



PERC PAN-EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COUNCIL
CRE CONSEIL REGIONAL EUROPEEN
BEPС ВСЕЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ

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Address of I. Petriashvili, PERC and GTUC President, to the ETUC 14th Statutory Congress

‘A FAIRER EUROPE FOR WORKERS!’

Vienna, 21 – 24 May 2019

Trade Unionist brothers and sisters,

Thank you for granting me the opportunity and trust to stand here as the PERC President and a great honour to welcome and address the most honorable part of Europe – workers and you, their respected representatives! Though, this is not just a great honour, but also a great responsibility for me, together with my brother, Luca Visentini, together with all of you to represent and stand for the interests and challenges of Workers of the European continent within the international Trade Union movement.

ETUC Congress is a truly remarkable momentum for the social life in Europe as well as its neighbouring regions as this event defines future priorities for regional and national labour institutions, areas of our future cooperation and elaborates vision and prospects to overcome the modern challenges.

Today, in the XXI century, the world of work is facing numerous challenges you are fully aware of. However, these problems have one common name – a global democratic crisis! Unfortunately, politicians who are engaged in populism and hypocrisy create global guarantees for free movement of business, social irresponsibility of which is boundless, but also, they set strict boundaries and barriers for human and workers’ rights. At a time when there are so many problems, ranging from the daily struggle of people for existence to the impending environmental catastrophe in the world, politicians, instead of working hard to develop and create safeguarded standards for overall security and a decent life, are busy modernizing

nuclear bombs, stimulating the new cold war and, who knows, maybe even the “hot” wars. If globalization for business is the Bible, I ask the question - why shouldn't rights be global?

Today, you define priorities and main guidelines for the next four years of the ETUC and I can contribute to this debate as we share representation of workers or the EU and the rest of the European continent within PERC architecture. It means that trade unions unite what politicians divide, and we break down the barriers and boundaries that they set.

It also means that trade unionists understand that in this globalized world it is impossible to create and build a “closed paradise” and protect countries from so-called unwanted people, as Orban and politicians like him are trying to do.

Do we need more integration, more joint actions and elimination of various borders and barriers? While discussing European future of work today, it is obvious that at this stage, the European countries are faced by rather non-traditional challenges that originate far beyond the European Union borders – these are unresolved conflicts, growing number of authoritarian regimes, neo-liberal and libertarian policies. The impact of digital economy on employment, economy, low access to education and healthcare, dumping of social and labour standards, women's rights and gender gaps should be noted separately. If left ignored in any part of the globe, these problems will soon reach these "closed paradises".

Let's take my country as an example. Georgia was used as a test laboratory by the large financial institutions and international corporations (ignoring labour code and social dialogue, low access to healthcare and education, two military conflicts) : Georgian authorities were encouraged by European politicians, calling them “beacons of democracy” at the time when they were abolishing ILO norms and standards, were oppressing free trade unions. These are the reasons that led to my compatriots living in tents in France, maybe even engaging in criminal activities somewhere, some working in other countries informally, dumping salaries

and social guarantees you managed to achieve. And Georgia is not the worst country on the European continent. Poverty and lack of safeguards for a decent life force more and more people to leave their countries and families and seek environment that is safe for life.

For that reason, it is of utmost importance to fight against the causes of migration and what is even more important – fight them at the places of their origin, at grass-root level. We need more integration, more joint actions, a more cohesive structure of the PERC. And our active engagement in the international trade union movement is necessary, more than ever!

But also, the most important factor for solving these issues is to ensure independence and democracy of trade unions themselves, and not everywhere in PERC region we managed to achieve that.

Therefore, sharing problems and active engagement is fundamental. Only true solidarity and common efforts are one, if not the only way to overcome modern challenges in the sphere of labour.

I would like to sum up with the GTUC motto – “In Solidarity everything can be done!”

Thank you very much!