

Trade unionists from several countries in Havana analyze strategies to confront pension privatization

In Havana, the Second International Conference of Pensioners' and Retirees' Unions of the World Federation of Trade Unions of the Region of the Americas began on Thursday, with the purpose of discussing joint strategies to stop the privatization of these resources.



Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, Secretary General of the CTC, highlighted the importance of the unity and integration of this international movement to defend the rights of retirees and pensioners. Photo: Amanda Llanes

The interventions constituted an exchange of experiences on the particularities of each country and its trade unions. Among the main issues addressed, common in the approaches of not a few delegates, is the need for big capital to dominate the destination of pension funds and achieve the privatization and management of such resources.

This is a reason for a constant struggle of the Latin American peoples to promote joint actions between countries and unions for the demand of labor rights.

Other aspects pointed out by the participants were the negative socioeconomic impact of the pandemic since 2020, and the consequent deterioration of various social benefits, including social security, something very marked in the retirement system.

The highest impacts of deaths and infections by Covid-19 in Latin America were among the elderly, also very affected by the deterioration of health regimes.

For these reasons it is essential to organize the struggle of the workers' movement and especially of the organizations of the pensioners, in defense of their demands, as a starting point for a dispute against the offensive of the capitalist system.

The reality of Cuban pensioners and retirees, different from that of most of the countries participating in the event, serves as a reference in the search for greater integration of this union sector in social processes.

In his speech at the end of the day on Thursday, Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, Secretary General of the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) and member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba, alluded to how in the world pensions are privatized and cut, however, in our country they increased with the salary readjustment of the beginning of 2021.



The Second International Conference of Unions of Pensioners and Retirees of the WFTU will meet in the Cuban capital until April 29. Photo: Amanda Llanes

He also pointed out the guarantees to retirements during the pandemic, as well as the preservation of the basic basket and health care.

The Secretary General of the CTC also indicated that we are a country with a marked trend towards population aging, where currently 21.6% of the population is over 60 years old and it is expected that by 2030 that figure will amount to approximately 32.6%.

He also highlighted the presence in the new Family Code of laws aimed at guaranteeing more rights to the elderly in the current social context, where we have 1 million 700 thousand retirees and pensioners.

Guilarte de Nacimiento thanked the organization for allowing the realization of an event of this magnitude in our country, in a context of communication campaigns on digital platforms, which seek to fracture and discredit the work of justice and social equity of the Revolution.

He called for the unity of the international trade union movement and for cooperating action to confront the hegemonic imperial reality of the big transnationals.

The plenary session was chaired by the Secretary General of the UIS, Quim Boix, Marcos Wolman, Coordinator of the UIS for America and Antonio Ferrero, Secretary of the Organization of the UIS.

Delegations from Colombia, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Argentina and Cuba participated in the conference in person, while the other member countries did so through videoconference.

WFTU International Forum Against Privatization of Pensions and Retirements Concluded in Havana

This Friday concluded in Havana the II International Conference of the International Union of Unions of Pensioners and Retirees of the World Federation of Trade Unions of the Region of the Americas, a meeting in charge of discussing joint strategies to stop the privatization of pensions and retirements of workers.



Members of the international organization highlight Cuba's role in the care and attention provided to the elderly. Photo: Amanda Llanes

The plenary session began with the screening of the Cuban documentary "*Cuidador de Cuidadores*", by Lisett Vila, director of the Paloma Project. This audiovisual addresses the figure of caregivers, as responsible for ensuring the safety of people in situations of disability and vulnerability.

A highlight among the participants in the conference was that currently those who exercise this work – caregivers – in the home are mostly women.

Another significant aspect was the financial aid granted in the Greater Antilles to those who assume the care of the elderly and people in situations of disability or vulnerability.

The representative of Uruguay stated that in his country being an old man represents a condemnation, since pensions are low and the costs of the basic basket are high. Being the policies, both public and private, very unfair for this population sector.

He considered the reform of social security a core issue for the public policies of all nations and urged the articulation of mechanisms to convince the people to fight for their labor rights in order to improve social security.

In his speech, the Chilean delegate highlighted his admiration for the Cuban government's concern for the living conditions of the elderly. "In my country," he said, "the elderly are increasingly asking for alms in the streets, and situations with housing, health and poor pensions. In Chile, pensions rarely exceed 40% of income."



Members of the commissions of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay present the situation of the elderly in their countries in which pensions are low with respect to the cost of income and basic basket. Photo: Amanda Llanes

Quim Boix, Secretary General of the UIS, congratulated Cuba and its trade unionists for their participation in the event, as well as for the quality and productivity with which the exchange of experiences between Latin American and Caribbean nations took place.

He pointed out that the Second European Conference of the International Union of Trade Unions will take place in Monaco and expects the participation of Latin American nations in the III International Congress of the UIS in 2024.

Antonio Forero, Secretary of Organization of the UIS, and Marcos Wolman, Coordinator of the UIS for the Americas, presented the final report of the event and announced the Regional Action Plan of the organization for the next stage of work.

The final document proposes the necessary articulation of the region to face the current context and continue the struggle for the rights of pensioners and retirees in the region.

Promoting events to confront capitalism, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, promoting policies aimed at improving social security and campaigns to respect the rights of workers and pensioners, are some of the tasks to be developed by the international organization in the current context.

On this final day of the international meeting, the participants thanked our country for the welcome, as well as the opportunity to exchange experiences, while congratulating the island for the achievements made in terms of the rights of trade unionists, pensioners and retirees.