



Global Framework Agreements: A New Tool for Regulating Transnationals?

**November 30, 2008
5:15pm – 7:00pm
Sheraton Hotel, Doha (room tbc)**

Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development

- Speakers:**
- Mr. Christopher Ng**, Regional Secretary of UNI-Asia Pacific Regional Organisation (UNI-APRO)
 - Mr. Glen Gregory Mpufane**, Head of International Relations Department, National Union of Mineworkers, South Africa
 - Ms. Molly McCoy**, Representative ITUC/Global Unions
 - Peter Ozo-Eson**, Director of Research, Nigeria Labour Congress
- Moderator:** **Mr. Werner Puschra**, Director, FES New York

The Global Union Movement has developed a tool to strengthen labour rights in the era of globalization, the Global Framework Agreement (GFA). The first GFAs were developed in the mid-1990s by the Global Unions in response to growing asymmetries between transnational corporations, which enjoyed relatively strong international legal and political protections for their business activities, and global unions, which had comparatively weak – or “soft law”-based – protections. During this same period, transnationals increasingly embraced internal codes of conduct and voluntary corporate social responsibility programmes (such as the Global Compact and OECD Guidelines), which often amounted to little more than public relations campaigns.

Global Framework Agreements can be seen as an alternative to “codes of conduct” because they are negotiated rather than voluntary and have proven to be useful in support of organizing campaigns. The main content of GFAs consists of the ILO’s Core Labour Standards (the abolition of child labour, the suppression of forced labour, the elimination of discrimination, and freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining) as well as mechanisms to address monitoring and grievances. Because these minimal standards often fall short of those common to countries with established labor institutions, GFAs are of particular value in strengthening union rights in developing countries. To date, more than 60 GFAs have been entered into, two of which were concluded with companies headquartered in developing countries.

This panel will introduce and discuss GFAs and explore both their potential as a tool to regulate the behavior of transnationals and their limitations.