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GUY RYDER – SPEECH FOR 16 SEPTEMBER 2005, NEW YORK

(Your Excellencies, Co-Chairs of the 2005 World Summit, Distinguished Heads of State and Governments, Mr. Secretary-General Kofi Annan., ...Ladies and Gentlemen...)

I am proud to speak here today on behalf of the 145 million working men and women united in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ICFTU, and also on behalf of the World Confederation of Labour. I am proud to speak also as one of the spokespersons here for the GCAP, the Global Call to Action against Poverty, of which the ICFTU was a founding member.

Poverty and hunger remain the lot of billions of people worldwide. This is unconscionable and unsustainable. This is a time for you to show vision and leadership and the capacity to work together to implement the commitments you have made at the major UN Conferences and global Summits of recent years. As political leaders, you must recognize the need to foster global solidarity in order to advance commonly shared global objectives, and lend full support for the achievement of national development priorities.

We reiterate the call of GCAP: "Wake up to poverty". Urgent solutions must be found. The right policy choices are possible, are within our reach, and MUST be adopted at this Summit, in order to turn the situation around, and bring about a virtuous cycle of growth with equity.

First and foremost, we need an enabling global policy environment as called for by MDG8. By that, I mean of course fair trade, more and better aid, debt cancellation and debt relief, and a new, strong social dimension to the policies of the international financial institutions and the WTO.

We need effective national-level policies with a focus on pro-poor, gender sensitive growth strategies, on participation of civil society including trade unions, and on respect for workers' rights and human rights in general.

And globally and nationally, we need a strong focus on the Decent Work Agenda as the most significant way out of poverty, as called for by the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. Decent work, carried out on a basis of respect for fundamental workers' rights, provides the empowerment that women and men need to improve their living standards, to participate in decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods, and ultimately to work their way out of and escape from poverty.

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The United Nations system, including the ILO with its body of norms, provides the social pillar of the multilateral system; as the anchor for establishing policy coherence. It must be strengthened, not weakened.