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ETF and IDC announce joint Euro ports policy overview

The ETF (European Transport Workers' Federation, the European arm of the ITF global union) and the IDC-E (International Dockworkers' Council – European zone) have met in Brussels to discuss the latest developments in European Union ports policy, as well as the critical situations of Spain, Greece and Portugal.

Following their meetings, the two organisations released the following joint overview of the situation, jointly authored by Terje Samuelsen, ETF dockers' section chair, and Anthony Tetard, IDC coordinator for the European zone:

The ETF and IDC welcomed the fact that the European Commission announced its intention not to intervene on cargo-handling and port labour. However, they remain concerned about ongoing demands by shipowners to liberalise port labour and the disproportionate influence that this group has over the views of the Commission.

In addition, they are deeply concerned over attempts at the national level to weaken organised dockers in Spain, Portugal and Greece.

The European Commission is promoting social dialogue at European level and should also encourage national governments to tackle through social dialogue the critical situations that are being experienced in some member states, notably in Portugal and Greece.

For the benefit of the whole sector, the European Commission should ensure that transparency is guaranteed, that social criteria are taken into account, and that workers' rights are respected in the event of concessions to private operators and investors.

They urge the concerned European and Greek authorities to put an end to the way Cosco's operations are being carried out in Piraeus, with no respect for fundamental workers' right and freedom of

association. These practices should not be tolerated and it should be ensured that European standards are guaranteed whoever the investor is in all European ports.

The two organisations are determined to defend European ports, which are the most productive in the world, for their members, the community and future generations. They remain united and vigilant, and are ready to both engage with other stakeholders and take action if necessary. They now look forward to initiating the social dialogue process, to which both organisations are committed, where they will work together for the benefit of European dockers.

The two organisations and their members are convinced that through real dialogue with social partners future industrial action can be avoided.

They therefore agreed to meet again this spring to check if any progresses on social dialogue have been made in Portugal, Greece and Spain. In the lack of any tangible progress they will decide if any there is any need to take industrial action to offer international solidarity towards the dockers involved in the above-mentioned conflicts.

They also call upon the EC to undertake an investigation to the potential anti-competitive behavior of shipping lines which are growing in power to the detriment of other port stakeholders.

ENDS

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