



# African trade union **roundup**

*This is a new column intending to provide brief news items on the significant stories on workers and trade unions in Africa.*

## Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has called on the Zimbabwe government to take responsibility for the economic crisis facing the country, and to stop blaming others. It challenged government to restore good governance, restore relations with its development partners (including the trade union movement) and to 'lift the nation out of the current economic morass'. Privatisation and commercialisation should also be put on hold. This emerged following a policy workshop on collective bargaining held on 15 July 2002.

## Namibia

A wage dispute between the Namibian government and the Namibia Public Workers Union (Napwu) and the Namibia Teachers' Union (Nantu) is looming. The unions are demanding increases of up to 25% while government has not budgeted for any wage increase for civil servants for 2002-2003.

## Zambia

Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) president Fackson Shamenda has called for quick investigation, arrest and prosecution of all those suspected of having plundered public resources. He cautioned that President Mwanawasa should not be worshipped over his actions against former President Chiluba, as democratic forces had been pointing out the

corrupt practices of Chiluba and his followers in government for some time. Mwanawasa should, however, be encouraged to continue, 'doing the right thing'.

## Congo (DRC)

Mineworkers at DRC's giant mining company Gecamines went on a three-week strike in May to demand payment of 19 months wage arrears. The company would not budge and is now threatening to fire 10 000 mine workers. Their union has repeatedly alleged that the signing of corrupt contracts with government officials has caused the current financial crisis of the company.

## Mozambique

Five hundred sugar cane cutters belonging to the Sugar Workers Union (SINTIA) went on a wildcat strike at the Maragra sugar plantation. They were protesting against errors in their wage calculations. Workers returned to work after the company acknowledged it had made errors and undertook to rectify these. However, the company has insisted that deductions be made from the workers' pay to cover the cost of damages to equipment during the strike. The union is contesting this. The cane cutters, who are seasonal workers, are paid about US\$1,5 (less than R20) for every six tonnes of cane cut.

## Kenya

Kenya Railways Corporation

retrenched 2 000 workers early this year as part of its restructuring programme. The retrenched workers were evicted from their railway owned homes. It has now announced a further round of retrenchments.

## Ghana

About 500 Nestlè workers went on a wage strike in Tema, Ghana, in July.

Also in Tema, workers at the PSC Shipyard went on strike to protest the government's ongoing contract with a Malaysian company, which now owns 60% shares in the previously state-owned dry-dock. The union has accused the Malaysians of running down the dry-dock over the past six years and having not paid the full value of the shares bought in the operations. The strikers rejected a management proposal to put in place an interim management committee, which would include two Ghanaians. The strike had not been settled at the time of going to press.

## Nigeria

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) suspended its one day nationwide warning strike scheduled for 10 July after the Federal Government agreed to establish a national negotiating forum to negotiate wage increases in minimum wages.

*The Bulletin hopes to expand this column to include a roundup of the rest of the world. Readers - please submit any short stories of interest that you may be aware of.*