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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Written statement* submitted by the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU),
a non-governmental organization in general consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[8 February 2005]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

20 YEARS AFTER BHOPAL DISASTER.

It is twenty years since one of the worst industrial accidents in history occurred in Bhopal. On the mid night of December 2, 1984, a deadly 40 tonnes of known and unknown poisons emitted from tank no 610 and 611 of the US-based MNC Union Carbide Corporation's (UCC) pesticide manufacturing unit in Bhopal. It was being run by UCC's Indian subsidiary Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL). The whole city was transformed into a gas chamber.

Till date nearly 25,000 innocent people met a painful death. Out of these, tens of thousands of victims are still seriously injured. Directly or indirectly, the entire city had been affected.

The severely affected victims are dying a slow painful death with horrible diseases like cancer, non-curable TB, heart and kidney failures, brain strokes and others pains.

All the systems of their body have been badly affected, including gynaecological and immune system.

A large number of people are still suffering from many known and unknown serious symptoms.

The World Federation of Trade unions consider that in 1982 the Union Carbide had prior information that if impurities get mixed up in the storage tank of MIC, a big disaster could take place. Not only were the necessary precautions not taken to prevent such an eventuality, but also the above fact was suppressed. All this cruelty of the profit-driven MNC cost the people of Bhopal enormous suffering, even till date.

For the World Federation of Trade Unions, this unjust settlement of 1989 has turned the seriously affected victims into beggars as they have lost previous work capacity and jobs. They have spent thousands of rupees during the last 20 years on hopeless medical treatment, lawyer's fee, feeding the family and others needs. However, they got only Rs 15,000 as full and final compensation after deducting the interim relief.

Among the major demands of the ongoing struggle in Bhopal, is the reversal of the new economic and industrial policies which have facilitated such a disaster and the getting away from any liability.

The world federation of trade unions support the demands of the people of Bhopal for a stronger regulatory mechanism to prevent obsolete, faulty and hazardous technologies being forced on third world countries like India; technology transfer by MNCs; monitoring of the location of hazardous industries and its effects on environment; labour laws and working conditions must be also monitored through tripartite bodies with workers representation.

As it was expressed in the Declaration of the Forum of the Civil Society to the XI UNCTAD Conference: "..... Transnational Companies must be made responsible for its activities which include the legal right of the citizens and communities to protect themselves against the investors who violate their rights...."

**Bhopal is a clear example of where lead the policies that only try to obtain profits
not matter which could be the consequences.**

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