



## **INTERVENTION IN COLOMBIA ON 26-4-23**

I send a respectful greeting to all the people who are listening to me.

It is a greeting from Barcelona, my city in the Spanish state, from where I wish you many successes and successes, especially successes for the people who need it most, as a result of your deliberations, in which I hope to help with my contributions.

It is a greeting as General Secretary of the only world organization that brings together all kinds of associations, including unions, Pensioners and Retirees, the UIS, International Union of Trade Unions, created by the WFTU, World Federation of Trade Unions, in 2011, in Athens at its 16th World Congress.

Behind me, visible to you, you have the logos and flags of the UIS and the WFTU.

The issue of pensions every day, throughout the Planet, is an issue that acquires new and more important relevances. They are the future of our species, because people can live longer and we want to live them with dignity, in addition to the best possible health according to the advances of medicine.

Our International Union does not share the words of Mrs Lagarde, when she was President of the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, who did not blush when she said that retired people were an unproductive burden of society.

This statement can be considered true if we only think about it in figures of capitalist economy, but it has very little, to say the least, of humanity.

People have a value that goes beyond the figures that an entrepreneur can make, if he simply and exclusively calculates what benefit he can get from our existence.

Older people, by age, have historically been the wisest, most experienced, most capable of doing true and balanced justice, who always have good advice to give to the other generations that follow them by age.

We as the International Union have a motto:

"LONG AND DIGNIFIED LIFE FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR LAST STAGE OF LIFE"

Motto that summarizes our willingness to find the best way to extend the life span (that which every person wants) if health allows it.

But to live without suffering.

In my last meeting with retired people in the United States , I was informed that there, in the theoretically richest country in the world, every day there are hundreds of new pensioners who must decide whether to buy food or buy medicines, because they can no longer buy both.

Situations like this are really unjust, and more so if we see how the US spends billions of dollars on weapons and destructive wars.

For us, the wealth generated by people working should be used to improve the quality of life and not to weapons that allow us to destroy countries to steal raw materials, as has been done with Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria (from which the US still steals oil), Mali, Sudan, and other countries, to which Ukraine has now been added.

Thanks to science and technology, which continue to progress, wealth can be produced today with less and less effort and fewer hours of work. The same economists of the most pro-capitalist organization on the planet, the International Monetary Fund, recognize this when they estimate that in recent decades productivity has grown by more than 100%, something that neither wages nor pensions have done.

I affirm the above to make it clear that we have, as Humanity, sufficient wealth to ensure the payment of pensions that allow us to live with dignity.

Another thing is whether private banks want to profit from pensions.

The reality is that, in the public money boxes for pensions, there is today, all over the planet, much more money than that existing in the Private Banks, and these want, for years, to seize public money to manage it themselves. That's why they exist as private companies.

Following this capitalist logic, the IMF guides, and often imposes (as it did with its neighbor Argentina), economic conditions that always include, among other privatizations, that of the Public Pension Funds.

This has been achieved by the IMF in Europe having approved, on March 22, 2022, the Parliament of the European Union, that the 27 countries that compose it must transfer the new pensions to the Great European Bank. It is the law, with the category of

Regulation because it is mandatory, which is known as PePP, European Private Pension Plan.

If this proposal is applied in all capitalist countries, it will be a regression in what was the great historical conquest of public pensions.

Now I will summarize, because I do not have time to give you many details, the booklet that I show you, edited by our International Union of Pensioners, which we distributed in 4 languages (Arabic, Spanish, French, and English) in Rome, at the 18th Congress of the WFTU, less than a year ago. This material is at your disposal, just send me your email address.

200 years ago there were no pensions of any kind.

The first pensioner that history records is Simon Bolivar, of you well known, who in the mid-19th century drafted the first law on pensions that we know. Thus he could ensure a well-deserved payment to the soldiers who helped him triumph against the troops of the Spanish Bourbon monarchy, when these soldiers could no longer fight.

We then know the laws of Argentina, at the beginning of the 20th century, which only granted pension rights to the military and civil servants.

The real revolution in the subject of pensions was made by Lenin, in the year 1,917, that is, more than 100 years ago, when he signed the first law in the world that gave the right to a pension to all people from the age of 60. Thus, for the first time, peasants and people who had only done domestic work were entitled to a pension.

This reality, at the beginning of the 20th century, spread like wildfire in European countries thanks to the class unions, especially after the Second World War.

With the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini's fascism (not Franco's) the laws were consolidated that, in addition to pensions, ensured the enjoyment of education and health free of charge for almost the entire European population, especially in the countries that began to try to build socialist societies.

It did not happen the same in the other continents.

Remember just one fact, until the year 1.967, the aborigines of Australia, that is, the really natives of this great continent colonized by the ancestors of the current monarchy of Great Britain, were governed by the law called Flora and Fauna, they were legally mistreated as animals, not as human beings.

That is to say that in Australia slavery existed, as something legal, less than 60 years ago.

Evidently these Australians were not entitled to a pension 50 years later than all the inhabitants of the Soviet Union did.

The same lack of the right to a pension existed, and still largely exists, in the other colonized continents. In them only civil servants and the military had, and to a large extent still have, by law, a public pension.

In Africa, Asia, and part of the Americas, continents with a high percentage of contractual informality (that is, with workers who carry out their tasks without a legal contract), the majority of the population is still not entitled to a pension. The exception is the workers of the largest companies. These usually could and can organize unions and even receive solidarity from the class unions of the same multinational or the metropolis country.

The WFTU, World Federation of Trade Unions, which was born in the year 1.945, in Paris, on October 3, already approved in its first Congress a clear resolution against colonialism and in favor of equal rights for workers throughout the Planet.

It was faced with this reality that the 16th WFTU Congress, at the proposal of the Spanish delegation, approved the creation of the International Union of Pensioners' Unions.

12 years have passed and we are still the only organization that coordinates Pensioners worldwide. This year, on October 1, the date that the UN established as the day of pensioners, we will hold the eighth World Day of Struggle of Pensioners for our demands.

Also in a few weeks, in Geneva, at the 111th Conference of the ILO, we will be the only voice of the pensioners of the Planet, since the unions of the former ICFTU, today ITUC, have not decided to create a global structure to coordinate the Pensioners. They supported Pinochet when he created the AFPs (Pension Fund Administrations) which have been a great failure, with Chileans losing almost 50% of the amount of their public pension. And now the ITUC continues to support the pacts, which enhance private pensions, everywhere in the world where they are heard.

At the ILO we will explain again our demand for sufficient Public Pensions to be able to enjoy a dignified life, repeating the fundamental thing that we have already said, before the ILO Plenary, in the last 8 years.

Let's explain our second world motto:

"OUR LIFE IS NOT A COST"

We want to make it clear that we do not share the views of the International Monetary Fund, which sees pensioners as a cost to society.

And we are also going to repeat before the heads of government, before the business leaders, who come every year to Geneva, to the ILO Plenary, that people who are out of work must receive from the capitalist states the money to pay their contributions to Social Security and Pension Funds. It is not the people who cannot find a workplace who are responsible for not getting one. It is the capitalist state, which organizes the economy, that is really responsible. It is true that capitalism is interested in having unemployed, so it can lower wages.

I will now explain to you that we are winning demands and battles, thanks to the collective organisation of pensioners (which, as I have just said, we are also concerned about future pensioners).

I will not explain the great struggles of recent weeks in France, which will continue next Monday, 1 May, to force its President, Mr Macron, to withdraw the law that delays the retirement age from 62 to 64.

I am going to explain the reality of Spain, where Pensioners have been filling the streets every week in more than 300 locations for a few years.

We go in front of the City Councils and demand, to the political representatives closest to the citizens, that they transfer our requests to the regional and state governors.

And we have achieved for the current year an increase in pensions of 8.5%, ending the annual increases of 0.25% implemented by the Popular Party, falsifying the accounts of the Public Pension Funds.

The most shocking thing is that while pensions have increased by the aforementioned 8.5%, wages (the result of collective bargaining with companies) have only been increased on average by 2.7%. And this when pensioners can no longer strike, as if they can do and have not done active workers, given that the CCOO and UGT unions have not wanted to call them, to continue, as yellow unions, receiving subsidies from employers and governments.

In short, that the governments, and not only that of Spain, are concerned not to have discontent with the passive working class, which is already pensioned or retired.

Our collective is close to 20% of the world's population, a figure that rises to 30% if we analyse it as people with the right to vote, a vote that older people exercise much more than young people, unfortunately less interested in intervening in political life.

I would like to end this speech by stating that there is enough money to pay decent pensions, as we say in the booklet that I have shown you and that is available to you in its Spanish version.

To argue this, I would like to remind you of what Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says. In paragraph 1 of the aforementioned article it is stated verbatim:

<<Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services; He is also entitled to insurance in the event of unemployment, sickness, invalidity, widowhood, old age or other cases of loss of means of subsistence due to circumstances beyond his control>>

They heard well, invalidity, widowhood and old age. For them there are pensions.

It is the states that have to legislate to make compliance with Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a reality in Colombia, in America and throughout the planet.

That is why our international organization demands that, in the Constitutions, or the fundamental laws, of each country, this obligation of the states be clear.

When planning the economy, when approving annual budgets, governments must ensure that there is sufficient public money for what is indicated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

And if there are revenue shortages, governments should decide to look for more money where there is (especially in companies that evade taxes using tax havens), and in turn eliminate expenses not useful for the needs of the people.

Any government, if it cares about the welfare of the governed, must give priority to health, education, pensions, before spending money on weapons or wars.

Today astronomical figures are spent on military issues, starting with the United States.

NATO requires NATO member states to raise military spending to 2% of its GDP, Gross Domestic Product.

This is what the Spanish social democratic government (composed of two parties, the PSOE and PODEMOS) has done last year, when in Spain there is a lack, among other social needs, of thousands of doctors and teachers in public health and education.

But not only this is denounceable in the case of my country (which for this dissertation is the easiest example), in Spain the Private Banking has been saved from bankruptcy by giving them 74,000 million euros, which said bank has not returned (because theoretically it was a loan) when it has subsequently had astronomical benefits recognized and officially published.

Spain is sending and giving away tanks and other weapons to Ukraine. Spain gives free training courses to many Ukrainian servicemen.

All this is paid by the Spaniards with our taxes.

Taxes that, instead of going to private banking or wars, should go to social needs, including pensions.

Only in this way would Spain comply with those demanded by the aforementioned article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, there is money, but it is not allocated to what is claimed by the aforementioned article 25.

And taxes are not applied fairly.

Large multinationals pay very little tax, ten times less than the average of what we citizens pay. In the multinationals I include the football teams that you know and that function as multinationals, I mean Barcelona and Real Madrid.

These companies move their headquarters to tax havens, as the construction magnate Florentino Pérez, at the same time president of Real Madrid, has just done, which, together with Ferrovial and other multinationals have set, a few days ago, Holland as a new headquarters.

Thus, with these data, it is understood that wealth, in the capitalist world, instead of being distributed based on the needs of people, I mean the majority of the population, is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

According to the International Monetary Fund itself, 1% of the world's population appropriates 99% of the wealth produced each year.

Changing this reality would surplus wealth throughout the planet to be able to cover all the social needs explained in article 25 already cited.

That is why our international organization is in favor, like the whole WFTU, of putting an end to capitalism as an economic system. This will automatically mean putting an end to imperialism and its genocidal wars.

I conclude by affirming, what you all surely know, neither in Cuba, nor in Vietnam, nor in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, nor in Laos, nor in China, in any of these countries that build, each in their own way, the socialist society, which Hugo Chavez himself claimed for Venezuela, in none of them will you see Pensioners or Retirees removing garbage to find food, as you see every day in capitalist countries.

Thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal.

Thank you.

Barcelona, April 26, 2.023



A classist and internationalist trade union greeting.

Quim Boix

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WFTU responsible in the Spanish State (except Basque Country)

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