

Speech by LO President Susanna Gideonsson

Introduction to motion area 15 International matters

Congress participants,

Let me start by going back in time.

112 years to be precise.

When in 1909 LO was forced out on general strike, our strike funds received contributions from trade unions all over the world.

Some of these contributions came from Africa. From Rhodesia, the country now called Zimbabwe.

There, miners had raised money for their striking comrades far up in the northern hemisphere.

Today, here at Congress, we're raising money for them.

Just now we received a video greeting from Japhet Moyo of Zimbabwe's free and democratic trade union movement. Through the Palme Center's fund-raising at this Congress we support both them and trade union comrades in other countries.

Yes, friends,

International solidarity is as old as the labour movement itself.
Because we've always known that we can never pursue our fight alone.
Not without the solidarity and the community of trade union comrades in other countries.

Our union work is fundamentally about the same things as it was in 1909.
About the trade union promise.

But the arena has grown. It now encompasses our entire world.

Today it is all the more obvious that workers in Sweden have interests in common with workers in the rest of Europe. As well as with workers in Brazil, in South Korea and Zimbabwe. Yes, all over the world.

Everything we do affects our comrades in other countries, and everything they do affects us.

In the same way, we are affected by developments in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN and the ILO.

That is why we continue to work for Sweden to ratify ILO Convention No. 94 on Labour Clauses in Public Contracts. The green 'people's home' we want to build must not be jerry-built.

We also call for Sweden to ratify as soon as possible the recently adopted ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

More and more workers are at risk of violations as global companies chase lower prices and higher profits. The global labour market conditions have an impact on everyone's wages and conditions.

I would also like to highlight the work on Agenda 2030, the UN agenda for eradicating poverty and hunger, realising human rights, achieving gender equality and resolving the climate crisis.

These are no small goals, as you can hear. But every step of the way is important. We were actively involved in the preparatory work and during the negotiations. Now the work must continue.

Globalisation is a fact, it's here to stay. But the benefits of globalisation must be shared by everyone.

In addition, we are an export-dependent country. Trade with other countries is of central importance to our economy, and thus to our ability to promote growth and employment.

Therefore, the Swedish trade union movement has never believed in protectionism. We have always stood for free trade. We will continue to do so.

But it must be trade based on fair conditions and on respect for human rights at work.

A central arena for us is, of course, cooperation within the EU.

We are continuing to work towards a social protocol, in which fundamental trade union rights and freedoms are superior to economic freedoms.

We need an EU that safeguards democracy and human rights in working life. The fight against social dumping is therefore a crucial issue for all EU cooperation. Then clear rules are required.

At the same time, however, these rules must respect different labour market models. We will not give up our Swedish collective agreement model. That is why we firmly reject the proposal on European minimum wages.

LO also welcomes Stefan Löfven's initiative for a global handshake between labour and capital – a Global Deal. An increasing number of countries are now joining this work. Most recently, both the trade union movement and the employers in Israel joined. Together, they are now launching a project for Palestinian migrant workers.

So let us now, together, continue to strengthen our international work.

For a world with more free and democratic trade unions.

A world in which workers' trade unions and human rights are guaranteed, both in working life and in society.

A world where the benefits of globalisation are shared by everyone, not just a few.