.

In your history you were confronted with many restrictions, arrests and even killings of DISK leaders and DISK members.

This history should never be repeated.

A free and independent trade union as yours, has the right to represent its members to negotiate with employers and with authorities and if needed has the right to demonstrate and to go on strike.

These rights do not depend on generosity of Governments, these rights are fundamental rights , based on international and ratified Conventions!

Intimidation and violation by authorities to block trade union events and peaceful demonstrations as your 1st May demonstration on the Taksim square, shows the weakness of the Government.

The authorities are showing fear- Fear for what? Fear for terrorism?

Or fear for an open democratic society in which people are free to met, free to express themselves- or is it perhaps a fear to lose control, to lose political power?

Choosing for repression and limitation of fundamental rights is a wrong choice, and will lead to a society in which Turkish citizens feel insecure and not respected in their fundamental rights!

It’s a Governments primary responsibility to safeguard the lives and integrity of all its citizens- and if trade unionists are killed while they are defending workers’ rights, as happened too often in your country, it is clear that the Turkish Government fails to protect its citizens, its workers against these crimes.

A real answer of a government against violence and terrorism is not the limitation of peoples freedom or democratic rights!

A real answer must be focused on the inclusion of all parts of the population, in work, in education, in health care.

Trust of the citizens in their Governments starts with respect of the authorities for ALL citizens, without any distinction by their race, their religion, their political background or other differences.

The magic word my dear friends is : RESPECT! And unfortunately the Turkish Government shows a permanent lack of respect for Turkish workers and their free and independent unio

A few days ago I participated in the very impressive commemoration odf the massacre of Ankara, that took place on 10 October 2015 and in which more than 100 people were killed and hundreds of others were injured.

You and we , will never forget the victims of this barbaric attack and we must ensure that the relatives of the friends that were killed and the injured, will never feel alone.

They have the right to know the truth, the full truth why a peaceful demonstration was attacked in such a brutal way!

It is heart warming to see how your Crisis Desk, and all volunteers among you have provided material and mental assistance to the victims and their relatives.

It shows your dedication, your capacity, but above all your Solidarity.

You will need that solidarity more than ever.

Solidarity against repression, but also solidarity against injustice and against inequality in the Turkish labour relations.

The minimum wages in this country do not allow workers and their families to have a decent life. A minimum wage based on a “ hunger line” or a “ poverty line” is shameful for a Government that promised to take care of its workers..

The ITUC stands fully behind you in your struggle for jobs, for the dignity of work, to meet employment targets for women and for youth, and to reduce the inequality in social protection, and to increase the minimum wages in this country to a level that provides workers and their families to a decent life.

DISK stands for Solidarity- you are one family in which members of the family are taking care , are protecting and supporting each other.

No one, no one, no Government, no employer, no terrorist, can take away that great asset, that friendship and solidarity between you!

The independent and free trade union DISK has a great future: you are a home, a shelter for all those millions of Turkish workers that feel non respected today, that live in poverty and are facing injustice and inequality.

And DISK, you members and leaders of DISK, as respected affiliate of the Global trade union ITUC can always count on the support of 180 million other friends from all over the world.

You are not alone, the power of workers will protect you, today, tomorrow , forever!!

I wish you a peaceful and inspiring Congress!

JW, Brussels 8/02/16