III Global Conference on child labour – Urgent action needed

From 8-10 of October Terre des Hommes was present at the III Global Conference on Child Labour (GCCL), taking place in Brasilia. Representatives from governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations and civil society from more than 150 countries came together to discuss the progress made in eradicating child labour, especially its worst forms, and to exchange on best practices and ways to accelerate global action against child labour. Terre des Hommes participated in semi-plenary discussions on child domestic labour, migration and labour, and child labour in supply chains.

Although the latest ILO report on child labour shows a decrease in child labour from 246 million child labourers in 2000 to 168 million in 2013, these are still 168 thousand too many children that are deprived of their childhood and work under hazardous conditions. The majority of these children are too be found in the hardest to reach sectors like domestic servitude, agriculture and sexual exploitation. Child domestic labour has even increased with almost 1 million since 2008 and child labour in agriculture accounts for almost 60 percent of all child labour. Therefore Terre des Hommes takes on a priority focus on the elimination of these worst forms of child labour, using a holistic approach including improving access to quality education, strengthening law enforcement, awareness raising, socio-economic development and rehabilitation programmes.

During the closing plenary session former Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva reminded the international community on their duty to take urgent action to tackle the worst forms of child labour. He made clear that action against child labour is about political will and therefore the economic crisis should never be an excuse to stop programmes against child labour.

Guy Ryder, Director General of the ILO, stressed that all the discussions and exchanges of this conference should now be translated into urgent action to bring the numbers of child labourers down significantly by the time the next global conference on child labour will be held in Argentina in 2017. Amongst other things he recommended “to move forward on the Decent Work Agenda, implement fundamental principles and rights at work, prioritize employment creation, in particular for youth, extend measures of social protection and strengthen the rule of law and judicial systems.”

The closing ceremony ended with the release of the Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour, calling on all the governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations that were present at the conference to strengthen actions to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016, including measures to extend and improve access to free, compulsory and quality education for all children.

Link to Brasilia Declaration: http://childlabour2013.org/the-brasilia-declaration-on-child-labour/

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