

9 March 2007. For immediate release

Rail workers put the case for 'safety first'

Railway workers worldwide will mobilise on Tuesday 13 March to persuade passengers and politicians to put safety first on railways everywhere and back them as a leading form of sustainable and affordable transport. A special event, the ITF railway action day, will give them the opportunity to do this as part of an international effort.

Now in its eighth year the action day attracts hundreds of thousands of participants in over 60 countries, who use it to organise activities such as station cleanups, stoppages, demonstrations, leafleting of passengers, and station visits for schoolchildren. Information on what's going on where, plus logos and posters, can be found at www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/SafetyFirst2007.cfm. This will be updated before, during and after the day.

Mac Urata, Secretary of the ITF's Inland Transport Section, commented: "It seems unbelievable but keeping railways safe and affordable is too often a constant struggle in a world where their undoubted environmental and social benefits are undermined by privatisation, cost cutting and restructuring. Today is our chance to back rail as an indispensable transport mode, and to back all those who want to keep and improve it."

These are some of the events planned for this year's rail action day (taken from www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/campaigns-1588.cfm, where there are also live links to publicity materials such as leaflets produced by the unions for these activities):

Europe

European railway workers' unions including **CGSP** in Belgium and **CGT Cheminots** in France will meet at the Courtrai railway station in Belgium on 13 March. They are planning to meet with the local attorney to ensure that adequate measures will be put in place to protect railway workers and passengers against violence.

The **Railroad Engineer Trade Union of Croatia** will use the day to target railway passengers and the Government, in particular the Ministry of Transport. By displaying adverts on trains and locomotives and distributing a leaflet to passengers, the union aims to raise awareness about the union and the ITF. The union will also hold a press conference.

In France, the **Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA Transports)** will focus their activities around the campaign slogan 'Safety First!'. According to the union, since the introduction of railway competition in the country in March 2006, railway safety systems have been destabilised

For more information contact ITF press officer, **Sam Dawson**, direct line: + 44 (0)20 7940 9260. E-mail: dawson_sam@itf.org.uk

and weakened. The union will target workers in the railway companies where it has members and on 13 March plans to meet with railway workers in the yards and distribute campaign materials. Campaign activities will be coordinated with other ITF unions, in particular at SNCF and the union aims to produce a joint leaflet with other ITF French affiliates.

TRANSNET in Germany is asking all works councils and staff representatives to discuss the action day at workplace meetings in March. The union has distributed leaflets which highlight possible topics for discussion. These include rail safety and whether the issue has been dealt with sufficiently in training courses; health and safety at work and what improvements are needed; the impact of restructuring/sell-offs on safety; protection against violence at work; and security against possible terror attacks. Transnet is also encouraging its members to use the results, queries and concrete demands raised from the meetings to enter into dialogue with employers.

Following the derailment at Grayrigg, Cumbria on 23 February, the **RMT** in Great Britain has called for a full public inquiry into the event. On the action day, the union will ask all branches and as many members as possible to write to their Members of Parliament asking that they sign a parliamentary motion tabled by the union in support of an inquiry. Branches will also be asked to lobby their MPs to support a motion opposing the privatisation of the East London Line on the London Underground.

ASLEF in Great Britain will use the ITF Action Day to highlight its 'SQUASH in the Cab' campaign to improve members' working conditions within drivers' cabs. Members of the union will visit Paddington and St Pancras Railway Stations in London on 13 March in order to highlight campaign issues to the traveling public.

In Luxembourg, **FNCTTFEL** plans to hold its activities for the Action Day on Thursday 8 March together with the unions in neighbouring countries.

In Serbia, the **Trade Union of Railwaymen** will hold a conference with members of the employers and inspectors on safety at work. Demonstrations will be held at the key railway stations in Serbia. The union is also planning a border meeting with their railway colleagues from Hungary and Romania. Meetings with workers and distribution of campaign information and materials at stations will form part of the programme of activities being organised by **ELA-Hainbat** for the Action Day in Spain.

SEV, Switzerland will organise a common action with their Italian colleagues **FILT-CGIL** on the Saint-Gotthard axis, at the border between Switzerland and Italy. The two unions are organising a common press conference which will highlight security in rail passenger transport, train manning on rail sections with tunnels of more than 1,000 metres, and certification of train crews in international transport.

Africa

The **Kenya Railway Workers' Union** is planning to organise clean-up exercises in the workshops, stations, offices and yards for its members at the Rift Valley Railways and Kenya Railways. The union is also planning a small demonstration to highlight Rift Valley Railways workers' terms and conditions of service.

Asia / Pacific

AIRF's affiliated unions are being instructed to observe the action day across the Indian Railways by organising seminars, meetings, rallies and processions against the government's anti-labour policies.

SRUT in Thailand will target the railway passengers and general public. In the morning of 13 March, the union will organise a culture ceremony at the State Railway of Thailand Headquarters. This will be followed by a demonstration from the Headquarters to the main Bangkok train station. At the station, various activities will be organised in the afternoon in order to highlight the important role the railways play. Activities are also planned in other regions of Thailand, including in Pitsanulok Province (in the Northern Region), in Nakornratchasima Province (in the North Eastern Region), and in Nakornsithammarat Province (in the Southern Region). The union will also organise an exhibition

on the history of the State Railways, the process of privatisation, and about the daily tasks of railway workers.

In Japan, **Kokuro**'s regional branches will produce their leaflets and distribute them in their respective cities.

JR-Rengo will be leafleting in major railway stations across Japan with an ITF Safety First! message, where they will appeal to the public that safety and the environment are the union's priorities.

The Americas

The **CAW** in Canada will use the day to highlight rail safety issues. On 13 March, representatives from the union's rail Locals (branches) will hold the first of a planned series of meetings with the Transport Canada - Rail Safety Directorate to raise issues on derailments, shipping dangerous commodities, train safety inspection issues and general rail safety. On 4 April, the union will meet with the Railway Association of Canada (RAC) to ensure that the RAC proposed changes to the Canadian Rail Operating Rules (CROR) are not compromised.

La Fraternidad in Argentina has invited fellow unions in the railway sector to a meeting in order to work out a joint programme for the action day. The union will focus its aims on the users and railway companies who the union stresses must invest in the system in order to adequately maintain the infrastructure and rolling stock to improve safety. The action day coincides with the Mercosur Transport Day in the region and so road transport unions are also invited to attend activities. In addition to organising demonstrations in the railway terminals, activity will also be organised at the Argentina-Paraguay-Brazil border points and the Brazil-Argentina border point in Uruguay. In Costa Rica, **UNATROPYT** will use the Action Day to raise awareness with the Executive Authority of the importance of railway transport on a worldwide level. There is currently a limited rail service in the country.

ENDS