

16th National Congress of Delegates - selected resolutions and statements
Stalow Wola, 26-27 September 2003

Resolution of the National Congress of Delegates on international co-operation

In the nearest future the NSZZ “Solidarnosc” activities in the area of the international co-operation must take into consideration two crucial aspects: ongoing globalisation of the world economy and approaching enlargement of the European Union.

NSZZ “Solidarnosc” will participate in the actions of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), aimed at preparing the new strategy of the international trade union movement for democratisation of the world economy and restoring balance between the capital and the labour. The changes in the world economy substantially touch the action methods of trade union that must work out a new approach to the international trade union action and to undergo certain structural changes in order to face the challenge of globalisation. We took part in the first stage of the Millennium Debate organised by the ICFTU in order to prepare guidelines for the 21st century. In our opinion the first effects of this debate are insufficient, although they give some advice as for consolidation of the labour movement.

Our goal is to have an influence on multinational corporations, governments of the richest countries and international organisations.

It is not enough to work out a method of adapting trade union actions to the new circumstances in order to survive, we also have to find ways to influence the world economy, the structures of MNC's, governments of the G-7 countries, international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) or intergovernmental organisations, e.g. WTO or those groups of the decision-makers that steer the world economy without transparency and control. We are of the opinion that the second stage of the Millennium Debate should be two-fold and concentrate on structural strengthening of the national and international trade unions on one hand, and on the other hand – on the strategy of optimal use of the organised labour force for changing the disadvantageous balance of power and including the trade union movement into the process of the global decision-making and, in consequence, to re-organise the structure of the world economy.

We will join the action of putting pressure of governments, mostly through exerting pressure on Polish government, aimed at including the social dimension and ILO core labour standards into the WTO agenda. Similarly, we will demand the international financial institutions to uphold the principles of information, consultation and dialogue with the trade unions.

NSZZ “Solidarnosc” will strive for trade union unity in the world.

The rapprochement between the WCL and the ICFTU, achieved in 1998 with our active participation, we consider as insufficient. We repeat our opinion that joint action of independent, democratic and representative trade unions in one international confederation, with respect for rights and identity of every one of member organisation would allow avoiding unnecessary competition, dispersion of power and means and would increase the effectiveness of the international trade union action. Upholding the basic principles of the ideological declaration, fellowship of the values, democratic structures, transparency of procedures give sufficient guarantees for internal pluralism and respecting the aspirations of each member organisation of the united international organisation, similarly to the ICFTU and the WCL, to which “Solidarnosc” is affiliated since 1986. We appeal to both confederations not to erect artificial barriers and strive for unity.

NSZZ “Solidarnosc” will still conduct campaign for strengthening creating and development of independent trade union movement world-wide. We will protest everywhere the workers' right to organise is not respected. We will stand up both to governments that conduct the policy of violating trade union and workers' rights and disrespect for the ILO standards, and to MNC taking advantage of such phenomena. We will also mobilise our friendly foreign trade unions for supporting solidarity actions in case trade union and workers' rights are in danger in Poland.

The Union will take advantage of experience of other trade unions.

In many areas of the trade union activities, organisations from abroad have long-term and rich experience. The trade union activists must take advantage of it in order to be better prepared for the nearest term of office.

NSZZ "Solidarnosc" subscribes to the idea of strengthening the European social model and democratisation of the Union institutions.

NSZZ "Solidarnosc" activities within the ETUC have special importance both in the light of upcoming enlargement and the work of the Convention that defined the future institutional and treaty shape of the EU. Through the ETUC and also through the government of Poland, we will demand following recommendations to be included and accepted by the inter-Governmental Conference:

- strengthening of the social dimension of the union based on common policy of employment, working conditions, social protection as a counter-balance to the Economic and Monetary Union,
- constitutional guarantees for common access of citizens to the services of general interest,
- the right to organise cross-border trade unions with the right to negotiate cross-border collective agreements,
- including in the Constitutional Treaty of the EU the social model based on the dialogue of the social partners, their right to information, consultation and co-deciding,
- including in the Constitutional Treaty of the EU the Basic Rights Charter in the way ensuring its provisions to be legally binding, possible for execution and supervision,
- democratisation of the Union institutions through strengthening of the role of representative bodies, better transparency of the decision-making and limitation of the unanimity principle to the constitutional matters e.g. adopting amendments, defining competency of the EU and limits of the aid principle, inter-institutional balance and EU enlargement.

NSZZ "Solidarnosc" is convinced that the EU is not only a treaty or constitutional commonwealth, but also a commonwealth of the spirit. We will work for an European identity based on common roots, heritage and values, among which the heritage of Christian tradition is the most valuable and the most respected in our country.

NSZZ "Solidarnosc" will mainly participate in the European social dialogue through the ETUC and European Trade Federations. Poland's accession to the EU will provide our Union with new instruments and paths of action towards the employers and the government on behalf of the workers' interest, but it also will create a challenge of preparing our structures and activists for effective use of these possibilities. After the accession our representatives will have the chance to fully participate with the right to vote in decision-making in the negotiations process on the European level, both in the phase of appointing the mandate of the negotiation teams, during the negotiations and in accepting or rejecting the results. Also the ETUC resolutions and statements referring to the European institutions will have stronger significance for us as they will refer to us directly, which will call for full engagement of our experts and activists in their creation in order to make their contents and effects serve best NSZZ "Solidarnosc".

The union will further prepare its activists to work within the European Works Councils. Presently activists of enterprise level participate in the work of several EWC's as full members of observers, depending on the will and consent of the employers. In the moment of accession, the act implementing the provisions of the European directive on EWC's defining obligation to affiliate Polish workers of companies being part of European companies, already adopted in Poland, will be in force. Our activists must be well prepared to take advantage of this additional possibility of information and consultation with the employers on the European level, and co-ordination with the trade union partners from other countries working in the same group of companies.

Statement of the National Congress of Delegates on present situation in the country

Poland has entered another crucial moment of the history. Incompetence and dishonesty of the governing group has lead to us to the edge of loosing everything we achieved in the last years trying to rebuild Poland from the ruins of communism – at the expense of millions of people suffering from poverty. High unemployment, increasing poverty, non-payment of wages, anarchic labour relations, widening gap between the incomes of the richest and the poorest, collapse of the health care, degradation of several branches and regions – these are the effects of discredited governing of Leszek Miller. Having implemented no positive changes, this government focused on re-possessing the country, centralisation of various spheres of economic and social life, increasing taxes and ideological fight. Recent examples of attacks against the High Chamber of Supervision, National Remembrance Institute, independent media or provocations during manifestations – remind of the years of totalitarian power. It is

accompanied by chaotic decision-making and internal fights. Poland is not prepared for the accession to the EU. We are facing paying the costs of it for long years.

We do not agree with impunity of dishonest businessmen building their fortunes at the expense of closed companies, with the state doing nothing to protect the workers against thievery.

We reject programmes leading to constant reduction of jobs and depravation the workers of their means for supporting their families.

We demand the state structures to ensure that all the citizens, also the poorest – pensioners, unemployed – have access to health care, public transport, honest information and education.

Direct involvement in political life, having political representation and participating in electoral coalitions is not the role of trade unions. NSZZ “Solidarnosc” will, however, take floor in matters important for Poland and Polish families. This stems from tradition, statute, programme and Christian roots of our organisation.

Therefore today we say – we need a breakthrough. NSZZ “Solidarnosc” demands all players of the public life that remain loyal to the tradition of solidarity – to create a real alternative for the governing coalition ruining the country and various demagogues. Create alternative programme where a human is the basic value instead of money.

Trade union strength is based on its organisational power and numbers. We appeal to all the workers struggling alone – don’t stand aside. Join us and increase your chances for effective protection from threats and for achieving our common goals.

Statement of the National Congress of Delegates on health care

The National Congress of Delegates of NSZZ “Solidarnosc”, expressing solidarity with the resolution of the National Health Protection Secretariat call upon the government of Poland and the Parliament to cease pseudo-restructuring of the health care based on total privatising leading to bankruptcy of many health centres. The proposed amendment of the act on the Principles of Health Care puts the present and future patients in position of clients whose health depends on profits.

Treating hospitals and health centres as production companies contradicts the idea of health care. We expect the government and the Minister of Health Care to immediately present a report on the health condition of the citizens and evaluation of accessibility to health care.

Statement of the National Congress of Delegates on violation of the constitutional right to gathering and trade union rights

The National Congress of Delegates of NSZZ “Solidarnosc” expresses its strong protest against violation of the constitutional right to gathering being one of basic citizens’ rights in a democratic state of law. The right was eliminated by an amendment to the act on road traffic that implemented provisions making it impossible for trade unions to organise legal demonstrations, manifestations and rallies. Hitherto existing law was changed without consultation with trade unions, although the act on trade unions clearly states the necessity of such consultations. The limitations implemented by the amendment force the demonstration organisers to ensure emergency and fire equipment, prepare an event regulations and projects of traffic organisation. Moreover, a demonstration must be announced at least 30 days in advance. The new regulation are supposedly aimed at improving conditions and ensuring order and safe traffic, but the real reason is to block the possibility of organising demonstrations as a reaction to important and urgent matters destructive for workers’ rights and trade unions. Clearly, the new regulations contradict the Polish Constitution art. 57 guaranteeing the right to peaceful gatherings and art. 59 giving the right to organising strikes and other forms of workers’ protests. The Constitution at the same time states that only international agreements ratified by Poland may put limitations to the scope of trade union freedoms. Recently, a demonstration of Daewoo-FSO workers defending their jobs was blocked due to the new regulations.

The National Congress of Delegates obliges the National Commission to undertake actions aimed at amending the present regulations, including filing a complaint to the Constitutional Tribunal and informing international institutions of violations of constitutional, trade union and workers’ rights.