

ISTANBUL ACCORD ON UNION ORGANISING IN THE METRO SECTOR

On 28-29 November 2023, trade unions of workers in metro systems around the world have met in Istanbul, Türkiye. Representing workers from Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, the Arab World and Asia-Pacific, we have exchanged experiences from our different cities and countries. Metro systems are expanding everywhere, and despite our diverse economic, social and political contexts, many of the issues confronting us are held in common.

These issues include:

01. Our **fundamental labour rights**, including the freedom of association to join a union without discrimination, the right to collectively bargain to improve wages and working conditions, and the right to strike. These rights are under assault in many of our countries, in metro systems and beyond, and we must fight to defend them.
02. The **safety and health** of ourselves, our colleagues and our passengers. We have the right to work in safe and healthy metro systems, protected from physical harm (such as from asbestos, air pollution, etc.) and mental harm (such as from stress and fatigue). Our safety and health as metro workers is the strongest safeguard for the safety and health of our passengers, especially those who are disabled and marginalised in other ways.
03. The introduction of **new technologies** can either serve the interests of bosses or workers. Technologies introduced by employers without negotiation and consultation perpetuate the exploitation of workers and alienate passengers, prioritising profit-maximisation over safety and downgrading service quality. In the worst cases, disregard for workers' skills and expertise can cost lives. Automation should not replace or cause detriment to human labour in metro systems. If technology is harnessed for strong labour standards via a process of just transition, it can give workers control, improve our working lives and the lives of our passengers.
04. Who **owns and operates** our metro systems. The privatisation and subcontracting of services and the outsourcing of workers are part of a failed neoliberal approach to the economy, to the detriment of safety and social conditions. Meanwhile, winning and defending public ownership and formal employment relations – underpinned by sustainable public funding arrangements – is essential to metro systems as public services operating for the common good.



05. The promotion of **gender equality** in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Metro systems must transform to end the systemic exclusion of women workers, by developing specific policies and conditions to recruit and retain women in the workforce. This includes providing appropriate sanitation facilities and respecting rights related to menstruation, parenthood, the menopause, etc. We demand an end to violence and harassment in our workplaces.

Following our meeting in Istanbul, we commit to taking collective action and strengthening international solidarity among metro workers in our common struggles, including organising together in multinational companies which operate public transport. In a world increasingly afflicted by division and conflict – most pressingly, at this very moment, in Palestine – we must deepen our cooperation across borders and work together for peace. This cooperation will include:

- Developing educational materials and programmes for metro workers, union representatives and officials to build our capacity to organise, campaign and bargain for strong labour standards and better metro systems.
- Developing a metro workers charter as a common political platform, setting out principles to inform collective bargaining with metro employers in different industrial and legal contexts, with particular attention to model clauses on new technologies and gender equality.
- Organising a global virtual meeting of metro workers to broaden our discussions in Istanbul to other unions in the sector.
- Planning a global day of action by metro workers and unions, with a particular focus on the common issues of safety, privatisation, subcontracting and outsourcing.
- Organising international solidarity for industrial disputes and campaigns involving metro workers and unions in different countries.
- Ensuring a strong presence of metro workers at the next Urban Transport Conference, to be held as part of the 46th ITF Congress in Marrakesh in October 2024.
- Engaging with the International Association of Public Transport (UITP), as the representative group of metro employers, on issues affecting the sector worldwide.

We are the workers who move the workers to work; we are public transport.

Dayanışma!