



IDWF 4th Congress Ten Years Together

De Haan, Belgium
2 — 5 October 2023



“ Global Solidarity:
Domestic Workers Build Bridges,
Close Gaps, Gain Rights



In order to hold our Fourth Congress in De Haan, Belgium on 2-5 October 2023, many organizations and individuals were very supportive. The IDWF would like to express our appreciation to the following:

ACV-CSC Union

Solidarity Center

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)

International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)

Written by Katherine Eva Maich, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Women's & Gender Studies, Texas A&M University

With appreciation for the dedicated team who captured the spirit of this Congress through their detailed note taking: Luna Ranjit, Sara Khatib, Gustavo Garcia, Pari Farmani and Alexis De Simone from the Solidarity Center, and Maya Fawaz and Ana Paula Melli from the IDWF. This group was talented, patient, and dedicated to being diligent around communication, translation, and representation of delegates' voices and opinions within the note taking process. Adriana Paz Ramírez was brilliant in her approach to organizing and supporting the notetaking team.

Photographs by Professor Jennifer N. Fish, Katherine Maich, and the IDWF

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“...this Congress brought forward a sense of solidarity as the IDWF has been “Ten Years Together.”

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Background and History



The IDWF was formed at the founding Congress in October 2013 in Montevideo, Uruguay, when the International Domestic Worker Network (IDWN) became a global federation with 48 affiliates. As of October 2023, it has grown to 88 affiliates (trade unions and associations) from 68 countries across 7 regions, representing over 670,000 individual domestic worker members.

The IDWF is the first global federation of domestic worker organizations. The IDWF grew out of the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN), which was formed in 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Federation aims to organize domestic workers, promote the ratification of Convention 189, campaign for legal change towards decent work for domestic

workers and the elimination of child labor, support migrant workers, combat gender-based violence, promote health and safety initiatives for domestic workers, mobilize allies and broad-based support, and build overall solidarity across regions and domestic worker organizations.

This report summarizes the workshops, speeches, and events of this Congress that took place alongside global strategizing, community building and the adoption of a series of important constitutional amendments and resolutions. As in previous Congresses, the 4th Congress addressed the challenges domestic workers are facing, but also showcased the larger successes and achievements of the movement at the regional level and the global scale.



The IDWF is the first global federation of domestic worker organizations.



countries spanning 7 regions (Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and the Middle East and North Africa). This was the first large-scale in-person meeting since the IDWF's Second Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, from 16-19 November 2018. The 4th Congress took place in Center Parcs, a peaceful, family-friendly set of cottages nestled near the Belgium coast, not far from Bruges. It was the first Congress to take place in Europe since the inception of the IDWF.

Many significant changes have taken place since the last IDWF Congress. As the movement was recovering from the devastating effects of the pandemic, on 16 January 2023, President of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) Myrtle Witbooi, passed away from a long battle with cancer, leaving a strong and storied legacy behind. This was the first Congress without Myrtle's booming voice and powerful messages of solidarity and song, and her presence was deeply missed. At the time of the 4th Congress, General Secretary Elizabeth Tang was embattled by political unrest in Hong Kong where she was not allowed to travel outside of the country, and therefore was only able to join the Congress virtually through Zoom technology. Finally, this was the first in-person Congress since the Coronavirus pandemic, which was a very challenging experience for domestic workers and their loved ones around the world.

Therefore, this Congress brought forward a sense of solidarity as the IDWF has been "Ten Years Together." This spirit of solidarity carried over into the Congress' workshop sessions that were dynamic and participatory, and its presentations that involved active question-and-answer sessions with engagement and dialogue. Unfortunately, a significant number of delegates had visa troubles and were unable to travel to Belgium, but overall it was an important time for many delegates and leaders to come together again to physically share space, exchange ideas, and connect about this dynamic and exciting global movement.

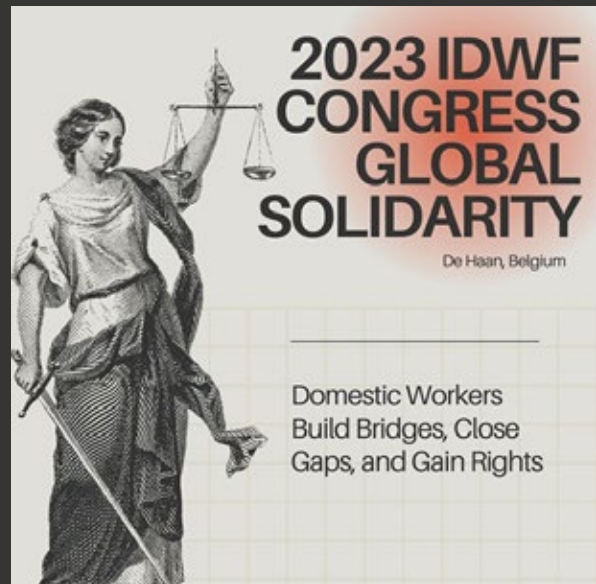
About the Congress

The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) held its 4th Congress in De Haan, Belgium, from 2-5 October in cooperation with the ACV/CSC Union.

The gathering included member delegates, observers, speakers and guests from 68



Representation of the Participants: Delegates, Observers, and Guests



The IDWF 4th Congress brought together delegates, observers and guests from 7 regions:

AFRICA:

Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

ASIA:

Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand

CARIBBEAN:

Antigua & Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica

EUROPE:

Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, Switzerland, and the UK

LATIN AMERICA:

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay and Peru

MENA:

Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan

NORTH AMERICA:

USA

In addition, the IDWF technical staff team was present, including the project team, communication and financial team. The IDWF interpreters were also present, actively engaging in simultaneous translation. This congress had 14 languages, reflecting the organization's commitment to the language justice principle.



Our Welcome Addresses

Carmen Britz, President of the IDWF, kicked off the Congress by noting what a momentous day it was to have everyone gathered together again, though the absence of Myrtle Witbooi was palpable. Despite that huge loss, Carmen reminded everyone that the IDWF is growing, as the membership has tripled since 2018. Carmen mentioned that the IDWF General Secretary Elizabeth Tang had received the Arthur Svensson Award for the accomplishments in promoting the rights of domestic workers around the world from the Committee for the Arthur Svensson International Prize for Trade Union Rights. “We used to be invisible, but now the world sees us!” she declared.

Pia Stalpaert, President of the ACV-CSC Union, welcomed everyone to her home country of Belgium. She noted that being a domestic worker is tough, and the Congress is the place to discuss those challenges that will shape the future of the IDWF and workers.

Luc Triangle of the ITUC also spoke and emphasized that the ITUC honors domestic workers’ resilience, courage, and determination

for social justice which leads to recognition of the essential care work that domestic workers provide. **Asmaou Bah**, the Master of Ceremony, noted that the ITUC is an important ally, and that we will continue working to ratify conventions including C189 and C190 as there is a great deal of inequality in a sector that is highly feminized and informal, and prone to precarity, harassment and violence. Triangle noted, “Women have lost 800 billion USD in payment during the pandemic. Young women, migrants, indigenous, and the entire informal economy were highly vulnerable, and suffered.” The ITUC recently launched a new social contract in Melbourne, rooted in a transformative agenda and committed to advancing decent work for domestic workers, including migrant domestic workers.





“Your courage to fight for the right to collective bargain is inspiring!” Triangle declared, stating that the ITUC will stand by the IDWF during those struggles.

Jane Barrett of WIEGO then stood in for Sally Roever and emphasized how proud WIEGO is to see such an established and strong Federation. “How many of you have an employer contract?” Jane asked the room. After seeing only some delegates raise their hands, she responded, “In the next few years we want to see the room filled with domestic workers who can say that they have a contract, social security, and a pension.” Jane also emphasized the importance of making connections with other informal workers, such as waste pickers, street vendors and home-based workers. “When you go home, make sure you find the waste picker, the home based worker, and the street vendor to build local solidarity.”



“ Elizabeth Tang had received the Arthur Svensson Award for the accomplishments in promoting the rights of domestic workers around the world.

Kristjan Bragason spoke about the partnership and common history the IUF shares with the IDWF, and the inspiration of this moment to champion domestic workers’ rights across Europe and in the world of work. She declared, “Let this moment inspire us as we march ahead with unity as the fight continues, and we champion domestic workers’ rights everywhere!”



Tribute to

Myrtle and the Leaders We Have

Lost

Elizabeth Tang joined virtually to reflect on the loss of Myrtle and her lasting legacy, as well as to pay tribute to other leaders from across the IDWF who had passed away. Representatives from different regions gave touching memorials regarding their fallen comrades and sisters. A video message previously recorded by Myrtle addressing the crowd was played, bringing about joy but also somber sadness as Myrtle’s voice filled the room.

Finally, Myrtle’s daughter, Jacqui Michaels, spoke and reminded everyone that her mother had valiantly fought her battle against cancer but never left domestic workers out of her heart until the last day of her life. “At the end, she couldn’t speak, but whispered: we must buy coffee and bread for our workers. She was thinking of our workers until the very last breath. Our mother, who asked us to carry on, wanted her life



to be remembered and to inspire commitment for the struggle,” Jacqui added.

Carmen mentioned the photobook present as part of a memorial for Myrtle, and asked everyone to come up and sign it so that the recognition of domestic worker comrades from all around the world could pay tribute to Myrtle. Carmen echoed the sentiment in the room as she stated, “She lives on in our hearts.”

“When you ask us, what is it that domestic workers want? The answer is simple: we want what you have, rights, like any other worker.”

Myrtle Witbooi, 2021



The 5-Years Report



In presenting the 5-Years Report, Elizabeth Tang spoke and took the opportunity to thank everyone for the solidarity messages and for standing with her. “I wish I was in the room with you, to sing, to dance, to debate, and to do everything together,” Elizabeth said. “But the political situation is so bad that people like me who are trade unionists and human rights activists are prevented from doing our rightful jobs.”

She presented the 5-Years Report with important milestones of the Federation, dedicating her presentation to Myrtle. Between 2019-2023, even though facing hardships, the IDWF achieved a number of important successes. The Federation welcomed 21 new affiliates, bringing the IDWF up to 88 affiliates in 68 countries across 7 regions. The Executive Committee and team came together and developed priority actions and made them into a 5 year strategic plan under the leadership of the regional coordinators. These strategic pillars are:

- Federation Development
- Research and Campaigns for the ratification of C189 and C190, and related policies for domestic workers
- Capacity building
- Organizing migrant domestic workers

Elizabeth highlighted certain results achieved, noting that these successes are because of the wonderful IDWF team:

- 21 affiliates have joined since 2018, representing a 30% increase in membership
- 94% of affiliates have improved their membership fees payment
- The budget increased from 1.6 million USD in 2018 to 5 million USD in 2023
- A solidarity fund for domestic workers was established
- C189 ratification and implementation campaigns

Elizabeth also mentioned several challenges remaining ahead:

- Fundraising: More resources to support the growing needs and the growing number of affiliates. IDWF is very dependent on funders
- The need to continue to invest in leadership capacity building, including in the care economy, climate justice and other emerging issues. IDWF has to be knowledgeable and able to participate in these discussions and influence the policies
- Policy changes and implementation challenges

Finally, new goals were discussed for the path forward:

- In 2018, the goal was to organize one million domestic workers. The IDWF is close, with 670,000 organized domestic workers globally, but we must continue to organize
- Build a global movement of domestic workers that is sustainable, democratic, and united
- C189: Elizabeth noted that we “must hold this tight as our main weapon, which allows us to overcome informalities and get our rightful place in the care economy, achieve legal protections, and attain more ratifications and adoptions”

Elizabeth thanked those who have walked with the IDWF, given us technical guidance and also been friends and allies, including the IUF, WIEGO, the ILO, ITUC, and the Solidarity Center. She ended her presentation by stating that she would step down after her ten years of leadership.

“Thank you—it has been my huge honor to serve you for 10 years, and I am humbled when I am with you, in meetings, in conferences, in your countries, etc. It has been a great privilege and the time with you will be a lifetime memory with me.”



Workshop 1:

The C189 and Care Economy



The C189 and Care Economy Workshop began with **Shirley Pryce**, President of the Jamaica Household Workers Union (JHWU), setting the stage around the importance of care work, which sustains life. Domestic workers globally play a key role in the care economy and the global care chain. C189, Shirley reminded us, is a “powerful international instrument that professionalizes domestic work to ensure decent working conditions.”



Valenzuela discussed how women have long been considered to be caregivers, with their unpaid and often taken-for-granted labor being relegated to the private sphere, while men’s work is

“Care is broadly defined as work and relationships that are necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of all— young, the old, disabled, everyone. Care at its core is a very basic need that sustain life.”

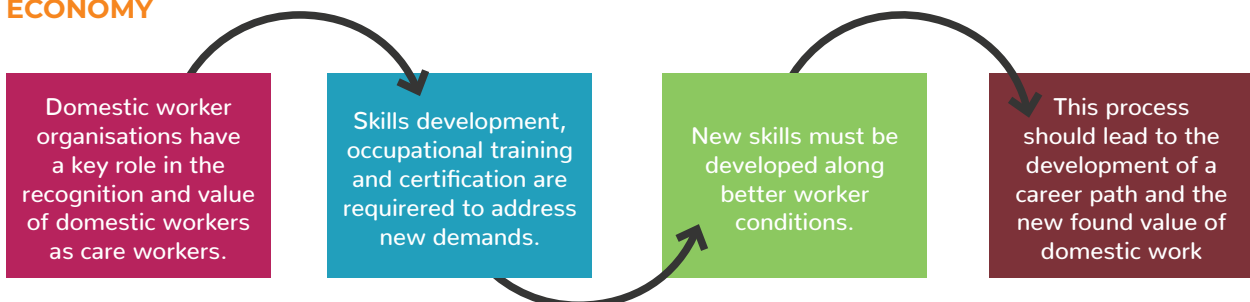
Shirley Pryce

Our panelist, **Maria Elena Valenzuela**, an ILO expert on gender and domestic work, asked straightforward questions in her presentation:

- What is care?
- Why is domestic work so important?

generally rewarded and seen as productive in the public sphere. Unpaid care benefits capitalism, Valenzuela explained, and there is a growing care crisis as more elderly people need care at an alarming rate. Unfortunately, most public policies have not adapted to these complex needs and this growing crisis, instead relying on female relatives and other women to provide care, which can lead to the feminization of poverty. Domestic workers must also be at the heart of these conversations given their increasing medical specializations in at-home care, the needs of domestic workers’ own families, and their related migration patterns structuring the global care chain. She noted that care is a public good and that we need more vocational training to respond to the new care needs with better working conditions, as well as career development paths forward for the increasing specialization of care work.

CHALLENGES TO MOVE TOWARDS RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC WORK IN THE CARE ECONOMY





NEW CARE WORK DEMANDS FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS



In response to Valenzuela’s thorough and insightful presentation, **Shirley Pryce** enthusiastically exclaimed, “I feel pregnant with information! So much information!” which was met with light laughter and agreement from the audience.

Next, **Claire Hobden**, ILO Technical Specialist on Domestic and other vulnerable Workers and longtime advocate of domestic workers’ rights, kicked off the second part of the workshop with an inspiring greeting. “It’s a huge honor to be here with you—it’s your tenth anniversary, this is a group of some of the fiercest leaders I have ever met, and in over twenty years of working on domestic work, I am re-inspired again by the incredible work you are doing,” Claire said. She asked how many domestic workers in the room consider themselves care workers, and then introduced the panel discussion around care—which is discussion of the future—through a series of questions proposed to the panelists.

Question 1: Who delivers care work in your regions? Do domestic workers in your region see themselves as care workers?

Question 2: Have your countries been discussing care policies, and are domestic workers included in these discussions?

Question 3: What has your organization or an organization in your region been doing to engage in these policy discussions, and to advocate for care?



Workshop 1: The C189 and Care Economy

The panelists included **Sonia George** from SEWA, India; **Ruth Díaz** from FENAMUTRA, Dominican Republic; **Emanuela Loretone** from FILCAMS, Italy; and **June Barrett** from NDWA, US. Panelists noted how the care conversation began with academics when domestic workers were not sitting at the table, so it is an important shift for domestic workers to talk about their own challenges as care workers. “We are the thread that holds society together,” June noted.

One of the major issues in the European context is the diverse national legislation. Many care workers are also migrant workers and it is difficult to become a citizen, so regularization is a huge problem as are issues in being underpaid. In the US, President Joe Biden declared April as Caregivers’ Month, an action that resulted from widespread organizing and allyship. Still, qualitative and quantitative steps forward must happen such as campaigns in Asia that strive for fair minimum wage and social protections, and hope to inspire worldwide discussions on the care economy.

A major theme from this panel is that globally, while domestic workers have made impressive strides, they are the ones who perform care work but are not being consulted in the care policies being crafted about them and their labor.

The next portion of the workshop focused on care and the ILO. **Chidi King**, ILO Branch Chief of Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion noted,

“There is a disconnect between what care we provide in our daily personal life and domestic work done for other families. The 29th of October this year (2023) will be the first celebration of care workers. This date is officially recognized by the UN. This is a result of domestic workers’ advocacy efforts.”

The ITUC has care and domestic work among its many priorities, as there are many challenges ahead: recognition of domestic workers as workers and as care workers, the reduction of burdens on women and the importance of sharing care responsibilities, and caregivers’ rights as basic human rights.



Adam Rogalewski of Public Service International stated,

“We have 700 affiliates in 145 countries, with 30 million people—we have this momentum of domestic workers. Who of you are looking after other people? Care is the future and domestic workers are the future of trade unions and the labor force.”

“We are the thread that holds society together.”



Mark Bergfeld from UNICARE pointed out the deep gender inequality that remains globally pervasive. “All of the “running the household” responsibilities are assigned to women. The richest countries from the global north are recruiting workers from the poorest countries in the global south. There are no decent working conditions for these workers. Domestic workers have the right to decent work jobs in their home country and they should have the right to choose where to work and live. Domestic workers’ work is a skilled work and should be valued because it makes every other work possible. Domestic workers are running an entire economy.” Importantly, he noted that there used to be hope in multilateral institutions like the UN agencies, but that has changed over time. Instead, looking to the future, Bergfeld noted,

“The struggle for labor justice is a union struggle. Domestic workers rights must be on unions’ agendas.”



“The pandemic changed the way domestic work is perceived. COVID showed us care is not a commodity. Care is a basic right.”

Adam Rogalewski

Panel Discussion:

Workers Overcoming Informalities: Issues and Strategies

Karin Pape from WIEGO stepped in to moderate the panel discussion on comparative informality for workers, an important and growing globally issue. First, she began by posing the question,

“What do we mean by informality? What does informality mean for you?” Many delegates answered, stating, **“No work security, no recognition, no unemployment benefits, no rights, discrimination, no holidays...”**

This set the stage for the panel discussants to share information and strategies about their pocket of the informal economy, how it shapes their members’ livelihoods, and their organization’s responses.

Lorraine Sibanda, President, Streetnet International

“StreetNet is a global alliance for street vendors with over 50 organizations; informality means that they are not protected by laws in their countries and have no social security recognition.”



Leonor Marisa Melina Larraburu, General Secretary of FACCyR, a representative of waste pickers in Argentina

“For us, this means working outdoors in a dumpsite without having anything and facing hardships, and there is also social stigma as society discriminates against us.”

Sabrina Bishop, UDW

“71,000 homecare and childcare providers have joined our union in the US. Homecare providers provide personal care that gives clients the care and dignity they deserve. Informalities affect our workforce, and we are now finally able to call ourselves a union.”

Antonia Peña, NDWA

“We are excluded from any kind of labor law and discrimination has continued since the 1930s. We are deprived from collective organizing because the people we work for do not allow us to organize nationally, and our migrant status is another informality we face.”

Jane Barrett from WIEGO mentioned an important takeaway from this panel that she has learned through global discussions with workers: the phrase “informal worker” is not favored; using “informal employment” or “informal economy” is preferable. This shifts the status of informal away from the worker herself and on to the status of employment, and so this is a starting point for WIEGO in their approach to the informal economy.

There was some discussion on this point, however, as there may be differing opinions based on language and region. Karin next addressed the panel and asked what acceptable conditions for each sector would look like.

Lorraine noted that in most countries, street vendors are placed at the periphery of cities and face a lot of harassment. For street vendors to be recognized as workers and have access to social protections, this would allow them access to benefits like maternity and unemployment protections.

For Leonor and the waste pickers, they started recycling the city’s trash. They created a movement by doing this work and became the second trade union in Argentina, which is how the state later granted them a salary and recognized their utility.

Sabrina from UDW noted that even though they didn’t have a right to have a union, they continued fighting until they won one. One of their goals is to give support to their members to make sure they have a better life through childcare support and education. Similarly, the vision for the NDWA is to be able to have the same workers’ rights and benefits, and recognition that a private home is also a workplace. Antonia also noted that it’s challenging at a national level in the US because each city and state can have their own laws, but fair migration laws is a big goal.

Sabrina noted that at UDW, childcare workers were the first in our nation to receive healthcare benefits.

“In the words of our beloved Myrtle, if I can do it, you can do it!”

Key Moments: Constitutional Amendments and Resolutions



An important tenet of the IDWF's 4th Congress was to make sure that all regions are represented, especially the MENA region, and to ensure "ethnic, geographic, cultural and political diversity" as a delegate from the Belgian Trade Union put it. There were a number of very important discussions between IDWF delegates on several topics over the course of the Congress, and representation for the MENA region was central. Many important points were made around the importance of unionism as being based on sharing and diversity, and others mentioned how the IDWF is an international federation that needs global perspectives.

Others mentioned,

"We are here to fight for domestic workers regardless of nationality, color, or race,"

while another delegate pointed out,

"Who can best represent the MENA region, who are the most oppressed and the most abused, if not represented in the Executive Committee? They need to be in the IDWF leadership."

The voting on the MENA representation resolution concluded with 128 votes to adopt the reorganization, with 10 votes against. Therefore, MENA was brought into full representation as the 7th region in the IDWF. In addition to this important resolution, 15 others were circulated during the Congress, with further discussion by the Executive Committee following the Congress. More details on the resolutions adopted in Belgium and by the Executive Committee in November 2023 can be found in the publication:

<https://idwfed.org/publications/congress/idwf-resolutions-adopted-in-4th-congress/>

Another important achievement was the decision to have a 1st and 2nd Vice President for the IDWF. Following the principles of global perspectives and geographic diversity, there is a key tenet of regional balance with the vice presidents, as the 1st VP and the 2nd VP shall be from different regions. This was a precedent setting decision for the IDWF and an important way to build up the leadership structure.

Key elections also took place throughout the Congress, establishing a robust collective of global leaders for the upcoming years. Carmen Britez was nominated as a candidate for the position of President, with Pia Stalpaert also being nominated though she declined the position. Toindepi Dhure and Sonia George were both nominated for 1st Vice President with Toindepi Dhure ultimately securing that position, while June Barrett accepted the nomination for 2nd Vice President and was unopposed. Adriana Paz Ramírez was the only person nominated for the position of General Secretary, and thus Adriana was named the new General Secretary of the IDWF.

There was a wonderful welcome dinner provided for all by the ACV Union with time to socialize and relax on the first day of the Congress. This also helped to inspire a sense of community, and set a welcoming tone of solidarity for the upcoming days of discussions. Center Parcs also fostered a communal environment for socializing and connecting, with cottages lining the walking paths and nearby lake enroute to the Congress gathering space.



Messages from Allies in the Fight for Domestic Workers' Rights

ALEXIS DE SIMONE, THE SOLIDARITY CENTER

"We are the largest US-based international labor rights organization, an allied organization of the AFL-CIO and works in more than 70 countries, and we are joined here by 6 colleagues. In 2015 the Solidarity Center and the IDWF came together, because we believe that domestic organizing is the vanguard of the global labor movement. Domestic work is visionary and powerful, we know that there's no victory in labor rights without racial justice, with gender equity, and without sexual diversity.

When domestic workers win, the working class wins. When you lead, we march! We're proud to be here with you in this fight."

LORRAINE SIBANDA, PRESIDENT OF STREETNET INTERNATIONAL

StreetNet is a global alliance of street and market vendors and informal traders that represents 600,000 workers. Sibanda began her address by recognizing the legacy of Myrtle and Elizabeth's leadership. She stated,

"Myrtle is always in our hearts and minds and will never be forgotten. We're proud of our partnership with General Secretary Elizabeth Tang, who is an exemplary leader. Strength to you, Elizabeth!"

Sibanda emphasized that C189 is our greatest legal weapon, and that we must continue to advocate for its ratification. She concluded with a message of unification and solidarity, declaring, "Unity is our key strategy to proceed with our demands and achieve what we deserve. Nothing for us without us! I encourage your comrades to exercise unity - unity is our strength."



SUE LONGLEY, IUF

Sue Longley acknowledged the long course of solidarity between the IUF and the IDWF. She also spoke of how this sector is one of the toughest to organize, given the exclusions from labor law and its protections, the difficulties in organizing with powerful employers, and the challenges to organizing inside of private households. Given that, she noted, we face many challenges in common with the strategies we have to adopt to organize strong unions and to give effective voice to domestic workers.

Domestic workers, Sue Longley said, can lead the way in how to organize women workers in sectors that have been often ignored by the traditional trade union movement. More importantly, as the world of work changes and becomes more precarious, we need to fight back against that and make sure that permanent employment with good conditions is the right of all workers. "It has been my pleasure to work with Elizabeth for many years, through her days in Hong Kong, through the founding of this organization, and sister Myrtle, what an inspiration she was to us all," Sue Longley added.

She concluded,

"As your movement grows and develops, my reflection would be, what would Myrtle say? What would her advice have been? My wishes would be to continue the work to build an inclusive movement for domestic workers."

Sue Longley also noted that now that the ILO has made occupational safety and health a fundamental right for all workers, this in fact gives us more space to bring forward the cause of domestic workers. This will be important in working together to build an effective voice across the trade union movement and to ensure that domestic workers have a voice and respect in the international trade union movement.



“The IDWF is an inspiration to the global labor movement about the sort of changes we need to make as the world of work changes.”

Sue Longley, IUF





Regional Highlights

One particular highlight of the 2023 Congress was the chance for various regions to present information about their countries and their various accomplishments through songs, skits, music, and other presentations. These were powerful moments in the Congress, as some presentations touched on the everyday challenges that domestic workers face such as employer discrimination when workers are pregnant or otherwise vulnerable.

Due to the ambitious agenda of the Congress, some regions displayed information about their various successes visually and passed out fliers and information, while others performed their presentations.

ASIA REGION

For the Asia region, the delegates and Fish Ip shared many exciting updates about all the steps domestic worker organizations are taking across Asia. Some of these major wins included:

- In Indonesia, domestic workers started a hunger strike beginning on Aug 16, 2023
- In South Korea, in 2020, the domestic workers law was adopted

- In Sri Lanka, in 2021, the Minister of Labor committed to bringing the Domestic Workers' Law to Parliament
- In Malaysia, in 2022, the Employment Act changed the term "servants" to "domestic employees"
- In Taiwan, there was extensive bottom-up organizing with leadership from the community.

These were truly major wins for the Asia region.

AFRICA REGION

The Africa Regional Presentation performed a powerful sketch about a pregnant domestic





worker getting fired to showcase the importance of workplace rights and social protections. First, a sick worker is forced by employer to work through her pains. The employer finds out the worker is pregnant, and fires the worker. Then, the employer's friend shows up and enquires about the worker to find out she is pregnant. The friend explains to the employer about her worker's rights to maternity protections, and they hug. In this simple yet compelling portrayal of the value of social inclusion, workplace protections, and maternity benefits, the delegates brought a far-too-common story of termination and dismissal to the forefront, showing a different way forward with the domestic worker being valued and respected.

■ LATIN AMERICA REGION

The Latin American Region also showcased their many accomplishments on video. These achievements included 16 ratifications of Convention 189, 10 ratifications of C190, and 8 countries across the region adopted Domestic Workers Laws. There were an additional 4 legal law reforms made to include and expand protections to domestic workers and 2 countries that enacted Constitutional Reforms to include and expand protections to the sector.



■ CARIBBEAN REGION

The Caribbean countries presented 4 ratifications of C189 across their region, namely Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda. The Jamaica Household Workers Union has also had successes in establishing a tripartite dialogue with skills training and capacity building workshops.



ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Through important debate and discussion, those leaders nominated for positions including the uncontested presidential nominee, the second vice president, and the general secretary gave brief presentations. Carmen Britez of Argentina was nominated as a candidate for the position of President, with Pia Stalpaert of Belgium also being nominated, though she declined the position. Toindepi Dhure of Zimbabwe and Sonia George of India were both nominated for 1st Vice President with Toindepi Dhure ultimately securing that position, while June Barrett of the United States accepted the nomination for 2nd Vice President and was unopposed. Adriana Paz Ramírez had very broad support, including being nominated by 54 affiliates globally.

She ran uncontested and was thus named the new General Secretary of the IDWF.

As of October 5, 2023, the Executive Committee shall be composed of one representative from each of the seven regions:

- Africa
- Asia/Pacific
- Latin America
- Caribbean
- Europe
- North America, and
- the Middle East and North Africa, including the elected Office Bearers – President, and Two Vice-Presidents.



**When domestic workers win, the working class wins.
When you lead, we march!
We're proud to be here with you in this fight.”**

Alexis De Simone, The Solidarity Center





Executive Committee



PRESIDENT'S PRESENTATION: CARMEN BRITTEZ, SECRETARY OF ORGANIZATION AND ACTS OF THE UPACP, THE UNION OF AUXILIARY PERSONNEL OF PRIVATE HOMES (UNIÓN PERSONAL AUXILIAR DE CASAS PARTICULARES), ARGENTINA

"I want to underpin my commitment to continue working for the unity of this federation, the rights of domestic workers and for the 670,000 workers of IDWF. We have to work for migrant domestic workers and care workers, and follow what Myrtle said: she will always be next to us to have our rights recognized. After this congress all of us will work as a team. The power for the sake of power should not exist; we have to work together for this federation."



FIRST NOMINEE FOR VP: SONIA GEORGE, SEWA, INDIA

"When I joined as a trade unionist, I took on a challenge to organize and stand up for domestic workers. I started my union work with SEWA 25 years ago, and the fight we have been going through is to gain recognition in India, and I have been working closely with our leaders to organize domestic workers. We have constituted a national platform bringing more than 30 organizations. We have to fight for domestic workers and comprehensive law. It is important for us to have representation in the global federation for the most vulnerable women."

“ Creating IDWF was a dream that many said won't be possible but you proved to the entire world that you could.

Adriana Paz Ramírez



FIRST NOMINEE FOR THE 2ND VP: JUNE BARRETT, NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS ALLIANCE, US

“Thank you for your support. I am extremely humbled to represent all regions, and would like to recognize the comrades who were denied their visas—this should never happen again. I will be taking my vision of all domestic workers. Together with my incoming Executive Committee and General Secretary we will work to strengthen and unite the federation. The first nomination was from a Gen Z generation. I am here to work and fight and unify all of us.”

SECOND NOMINEE FOR VP: TOINDEPI DHURE, ZIMBABWE DOMESTIC AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (ZDAWU)

“We share a common goal to make a difference in our lives as domestic workers. It is our duty to implement and identify sustainable solutions. I am committed to create an environment of inclusivity where every voice is valued. I advocate for the continued pursuit of innovation. We can drive transformative change through education and training, migrant domestic workers support, organizing, and campaigning for ratification of C189 and 190.”



ADRIANA PAZ RAMÍREZ, NOMINEE FOR GENERAL SECRETARY, FORMER REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR LATIN AMERICA, IDWF

“I am Adriana, born and raised in Bolivia in dictatorship times, which shaped my understanding of sovereignty and autonomy. Democracy, even if not perfect, is what we should aspire to for justice. It requires us to put aside our differences in the pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality. I spent most of my working life in Canada where I worked as a farm worker alongside many other migrant workers hence I became a migrant justice labor organizer, which naturally led me to organize migrant domestic workers and care workers. I fell in love with this powerful movement. Creating IDWF was a dream that many said won't be possible but you proved to the entire world that you could. IDWF needs to keep consolidating and building upon the work of our predecessors as well as more processes for inclusion. I am honored to receive the nomination from 54 affiliates globally, and thank you for this opportunity and for your trust.”



Executive Committee Members 2023-2028

ELECTED AT IDWF 4TH CONGRESS 2 – 5 OCTOBER 2023, DE HAAN, BELGIUM



“We have to work for migrant domestic workers and care workers, and follow what Myrtle said: she will always be next to us to have our rights recognized.”

Carmen Brites



Name	Country	Position	Full Name of the affiliates	Region
Carmen Britez	Argentina	President, Titular member from Latin America	Unión Personal Auxiliar de Casas Particulares (UPACP)	Latin America
Toindepi Dhure	Zimbabwe	1st Vice President, Titular member from Africa	Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU)	Africa
June Barrett	USA	2nd Vice President, Titular member from North America	National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)	North America
Adriana Paz Ramírez	Bolivia	General Secretary, ex-officio	IDWF	Latin America
Sonia George	India	Titular member from Asia	Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)	Asia
Elaine Duncan	Jamaica	Titular member from Caribbean	Jamaica Household Workers' Union (JHWU)	Caribbean
Emanuela Loretone*	Italy	Titular member from Europe	Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Commercio, Turismo e Servizi (FILCAMS CGIL NAZIONALE)	Europe
Mary Ann Abunda	Kuwait	Titular member from MENA	Sandigan Kuwait Domestic Workers Association	MENA
Ruth Diaz	Dominican Republic	Alternate member from Latin America	Unión Nacional Fenamutra de Trabajadoras del Hogar (UNFETRAH)	Latin America
Aissata Sadjo	Niger	Alternate member from Africa	Syndicat National des Travailleurs des Hotels, Bars, Restaurants et Assimiles du Niger (SYNTHOBRA)	Africa
Jec Sernande	Hong Kong	Alternate member from Asia		Asia
Ida Le Blanc	Trinidad & Tobago	Alternate member from Caribbean	National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE)	Caribbean
Doug Moore	USA	Alternate member from North America	United Domestic Workers of America (UDWA)	North America
Marina Kunzi*	Belgium	Alternate member from Europe	ACV Food and Services	Europe
Mercy Muteti	Jordan	Alternate member from MENA	Domestic Workers Solidarity Network in Jordan	MENA

* Effective April 23, 2024, Ms. Pia Stalpaert has resigned from her position as the Titular Member for Europe. With the consensus of the European Affiliates, Ms. Emanuela Loretone will assume the role of Titular Member, while Ms. Marina Kunzi will serve as the Alternate Member for Europe.



Closing the Congress

Carmen Brites stepped forward as the new President of IDWF along with the 1st Vice President **Toindepi Dhure**, the 2nd Vice President **June Barrett**, and our General Secretary **Adriana Paz Ramírez**. Carmen announced the Executive Committee representatives from each region and stated:

“We are a large family of the IDWF, and my responsibility and that of the Executive Committee is to work together as a community, for all domestic workers. This new Executive Committee, this new President, General Secretary, and 1st and 2nd VP are going to continue to work for our unity so that we can work for domestic workers. We must never forget what our mother Myrtle taught us; she’s beside us always and will accompany us on this path.”

June Barrett next spoke, noting,

“This has been a remarkable Congress and I have learned a lot. We get to realize one thing, that the delegates are the boss of the congress. We came here in De Haan, Belgium, and our theme is unity under

one global umbrella. The IDWF is for domestic workers and will continue to fight for the rights of all domestic workers—no domestic workers from any region should be left out. May I call into the room, all the comrades who wanted to be here but could not be because they could not get their visa. May this NEVER happen again. It was through unity that we came together to achieve the big win. Let us concentrate on unity through the Executive Committee, we will be able to build this federation bigger and more powerful.

Adriana Paz Ramírez added,

“Congratulations to all the delegates and Executive Committee members because we have made it until here! This required our engagement and participation. Domestic workers have been organizing for 100 years already. There was a common vision, they knew they had a common goal, but had different strategies and views, yet they took the challenge. But they said, let’s do this, despite the challenges. Let us remember that domestic worker organizing is bigger than us. We have immense challenges, yet our vision for justice is bigger than us. As your General Secretary, I have a clear mandate.”



The Congress concluded with a motion to close all debates and give power to the Executive Committee to decide on the remaining resolutions.



“We have immense challenges, yet our vision for justice is bigger than us.”

Adriana Paz Ramírez



Myrtle's Book Launch in Bruges

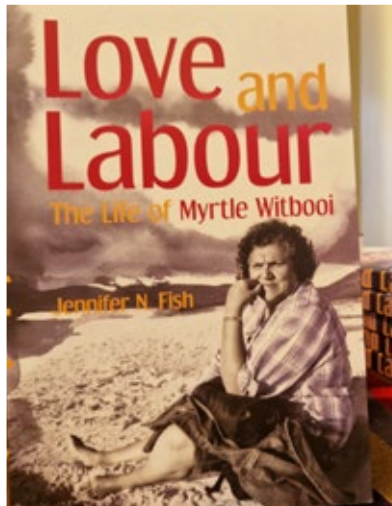
The final afternoon of Day 4 gave everyone a chance to relax together after the busy Congress events. Delegates traveled together to explore more of nearby Bruges, as the day trip options included walking around the city or going on a short ferry ride prior to gathering together to celebrate Myrtle's book launch. The ACV-SCS Union was the generous sponsor of this important event, which was held in the beautiful historic venue at the Old St. John Site Congress and Event Theatre.

The book, titled *Love and Labour: The Life of Myrtle Witbooi* is a biography written by Myrtle's longtime friend and domestic worker

advocate and ally, Professor Jennifer Fish. It covers the rich history of Myrtle's admirable determination, passion for social protections and social justice, steadfast leadership and long service to the movement for domestic workers' rights. This important project memorialized the struggles, hardships, achievements and wisdom of one of the fiercest and most inspiring labor leaders to have lived, brave through her entire life including her battle with cancer. The launch took place with Myrtle's memory and fighting spirit being triumphed throughout, as reflections, poems and memories about her legacy captivated the audience. Professor Jennifer Fish spent years earning Myrtle's trust when she first came to Cape Town, and shared stories with the packed auditorium about those early days.

Myrtle's daughter Jacqui Michaels gave a very moving tribute about her mother, and the former poet laureate of Virginia, U.S., Tim Seibles, read his poem in honor of Myrtle. It was a fitting tribute to celebrate a global leader as the final moment of the Congress, together gathered in an historic venue.

The launch was followed by a lovely reception in Myrtle's honor, which provided the IDWF delegates a chance to unwind together following a successful 4th Congress, knowing that Myrtle's spirit is still with us today and going forward into the future.







THE INTERNATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKERS FEDERATION (IDWF) IS A MEMBERSHIP-BASED, GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS.

WE AIM TO UNITE DOMESTIC WORKERS TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS, OVERCOME EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE, AND SECURE DIGNITY, JUSTICE AND SECURITY.

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