



ReI UITA

Editorial

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We need to rethink the world and trade union action

Dear fellow unionists,

We are learning to deal with a situation that nobody was prepared for, fighting an invisible enemy that is no more deadly than other viruses but is characterized by the speed and ease with which it spreads.

The pandemic forces us to reflect on the present and rethink the future. One thing is clear: we cannot go on as we have done until now. We need to change production, distribution, and consumption models, otherwise we will overcome this pandemic only to fall right back into another one, because we need to understand that the planet is sick.

Under these circumstances, trade unions are helping millions of workers, providing legal advice, and reporting abuses committed by employers and governments who take advantage of the situation to slash benefits, alter the rules of the game, and reduce the workforce, while they put more pressure on the workers who are still employed and increase their workload.

In **Argentina**, labor organizations have put up their hospitals, recreational centers, and sports facilities for healthcare coverage purposes.

Thousands of beds in social tourism hotels owned by unions have been made available already for people who arrived and are still arriving from abroad and need to be quarantined, regardless of whether they are union members or not. The solidarity of the labor movement is expressed today in these actions that go beyond the daily issues that trade unions deal with in the course of their regular activities in the workplace.

The coronavirus has laid bare that for neoliberalism the economy is worth more than people's health. The virus thrives when the necessary measures are not implemented in time and the healthcare system is not efficient, public, and universal.

In our continent, sadly, we have a trio of lunatics formed by **Donald Trump**, **Andrés Manuel López Obrador**, and **Jair Bolsonaro**, who in the **United States**, **Mexico**, and **Brazil**, respectively, are carrying out irresponsible policies, endangering the lives of millions of people.

Meanwhile, thousands of healthcare workers are putting their lives on the line. Millions of workers in agriculture and the food industry also risk their lives, **in conditions that were already very complicated and unsafe before the coronavirus outbreak.**

In the hotel, restaurant, and tourism sector, millions of people have lost their jobs. In **Argentina** alone an estimated 500,000 jobs are threatened.

Saving the planet

Today the pandemic is paralyzing the global economy, and as it is suffering less contamination, the planet is healthier. While human beings are quarantined, we are seeing animals returning to cities, rivers, and oceans. It is ironic and symptomatic that what should be the product of public policies aimed at

protecting and defending the environment is happening instead as a result of a catastrophe.

For decades, **UTHGRA** has been speaking out in international forums about the need to generate sustainable tourism, to safeguard the resources that belong to future generations, but I am certain that we were not understood, perhaps because it is believed that trade unions should only concern themselves with wages and working conditions.

In its hotels, **UTHGRA** implements a clearly defined environmental sustainability policy, and that is an important part of our union work. We take care of natural resources, promote organic vegetable gardens, and engage local producers, among other initiatives.

To give just one element for reflection: our hotel in Los Cocos, in the province of Córdoba, had a daily consumption of 325,000 liters of water in high season. Today, with all the changes we have made, we brought consumption down to no more than 60,000 liters a day, and we have obtained more than considerable results in energy saving.

We therefore know that substantial changes can be made in models of production and services, because we have made them and we will continue introducing further changes. Of course, we are not the only ones. Many others have taken up sustainability as their goal, as the ethics that guides them. But there are still not enough of us.

It is vital that labor organizations in our region, and in the world, assume a more active role in this matter.

We will not be able to change the course of the current systems on our own. We are hearing louder than ever the call of solidarity, of coming together, of collective reflection and struggles, of proposals capable of summoning the great majorities to give the future a chance.

Organized, with new ideas and strategies, and together with the people we will find the paths toward the changes we need.

We will move forward with rebelliousness, courage, and new proposals.

Yours in fraternal and union solidarity,

Norberto Latorre
President of Rel-UITA / IUF Latin America