Speech by Mr. Vladimir Shcherbakov, General Secretary of General Confederation of Trade Unions

Dear representatives and my colleagues,

First, please allow me to extend my sincere appreciation on behalf of General Confederation of Trade Unions to All-China Federation of Trade Unions for inviting us to attend this forum. This forum provides an international platform with increasing influence for representatives from trade unions all over the world to discuss the most urgent and concerned issues and understand and harmonize each other’s standpoint.

Today, the topic is to analyze the influence of change in global labor-capital relationship on workers and discuss how to explore the potential of local and global trade unions under a significantly changed world economic and political pattern.

Despite gradual recovery of global economy after the crisis, the unemployment and income levels have rarely improved.

The international trade union movement is greatly concerned about the problems that the employers and governments disparage the rights of trade unions and workers, and some people are attempting to wipe out the
fight for legitimate rights by the trade unions and workers and reduce the social security of the people.

At present, all members of General Confederation of Trade Unions are facing the same challenges. Due to the economic crisis, the growth rate of each country has decreased. The unemployed population is about 8 million and the unstable employment is expenses, especially in the informal economic sector. A vast majority of workers still cannot be financially independent based on their wages, and are unable to pay for medical care, decent housing and family cost. However, the employers have been always making efforts to reduce regulation over labor market and bend the labor rules.

Collective bargaining is very difficult under the framework of social dialogue. Some enterprises, including MacDonald’s, Auchan and other transnational companies, are obstructing the establishment of trade unions.

In such a case, the members of General Confederation of Trade Unions shall continue to fight for decent jobs and social justice.

Unfortunately, it is still not tenable to say that the local wage has reached
a proper level. There are a total of 13 million workers whose wages are lower than the minimum standard of living. The minimum wage is still underestimated. Therefore, trade unions of all countries shall be united to struggle for pay raise.

Under the efforts of some national trade unions in the region, the people are more aware of the necessity of a rational tax system to ensure a fairer income distribution, reduce social inequality and eliminate poverty. The tax here refers to the individual income progressive tax, the tax on luxuries and the individual financial service tax.

General Confederation of Trade Unions and its branches are making efforts to protect the rights of workers and trade unions with the legal protection system, and fighting against any acts of those attempting to amend the labor laws, expand unstable employment and reduce the influence of trade unions on labor relations.

For example, under the unremitting efforts of Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Russia has issued a law to ban the use of any “contract labor”. It should be noticed that, “contract labor” is regarded by the International Labor Organization as a kind of atypical employment, because it destroys the basic principle of the labor laws.
Georgian Trade Union Center has successfully abolished many discriminatory regulations on the labor law for the employees.

The National Convention of the Republic of Belarus has improved the labor law amendment provided by the Belarusian Federation of Trade Unions. The amendment has gradually improved the social security level of the workers.

The Kazakhstan Federation of Trade Unions has made a great contribution for the recently approved Trade Union Law. The Law will significantly improve the efficiency of social dialogue and the activities of the labor organizations.

General Confederation of Trade Unions insists on the integrated growth of the region, especially the social organizations. Today, the coalition of countries in the region continues to progress, and some achievements have been made during the integration of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The three countries have signed an agreement to establish a Eurasian Economic Union in May of this year. We will continue to contact with all the intergovernmental institutions to protect the rights and interests of the laborers.
General Confederation of Trade Unions has been always concerned with the approval and implementation of a series of important conventions of the International Labor Organization by countries in the region. There are still 11 important conventions that are not approved. For example, the most crucial No. 102 Convention related to the minimum standard of social security is still not approved by any country in the region.

General Confederation of Trade Unions held an international conference in April and discussed the prospect for countries in the region to put into practice the principles related to decent jobs and social justice. It was emphasized on the conference that, new social and economic growth patterns were needed to get rid of the global commercial dominance and liberalism doctrine, which is in conformity with the interests of the majority.

We believe this forum will further enrich the experience of global trade unions, deepen the understanding on the channels and means to form the new patterns. The new patterns shall be more democratic, and more adapted to the labor interests and the value and achievement of the 21st century.