

Companions and companions.

Dear comrades,

Once again it is for me a big pleasure to be with you in such an important meeting, and to greet you, as General Secretary, on behalf of those pensioners and retirees from the five continents, members of ITU (International Union of Trade Unions) of the WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions).

All of you, as this 22nd Congress shows, have been organizing for decades and fighting for the rights of the working class in the last stage of our lives, that of pensioners and retired people.

Actually, this stage should be a long collection of years in which we may enjoy life after having contributed with our work to the functioning and improvement of the societies in which we live.

As President of the IMF (International Monetary Fund), Mrs. Lagarde has publicly declared that we should die soon because we are no longer producing goods with which to enrich the capitalists.

This statement clearly shows what capitalism means: exploitation and death.

Capitalists leaders do look for the happiness of people, they just want to exploit us. And when they no longer can they want us to live in bad conditions so that we die soon.

On this same grounds, Japanese labor minister has said, on his country's television, that pensioners and retirees should do hara-kiri (traditional Japanese method of committing suicide) in order to die with dignity and not to live in the last years of his life.

At this stage we say that the only ones who must commit suicide are the leaders of the capitalist system, who are nothing but real murderers and whose only aspirations are to continue increasing their enormous wealth through the exploitation of workers.

Most of the world's wealth continues to be concentrated more and more in the hands of a very few people, thanks to the unjust and inhuman capitalism. Less than 1% of the inhabitants of the planet accumulate more money than the remaining 99%. Only 7 people, the richest on the planet, have the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity, that is to say that the 7 mentioned have the same money as 3,500 million people, or, put it in another way, each of these 7 people has, alone, the same money as 500 million people.

These may seem impossible figures, but they are nothing but true, as they have been recognized by the same capitalist leaders who do not even hide them. Some spread them as one of their many ways of cheating us by the same old song: anyone can get rich inside the capitalists system.

But this unfair daily reality is coming to an end thanks to the struggle of the working class. Capitalism, which is in continuous systemic and structural crises (another one is just around the corner), will disappear from the planet as a system of slavery that can't be accepted for more decades.

Just as the first form of slavery was finally defeated through long lasting struggle waged by the peoples of the world, we are going to put an end to the second stage of slavery, those called capitalism, which always appears in front of us appears disguised with the words "free market".

More soon than later socialism will become a reality. Socialism is the only possible system able to bring a new and fair society without the exploitation of the majority of the population by the minority that currently owns the means of production.

We must build socialism by learning from the great successes, and also from the mistakes made in the countries that showed that a society without social classes was possible. I refer in particular to the former Soviet Union, which 102 years ago set up a society without exploited or exploiters. It was the first society in which the right to a pension was extended to all its inhabitants, which allowed them to live with dignity, after only 25 years of work.

Right now the capitalists want us to work 40 or more years in order to be entitled to pensions of misery that do not allow us to lead a decent life. Here is demonstrated, once again, the superiority of socialism against capitalism.

Our International Union of Pensioners and Retired Unions was born in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, Europe, in February 2014. Almost 100 delegates from more than 30 countries of the five continents attended those First Congress where we approved the documents that have helped us to function and fight during these first 4 years of life as ITU.

In this First Congress a team formed by 24 leaders was appointed. Now, this is the team we are going to renew in our Second Congress, which we will be held next February 2019 in Bogota, Colombia, America. I hope that in this Second Congress we will again elect, as President of our International Union, our comrade Dimos Koumpouris, who has exercised his responsibility very correctly since the founding of our International Union.

During these four years we have managed to organize pensioners and retirees from continent to continent, holding the following Regional Conferences: 1) in America, in Quito, Ecuador, on September 30th, 2015; 2) in Europe, in Denmark, on July 16th, 2016; 3) in Africa, in Dakar, Senegal, on November 16th, 2016; 4) in Asia, in Nepal (where the aforementioned comrade Dimos Koumpouris came to preside over the Conference), on December 3rd, 2016; and 5) in the Arab Countries, in Tunisia, on October 26th, 2017.

Beside this we have been the only International Union of Trade Unions of the World Federation of Trade Unions that have established one day a year to commemorate the struggle against capitalism throughout the planet. This day is October 1st of each year, date established by the UN as a reminder of the existence of Pensioners and Retirees.

On October 1st, which in some countries such as Greece and Argentina has been held at a close date, it has been the third year in which the celebration of this World Day of Struggle has been successfully carried out. We have taken part in all its related activities along with comrades from dozens of countries from the five continents. Many samples of these activities can be found at our website as ITU.

In the Spanish state, where I come from, this October 1st, there have been concentrations and demonstrations in almost 200 towns throughout the territory. Actions that we have promoted against pro-capitalist political parties that said there was no available money for pensions, but

that they have ended up accepting a first part of the claims taken to the streets on dozens of occasions (now every Monday).

Also in the Spanish state, we have had to confront the yellow unions, Comisiones Obreras and UGT (the former ceased to be and to consider itself a class union some 20 years ago). The yellow unions have sold and betrayed the workers, not only active workers by signing the loss of their rights in the agreements reached through collective bargain, but also on the issue of pensions.

In 2011, Comisiones Obreras and UGT signed, along with the Social Democrats of the PSOE then in power, a document that delays the retirement age in Spain up to 67 years (with a loss of up to 30% of what was collected as a first pension). And this happened only a year after the age of retirement was lowered (to 58 years for men and 52 for women), by decision of the anti-imperialist Bolivian government lead by Evo Morales..., Bolivia, one of the many American nations formerly exploited and plundered by colonial Spain; a nation where George Mavrikos, on behalf of the WFTU, celebrated in 2017 a great anti-imperialist rally alongside Evo Morales.

All over the planet the yellow unions, corresponding to the money paid to them by capitalist and employer governments, continue to help the exploiters. They continue to betray the working class they appear to represent. On the subject of pensions, they support the existence of Private Funds. They began in the 70's of last century giving support to the fascist Chilean dictator, General Salvador Pinochet, who promised with the help of the ICFTU, actually turned to the yellow and treacherous CSI, that Chileans would charge, with the Private Pension Funds, 100% of their last salary as active workers as the first payment of the pension instead of the 70% that they were charging at that time. Today, 40 years later, those lie carefully spread by the fascists with the help of the yellow unions of the ITUC has been clearly demonstrated. Today, the first pension payment in Chile is only 35% of the last salary as an active worker.

The same has happened in the multinational Telefónica-Movistar to its workers of the Spanish state. In 1992 the company, by prescribing the Spanish law, needed the consent of its workers to privatize the Pension Fund. The Spanish yellow unions Comisiones Obreras and UGT supported the company in this attempt, but thanks to the union AST, affiliated to the WFTU, they lost the first two referendums, as the workers who voted did not accept the privatization. In order not to lose the third referendum, the company changed the conditions and established as a volunteer choice (to be taken by each worker on individual grounds) the passage from Public Fund to Private Fund. This third referendum was won by the company while the Private Fund was presented as an improvement for those who signed up for it.

Today, 26 years later, the great deception has been demonstrated, as announced by the AST union, the only one union that truly defends the rights of workers and that, consequently, is affiliated to the WFTU.

Compared to the workers who decided to stay in the Public Fund, those who joined the Private Fund receive far less. About this loss there are lots of public documents that show how the Private Fund works. Also those who now charge less, for having agreed to move to a Private Fund, have lost each year, 14 times (in each of their 14 salary payments), 2.4% of their salary that would swell the Fund Private.

And now they will understand it completely. The money has not been lost, they have lost it, the workers, as it always happens in capitalism, for the money has finally gone to the exploiters and to their friends. Thus, the company has earned more than 100 million Euros in

these 26 years. To this sum we must add more than 20 million Euros that went to each of the yellow union behind this agreement. This has been the final destination of the money stolen from workers who accepted the passage from Public Fund to Private Fund.

They must know, all Greek pensioners, that these yellow unions are already committed (in exchange for the millions of subsidies they receive from the European Union) to support the new European law that are being implemented far from the public eye.

It is called PEPP, that is to say European Plan of Personal Pensions, obviously of private pensions.

Equipped with the false excuse of "saving" the pensions, they would become the big banks and the global financiers who control the now public money of the State Pensions Funds, funds that the workers contribute to Social Security through the payments they do while on active work...

European pensioners have to prepare for a great struggle that prevents the capitalists who run the EU from stealing our money.

It has been shown once again that the worst for the workers is to heed the yellow unions that enrich themselves betraying the working class.

In conclusion, I must tell you that our International Union of Pensioners and Retirees has been the sole voice of Pensioners from all over the world in the ILO (International Labor Organization) for the last four years and throughout the existence of the ILO (which will be 100 years old).

No other voice of the Pensioners has been heard from the floor in this forum in which the WFTU is represented by our General Secretary George Mavrikos.

That is why we must claim that there is no other worldwide organization of Pensioners and Retired people in the entire planet.

As such organization we will continue to fight and defend the rights of the working class in the last stage of our lives, with your help and with your effort, the pensioners and retired Greek workers, and many organizations of Pensioners from the 5 continents.

We wish you a great success and good results in your 22nd Congress.

LONG AND DIFFERENT LIFE FOR GREEK, PENSIONIST AND RETIRED PEOPLE!

UP WITH THE STRUGGLE OF PENSIONISTS, RETIRED AND RETIRED FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD!

LONG LIVE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

LONG LIVE THE WFTU!