



International Atomic Energy Agency

General Conference

GC(XIV)/INF/126
24 September 1970

GENERAL Distr.

Original: ENGLISH

Fourteenth regular session

STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

Pursuant to Rule 3(d) of the Rules on the Consultative Status of Non-Governmental Organizations with the Agency^{1/}, the Director General is circulating the attached written statement by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

^{1/} INFCIRC/14.

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION
OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

1. At the outset, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), representing millions of workers throughout the democratic world, wishes to convey its best wishes to the Agency, and expresses its satisfaction with the steady progress it has achieved during the past years in fulfilling the various tasks for which it was created.
2. The ICFTU, having long striven and continuing to strive for peace, freedom and elimination of hunger and poverty, expresses its wishes for the success of the present session of the General Conference, which is meeting in Vienna to further the contribution of atomic energy to the peace, health and prosperity of the entire world. At the same time, ICFTU pays its tribute to the assembled Government representatives, scientists and experts for their sincere efforts, and pledges that it will use its influence at the international level, and, through its member organizations, also at the national level, to strive to eliminate the dangers that are inherent in this new source of energy. Bearing in mind that this Conference, working in an atmosphere of goodwill and co-operation, depends to a great extent on the international political climate, we hope that the wisdom and the responsibility towards mankind of every nation in the world will facilitate our progress towards complete and controlled disarmament throughout the world.
3. The fact that 25 years have passed since the explosion of the first atomic bombs underlines the importance of continuous effort towards complete and controlled disarmament. ICFTU's executive has stated in relation to this problem:

"The ICFTU stresses that the unabated continuation of the arms-race constitutes one of the gravest perils to world peace, and reaffirms the position of the international free trade union movement that all efforts must be made to arrive at a general and complete disarmament under effective international inspection."
4. The ICFTU appeals to the peoples of the world to work unceasingly for peace and universal disarmament so that the organization of a secure world order under the aegis of the United Nations may become an attainable objective.

5. In regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, ICFTU has welcomed and supported the Treaty, which offers a chance to limit and to reduce the danger of nuclear warfare. ICFTU has made it very clear that:

"the treaty will acquire its full significance only if it is accompanied by guarantees for the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy by non-nuclear countries and by a commitment of the nuclear powers to abandon all kinds of nuclear bomb testing and to strive for further nuclear disarmament".

6. Further, the ICFTU hopes that all nations of the world will sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and help the International Atomic Energy Agency to install an efficient system of inspection to prevent the misuse of nuclear material for other purposes.

7. Furthermore, the ICFTU considers the bridging of the economic and social gulf between the industrialized and non-industrialized countries as the most important problem of the second half of this century, and will use its influence to further the development of international aid and solidarity which are as important preconditions to the fulfilment of this task as is scientific and technological progress, including progress in the field of nuclear energy. With great disappointment ICFTU has noted that this gulf has been even more widened, in spite of the increased application of nuclear devices in the economies of the world.

8. It has been made clear at previous sessions of the Conference that the non-industrialized countries of the world lack conventional energy reserves and that only economic nuclear energy would enable the developing countries to meet their immense energy requirements for building up their infrastructure in order to be able to catch up with the living standards enjoyed in the industrially advanced countries. In this connection, ICFTU assesses highly the positive role the Agency has been playing not only in providing technical assistance to the developing countries and in serving as a clearing-house for scientific and technical information, but also in co-operating with other bodies and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to work out sets of recommendations on all aspects of radiological protection which at present form the basis of relevant national legislation in many countries.

9. While the results obtained from the peaceful use of nuclear energy are highly valued, ICFTU would like to address a frank appeal to the Conference by drawing its attention to the following points.

10. In the statement made to the Conference in 1965, ICFTU expressed the view that:

"The almost perfect record of health and safety which nuclear industry so far enjoys in many countries is partly due to public control of the vast majority of nuclear installations and to their running on a non-profitable basis. We express our concern that when nuclear installations come under private ownership and are integrated into normal commercial activities, it might not be easy to enforce adequate measures against hazards inherent to the nuclear industry. Therefore, we must be fully cognizant of the fact that the burden of responsibility for adequate radiological protection will grow heavier and more difficult to shoulder for this Agency as well as for all others concerned and last but not least for the free trade unions."

11. In this connection ICFTU appeals to the Agency greatly to extend its information and educational work, especially in the field of radiological protection and safety standards in industry and services, so as to include also the non-governmental organizations and thus help them to fulfill their role as constructive pressure groups in modern society.

12. Several years ago the International Metal Workers Federation (IMF) adopted a resolution, which shows awareness of the problems which will face us in the future:

"The IMF notes that the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes is continuing to make great progress; the IMF directs attention to the marked development of uranium mining, of nuclear facilities in research and industry, where sources of ionizing radiation and radioactive materials are being increasingly used for a multitude of purposes; the IMF notes also that, together with the enormous development of new electronic products, has come the possibility of dangers to both workers and consumers from excessive radiation; the IMF demands most emphatically the effective protection of all workers and consumers from the hazards of the atomic and electronic age and to this end requests that competent institutions of the United Nations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency, undertake appropriate continuing investigations into working conditions in uranium mining and in other industries whose workers are or may be exposed to risks of radiation, for the purpose of establishing international safety standards and revising them in the light of new discoveries; the IMF urges all countries to observe rigorously all safety standards and provisions and to work in active co-operation with the International Labour Organisation whose activities in this field should be continued and intensified."

13. ICFTU is fully aware of the fact that ILO, WHO and the International Commission on Radiological Protection, as well as the Agency, have already worked out a set of recommendations which at present form the basis of relevant national legislation in various countries. We also note with satisfaction from the Annual Report of the Board of Governors to the General Conference^{1/} that, with the general development of atomic energy, the Agency has been developing or is intending to develop specialized activities in this field, such as the preparation of standards for the safe operation of research and power reactors, detailed technical manuals on subjects such as the production of nuclear fuel, decontamination and protective equipment and the management and disposal of radioactive waste. We pay high tribute to the Agency for such endeavours and hope that in co-operation with the relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations, it will facilitate the development of research and activities in these subjects. At the same time ICFTU, for its part, pledges that it will use its best endeavours at the international level and also, through its affiliated organizations at the national level, to strive for safety measures by legislation or collective agreements.

14. Finally, ICFTU hopes that all efforts will be used to decrease international tensions and to improve confidence between the nations with a view to achieving complete atomic disarmament and to using the new source of energy for peaceful means. May the assembled Government representatives, scientists and experts use the opportunities that science and technique offer to mankind.

^{1/} GC(XIV)/430.

