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Global Fairness

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It is now more clear than ever that because of globalization, threats to the national security of our country also represent threats to the economic security of workers both here and around the world. Working families need a global economic recovery package that addresses the needs of the poor, not just the wealthy. Debt relief, market access, democracy and human rights are essential to the fight for equitable, democratic, sustainable development.

The broad, diverse and international coalition that came together in Seattle in November 1999 to protest the policies of the World Trade Organization has called the world's attention to corporate-dominated globalization. The debate on globalization now has become a central political issue worldwide. But much work remains to be done to build an undeniable public consensus around the need for global reforms and translate public concern into concrete achievements for our social justice agenda.

The AFL-CIO renews its commitment to the multitrack Campaign for Global Fairness. Our objectives include changing the rules of the global economy, building economic power for working families as we hold corporations accountable and providing broad-based education through international solidarity among working people and our allies.

We need to continue to build a broad-based, nonviolent coalition of allies committed to peaceful public collective action in defense of inclusion, equity, negotiation, justice and democracy on a global scale. If we want to build a global economy characterized by such principles, we need to oppose any and all sorts of violence.

Changing the Rules of the Global Economy

Labor's challenge is to change global rules and transform international institutions to ensure the benefits of global economic activity are broadly shared and working people have a voice in the policies that shape our lives.

Current global economic policies have failed America's workers by hollowing out our manufacturing sector, contributing to pressures to deregulate and privatize our economy and strengthening the political and economic clout of multinational corporations. These same policies have failed workers worldwide in similar ways, resulting in increasing global inequality, weak and underfunded governments in many developing countries and erosion of workers' rights and environmental protections.

These global economic policies have not fostered broadly shared prosperity and steadily improving workers' rights. Minimum standards regularly are violated around the world and trade union organizers often are jailed and murdered. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) reports 209 union members disappeared or were killed last year, three-quarters of them in Colombia alone. Another 8,500 people were arrested for union activity, 3,000 were injured and 20,000 were dismissed from their jobs for union activism.

The same workers whose rights are violated on global production lines live in societies where inequality is on the rise, poverty remains stubbornly high, basic public services like education and health care are crumbling and fragile democratic institutions are faltering. These problems will only deepen in the current global economic downturn. As the U.S. economy slows, the many developing countries that have based their development strategy on exports above all are seeing their only engine of growth sputter to a stop. Low growth is exacerbated by the volatility of international commodity and financial markets, unacceptably small official aid flows from wealthy countries, soaring debt burdens and the flawed, anti-worker policies of international financial institutions. The future of entire societies is at risk as children are pulled out of school to work and support their families, and the digital divide grows ever wider. Meanwhile the HIV/AIDS crisis spreads unchecked; there are now 36 million people living with HIV and AIDS and 70 percent of them live in Africa. In the next decade, AIDS is projected to kill one quarter of the population of the most acutely affected African countries and orphan 27 million children.

Too often, the "globalization debate" is oversimplified as a choice between isolation and engagement, with critics of current policies cast as know-nothing protectionists who want to turn their backs on the rest of the world. This never has described the views of the American union movement. International trade is vital for economic growth. But trade must benefit all peoples, not just a favored few or corporations.

In partnership with the world labor movement through Global Unions (the new common identity for the international trade union movement and

platform for common international action), America's union movement is deeply engaged in building international solidarity, transforming global rules and institutions and contributing to a more equitable and just world. Along with our trade union brothers and sisters and civil society allies, we are engaged in a worldwide democratic and nonviolent campaign to pressure international institutions to recognize the human values that are essential to economic development.

At home, the AFL-CIO will continue to insist that our government negotiate enforceable provisions ensuring workers' fundamental rights and environmental safeguards in the core of all new trade and investment agreements, and we will vigorously oppose any agreements that fall short of this standard. In particular, we will continue to oppose the extension of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) investment provisions to the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement, bilateral agreements or the World Trade Organization (WTO). We will join with our brothers and sisters in developing countries to insist that public health should be paramount in trade disputes, especially with respect to policies on life-saving pharmaceuticals. Governments' legitimate efforts to protect public health, the environment and social programs must not be obstructed by trade and investment rules.

We must ensure that increased freedom in international aviation and the emergence of multi-carrier global alliances and partnerships are not used to export jobs, lower U.S. safety standards or weaken collective bargaining rights that are an integral part of our successful U.S. aviation system. We also oppose any loosening of the ban on foreign control of domestic airlines or of the prohibition against cabotage—foreign carriers serving U.S. domestic routes. The repeal of these policies would negatively impact both national security and the economic welfare of U.S. workers in the air transportation industry.

It is also critical that new trade and investment agreements be negotiated with adequate consultation and participation by unions, civil society and Congress (or parliamentary representatives), rather than being influenced only by big businesses.

The U.S. needs to lead the international community to support a broad and generous economic recovery package for developing countries. All wealthy countries must raise their levels of development aid to the U.N. goal of 0.07 percent of Gross Domestic Product. The U.S. falls especially far behind in this crucial area. An urgent target for increased development financing is the HIV/AIDS crisis; the Global Fund, which should quickly deliver funds to address this crisis through governments and nongovernmental organizations, including unions, must be fully funded at the level of \$7 billion to \$10 billion.

In addition, in order to raise the skills and productivity of workers in poor countries and create an educated citizenry that demands and supports democratic development, universal education and technology equipment and training must be top priorities for increased financial and technical assistance.

We will hold our government accountable for its role in the international institutions in which the United States plays such an important role: the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These organizations must transform both their policies and their processes to ensure the interests of workers, protection of the environment and true democratic participation are their priorities, not afterthoughts. They must cancel the debt owed to them by the poorest countries and ensure that this debt relief goes to poverty reduction—with meaningful input from stakeholders, including unions. Only by protecting workers' fundamental human rights at the workplace and recognizing the central role of independent trade unions in building vibrant democracies can these institutions live up to what ought to be their central mission: fostering sustainable, equitable and truly democratic development.

Holding Corporations Accountable

Corporations are the dominant economic institutions in the global economy. They are the driving force of globalization as they internationalize their operations through foreign investments, international mergers and joint ventures and contracting relationships.

Under the rules of the current trading system, corporations' power has grown unchecked, often surpassing the ability of nations to control their actions. Multinational corporations scour the globe in search of new markets, new resources and higher profit margins. Increasingly, they are neither accountable to the countries under whose laws they are established nor responsible to their employees, employees' families or the communities in which employees live.

To hold multinational corporations socially accountable, the American union movement, in cooperation with labor movements in other countries, must change the rules of the global economy.

But we must also rebuild our power by helping workers organize, at home and abroad, and by developing the capacity to bargain and campaign more effectively in a rapidly changing and increasingly global economy.

We will help workers organize at multi-national companies and companies competing in international industries, both in the United States and abroad. Multiunion strategies across geopolitical boundaries increasingly are important to achieving union recognition and good contracts. The AFL-CIO will assist

affiliates and partners abroad in building capacity by recruiting and training organizers, strategic researchers and campaigners and providing direct research and campaign support for strategic organizing initiatives.

The AFL-CIO also will assist unions in bargaining with major employers by monitoring collective bargaining trends and identifying bargaining threats and opportunities. The federation will capture best practices in contract language, bargaining strategies and bargaining-related campaign tactics, while providing support for union efforts to develop more effective approaches in strategic bargaining relationships and in coordinated bargaining.

Together we will hold employers accountable for their responsibilities to employees and to society. We will work with willing employers and fight employers unwilling to compete in ways consistent with strong unions and rising living standards for workers.

With high-road employers, we will under-take partnership agreements and workplace democracy initiatives, which increase employment and compensation and enhance worker safety and satisfaction while building stronger unions. These efforts will include crafting corporate codes of conduct and responsible contractor agreements, promoting respect for government guidelines for corporate behavior and encouraging pension funds to observe socially responsible investment guidelines.

With aggressive, low-road employers, we will undertake comprehensive campaigns that integrate all sources of power in organizing and bargaining efforts, both in this country and abroad. The AFL-CIO will help unions develop industry-specific campaign capacities, while continuing to build AFL-CIO capacities that can only, or most economically, be delivered by the federation.

Through capital stewardship programs, we will ensure that workers' saving—pensions, 401(k) plans, ESOPs and other plans—work for workers rather than against them. The AFL-CIO will provide technical and legal support for union capital stewardship programs in the United States and abroad and will help establish and raise standards in global capital markets.

Providing Broad-Based Member Education

Broad-based member education about the rapidly changing global economic environment is the cornerstone in our fight for justice for workers. The more union members and leaders discuss and understand the issues, the more we can strengthen our unions to initiate concerted, collective actions that strive to protect the interests of working people.

Member education must focus on core issues of the global economy and the role of unions globally. We must counter attempts by employers to place

workers in a “race to the bottom” by showing workers how the global economy affects all of us. We must explain that while globalization has existed for more than 500 years, a new “internationalization of production” is being driven by a global corporate agenda motivated exclusively by the bottom line. And we must demonstrate how global union solidarity can, and does, make the difference for working people.

Trade union member and leader education opportunities exist on many fronts—at union conventions, conferences, schools and public forums—during which we can reach thousands of union members and other workers with information about the global economy. These opportunities allow us to show the connection between our political and organizing work around domestic issues—Social Security, tax cuts, deregulation, labor law reform and workers’ freedom to choose to form unions—and our work on global economic issues. They help explain why corporations want to push their agenda calling for labor market flexibility, free trade agreements, unregulated capital, union-free environments and privatization—and why unions must fight back.

We must also show the links between our domestic concerns and such issues as Fast Track, the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement, trade with China and the WTO. We need strong unions and an active membership to ensure the global economy works for working people.

We will use these and other opportunities to work with labor educators nationally and globally and to develop additional trainers who can reach workers. Our goal is to bring workers together in solidarity around common concerns and common issues. United, we hold the key to making the global economy work for everyone.

Building International Solidarity

Achieving policy reforms, economic power and broad-based education in the global economy increasingly requires union coordination throughout the world. The American union movement faces criticism that its commitment to struggle for workers’ rights around the world is “protectionism in disguise.” This lie can only be challenged effectively through global campaigns. More than 220 unions and 156 million members worldwide are part of the coalition that came together in Seattle and that continues to fight for workers’ rights affected by the WTO, IMF and World Bank.

Global Unions are mounting global campaigns to enforce and promote the International Labor Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work:

- The right to organize and bargain collectively.
- The right to refuse forced labor.
- The right to reject child labor.
- The right to work free from discrimination.

The unions of the AFL-CIO are working to promote and publicize these basic rights and make them accessible to workers as they organize and fight for a voice at work.

The AFL-CIO will continue to work with affiliates on organizing and bargaining campaigns involving employers with foreign ownership, production or retail markets and to coordinate with unions around the world to build solidarity across borders.

Racism and xenophobia contradict and undermine the trade union struggle for freedom and social justice for all. Workers of color, migrants and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the ranks of the unemployed and marginalized worldwide. Women make up 45 percent of the world's workforce and account for 70 percent of the world's poor.

To address worldwide racism as well as the challenges facing working women everywhere, we will increase education about the impact of these deeply rooted problems. We will work to build greater understanding of the costs of racism and to build global solidarity among women workers and unions around the realization that workers' rights are women's rights.

Through the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, we will continue to work around the world to strengthen democratic trade unions through comprehensive union skills training, defense of core workers' rights and exchanges between U.S. unions and those in developing countries. The Solidarity Center raises public awareness of the abuses and exploitation of the world's most vulnerable workers. It also offers the tools to create effective responses based on unity, democracy and solidarity.

The commitment of the AFL-CIO and our affiliates to solidarity across borders was never more evident than in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks. People from more than 80 countries died in the tragedy. Thousands of messages of condolence and solidarity came from unions in more than 100 countries in every part of the world. We will work together to coordinate economic action to stave off a global recession, meet humanitarian needs and confront the problems of development and poverty.

Together, the Global Union Family of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Trade

Secretariats have undertaken a strategic review of trade union priorities and structures because we recognize the need to refocus, reshape, reinforce and continually re-energize our movement. The AFL-CIO will participate in this process to help shape a more powerful international labor movement to meet future challenges.

The union movement is the one institution in the world that crosses political boundaries, ideologies and economic class to raise these serious moral questions about the current global economic system. We speak for working families and the exploited women, men and children around the world who have no voice.

We demand that our voice be heard and the rules changed to bring human needs back into balance with economic gain in the global marketplace. Through international union solidarity and with the support of allied organizations around the world, our voice grows stronger and we will not be silenced until working families have a role in making the global policies that shape our lives.