

TWENTY FIVE YEARS IN BUILDING WORKERS' POWER



in building workers' power

1989-2014

Silver Jubilee Special



Trade Union Rights



महाराष्ट्रक श्रमिक संघ संघ संघ

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Silver Jubilee Special

2014 September

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(July 20, 1989 – July 20, 2014)



"It was a rainy day of July in 1989. A group of senior activists of Nepali working class movement quietly gathered in a secret den, hiding themselves from wolfish eyes of the agent of the then reactionary establishment- the Panchayat and its police. The very gathering launched the GEFONT as a coordinating mechanism to fulfil a historic task of forming the umbrella, a long-felt need in the trade union movement of Nepal."

Bishnu Rimal, Founding Secretary General & now President

Happy Birthday GEFONT!

A Very Happy Silver Jubilee!!

Five years ago, while celebrating the 20th Founding Day of GEFONT, I had quoted the then GEFONT Chairman Comrade Mukunda Neupane: "In that rainy day of July, disguising the search and warrant of the then brutal autocratic Panchayat dictatorship, we converged together and proudly declared 'now a coordinating mechanism for trade unions has been launched in Nepal'. It was the establishment of GEFONT to address a long-felt need of the nation." I had also spoken of the context and the changes Nepali society had seen and achieved, including the changes in the world of work, during the 20 years of our struggle.

After 5 years, today, there are not significant differences from those points of my address. I will not repeat the history. I will not dwell into the analysis of the situation leading to GEFONT's establishment. To add to the changing context over the time, which I then referred to, we have achieved the seemingly impossible dream of a republic.

Together, we can proudly declare: Transformation is possible!

Today, I would like to remember two of our founders- Com. Madhav Neupane and Com. Nooru Wangxu Sherpa. Comrades you are not with us today, but

your spirit is in this hall, all over Nepal and world, embedded in movements to fulfil the dreams that we had cherished together. I want to express my gratitude to Com. Prakash Nepali who provided us with his home to launch GEFONT ignoring possible cruel suppression of the then tyrannical regime. Thank you Comrade Nepali! Let me thank Com. Binod Shrestha for managing such a safe house to launch our great organisation. I thank Com. Lalit Basnet, our Founding President, Hari P Sharma, Jyotilal Ban and Raju Silwal. Comrades, I recall, you all were attending the GEFONT founding meeting. Thank you Com. Chudamani Jangali and Loknath Pandey for bearing the responsibility of founding membership. Com. Mukunda Neupane and Com. Pradip Nepal were the mastermind of GEFONT establishment! I still remember your sincere efforts given to establish GEFONT were even questioned by the party in which you were leaders. Dear Comrades, I offer my heartfelt thanks to you. Time has proved you were perfectly right and those questioning fingers were wrong! Dear audience, kindly give a big hand to our dear comrades. Thank you!

Comrades,

I ask your permission to bring back you again to the 20th Founding Day Ceremony of five years ago. Making a departure from some sort of interpretation of 'class struggle' as "establishment of a classless society by wiping out a class of opposite interests"; we had underlined that social transformation – a radical change of the complex of class exploitation and social oppression – is possible only through the unity of several social groups. As we said so we were referring to the specific character of Nepali revolution.

After 5 years, today, we have walked past the people's uprising of 2006, soon transformed into a peaceful peoples' revolution, which was really original to Nepali reality both in terms of the extent and leadership. It did not subscribe to the so-called European or Chinese model. This revolution was possible through collaboration between two competing classes – the class of the haves and that of the have-nots! It brought about a historical political change, but is yet to trigger a social and cultural transformation. The movement concluded with the establishment of rights, but is yet to create an environment in which the rights can be realised. Most important, the hegemony of the anti-working class is yet to end.

We were encouraged when you assured us of your full support from legislature-parliament and Constituent Assembly (CA). Ratification of ILO Convention 87 was related to our demand.

Therefore, today, on this occasion of Silver Jubilee I am not going to detail social changes. Allow me, however, to elaborate with an example how the dream that we had just five year ago, not 25, has been shattered and the agents of change, like us, have been disheartened.

May I request former General Secretaries of GEFONT, Com. Binod Shrestha and Com. Umesh Upadhyaya, Deputy Member of ILO Governing Body Com. Binda Pandey and former Deputy Member Brother Laxman Basnet to help me out here? Kindly come to the podium. May I request you to unveil the stand? Thank you. What is written here is "Ratify ILO 87 and a figure- 10.1:20:20!"

Right Honourable Chairperson,

Five years ago when we were celebrating the 20th Anniversary you were our Guest of Honour. We had handed over a demand letter to constitutionally guarantee the right to organise and social security for the working class. We were encouraged when you assured us of your full support from legislature-parliament and Constituent Assembly (CA). Ratification of ILO Convention 87 was related to our demand.

For a reminder I would like to mention the meeting of Rt. honourable Chairperson with the then Director of ILO – ACTRAV, Don Cunniah- in your office in Singhadurbar. The meeting was about ILO C. 87 ratification. Today, we repeat our request for your support to ratify the same Convention. We would now like to hand over a letter arguing why Nepal should ratify the Convention.

In the first meeting of the CA this year, the CA members representing the trade union sector and the three major political parties had requested you to arrange a discussion in Full House to propose a Resolution of commitment. In the past four years, the CA did not introduce a bill on implementation of social security despite the national budget allocating funds to that end. The budget levies one percent social security tax on workers' pay. Over years, the tax has accumulated into billions of rupees. It is a serious concern that the bill agreed by the government, employers and workers has not moved from Singhadurbar, the government building, to reach Parliament in Baneshwor. To resolve this problem we had proposed a resolution. It is sad that we were not provided with a time slot to present the proposal in parliament. We would like to take this opportunity to request Rt. honourable Chairperson to extend your support to establish a law for implementation of the social security fund. We rest assured that honourable Chairperson will do all it is needed this time around.

May I request honourable Chudamani Jangali, Binod Shrestha, presidents of two ITUC affiliated confederations – Com. Shalikram and Brother Khilanath – and friends from JTUCC affiliated unions to kindly hand over the letter to the Rt. honourable Chairperson. Thank You.

I believe progress is not possible by a dead review of history. For progress, we need a roadmap and work-plan to face the challenges ahead. Brother Suzuki, our regional General Secretary, Brother Chris, Secretary of UNI-APRO, Dr. Sharan K.C, Brother Devraj, Brother Narayan and Com. Deborah may I ask you to come a bit ahead in this stage please. May I ask you to unveil that stand please? Then you brothers, sisters and my dear comrades, please have a seat.

Today, the international trade union movement follows the model of unionising through organising academy. The stand mentions four subject-areas: GEFONT Trade Union Policy Institute (TUPI), GEFONT Trade Union School, National Labour Resource Centre and GEFONT Solidarity Fund.

This is the gift from our generation to the new generation of trade unionists. For the information of the participants present here, a renovated GEFONT building will be ready in a week to ten days' time. From today, you will see changes in GEFONT website. GEFONT will have a personal labour resource centre operating from October dedicated to the general working class. The Trade Union Policy Institute will also work with a renewed zeal. In the leadership of Com. Umesh

In the past four years, the CA did not introduce a bill on implementation of social security despite the national budget allocating funds to that end.

Upadhyaya, former Secretary General of GEFONT, GEFONT-TUPI will contribute to the Nepali World of Work at a policy level. Now we will have a regular trade union school to upgrade the capacity of our leaders and cadres. The school will run in National Labour Academy for now.

May I request Com. Deborah Nicholas to kindly stand up? She will mentor our teachers and our movement will greatly benefit from her. I request you to give her a big round of applause. Some 200 of our unions have invested 25,000 rupees each to form a solidarity fund. GEFONT has matched the same amount. Now we declare the establishment of the solidarity fund of 10 million rupees. This fund is different from the existing relief funds and will be operated together by investing unions and GEFONT.

All of these issues are termed as a structure for support and is headed by the transitional GEFONT structure: the GEFONT Governing Council.

Comrades,

May I also have your permission to share a context? Many of you may be organised members of CPN (UML). Some of comrades present here may even have been delegates to the CPN (UML) Congress. One of fellow delegates told me an interesting story related to an election for the new leadership in the party.

“Once, Gold met Iron and asked the latter, “Iron, why do you scream when an iron hammer hammers you? A goldsmith also hammers me but I do not scream like you.” Then Iron said, “had a goldsmith

hammered you with the gold hammer then you would have felt the pain of being lashed by your own.”

‘All the workers of the world unite’, we say. We talk about empathy for fellow workers; slogan-“An injury to one is an injury to all!” If we fight among ourselves, among the citizens and workers of the same country, will we have moral standing to shout the slogan of global unity of the workers? If we are not able to forge solidarity among ourselves, how can we have solidarity among workers of our country? Will we have moral ground to ask JTUCC affiliated unions to unite? Therefore, the first condition of the labour movement is internal unity! House should be in proper order. Only then can we bring national labour movement in track. We can then mobilise South Asia’s SARTUC; we can then play a significant role in ITUC-AP; and, then we can sing the slogan of global unity.

After five years from now, when we will be celebrating the 30th Anniversary, I will definitely not be in the same position as I am now. But you comrades will be. You will then be responsible to take the trade union movement and GEFONT forward from the envious profile that GEFONT has achieved today. It will be upon you to ensure that GEFONT continues to receive the glory from the world trade union movement.

Twenty-five years ago when GEFONT was formed, we had our office in a bag with a few sheets of paper and some files. Our total fund was personal savings accumulated together about 1,250 rupees. Those of us who were working full-time in the union had no fixed place to sit or time to eat. But we had limitless passion to work for the working class. In crisis, we asked our cadres to contribute a day’s salary to the union. The well-equipped GEFONT office today and its property of about 120 million rupees is the earning of those hardships.

I would like to quote a famous businessman and former CA member Binod Chaudhary from his autobiography.

There is a famous hotel near Gateway of India in Mumbai called Hotel Taj, a highly expensive hub for highly powerful politicians and high profile cine artists from Indian cinema. Mr. Binod Chaudhary had gone to visit Mumbai after his SLC. He was roaming around the area with his father’s personal assistant; and wanted to see inside the hotel. When he asked his guide to take him there, the

*“My journey of life is a travel from that point to this point.
And, you guys are starting from here. Now I am going to
see where do you go from here?”*

guide denied it and said the guard will hold him by the collar and throw him out if he attempts to go in.

The same Binod Chaudhary today owns the same hotel. Whenever he visits Mumbai he stays in Hotel Taaj. Whenever he visits Mumbai he stays in the suite facing the Gateway of India paying a tariff of 30 to 40 thousand Indian rupees a day. Thinking of his past he feels there is no substantial change, it is just a journey from the gate to the suite. Writing to his sons from the suites he says, “My journey of life is a travel from that point to this point. And, you guys are starting from here. Now I am going to see where do you go from here?”

Comrades, Com. Mukunda and us, the first generation of the GEFONT movement, can ask you the same question. And, may I, finally, request you to watch the documentary prepared on GEFONT and the Nepali trade union movement “25 Years in Building Workers’ Power!”

Please do not through the question away from your mind! With this let me conclude here!

Keynote of the president at silver jubilee celebration!



In spite of many challenges, GEFONT has been succeeding because GEFONT is in centre of the main-stream movement of the country. I congratulate GEFONT on its achievement during 25 years.

Rt. Hon'able Subash C. Nembang, Chairman-CA

GEFONT proud to celebrate grand **Silver Jubilee Ceremony** amidst large audience

July 20, 2014! This day GEFONT concluded 25 thorny years of its founding. Marking the very occasion a Silver Jubilee ceremony was organised amidst large audience of working people from different trades and industries. Chairperson of Constituent Assembly Rt. Hon'able Subash Nembang was the Chief Guest whereas ITUC AP General Secretary Bro N. Suzuki and UNI-APRO regional Secretary Bro Christopher Ng were Guest speakers of the ceremony.

Still, we are not able to make the foundation, which pays respect & dignified worker, it is possible when we will promulgate the pro-worker constitution on time" said, Mr. Nembang, addressing the ceremony.

GEFONT recalled 20th founding day ceremony held 5 years back and reminded the CA Chair its urge to ratify ILO C. 87 and introduction of new legislation for Social Protection of the workers.

Through video message ILO DG Bro Guy Ryder congratulate GEFONT. "For workers in Nepal and beyond, GEFONT has grown from small spark to a big, lightening the way for lasting peace for prosperity, and for progress for working people. Looking to the future, I am confident to the GEFONT sanctions to serve to make real difference, a positive difference to the course of the history in your country and social justice in the world. The ILO stands with you, striving towards that common goal-the Social Justice." ILO DG further added in his message.

On the occasion Bro. Noriyuki Suzuki, General Secretary ITUC Asia Pacific appreciated GEFONT efforts for uniting working people. "Ever since its foundation twenty-five years ago, we have keenly watching the activities of your organisation and you can legitimately be proud of many achievements towards improving the working and living conditions of the working people of this country and in ensuring workers' rights", he said.

Guest speaker of the celebration UNI-APRO regional secretary Bro Christopher NG acknowledged GEFONT as its treasured partner. Bro Chris said- "Our relationship is an example of meaningful partnerships built upon a shared vision and a strong commitment towards the common goal of a better world for all. As your close partner, we are inspired by your success and motivated by your union's vision."



On the occasion, GEFONT felicitated GEFONT's former Chairman Cde. Mukunda Neupane, UML Leader Cde Prdeep Nepal and founding Vice-president Cde Hari Prasad Sharma for their contribution to strengthening the trade union movement in Nepal.

GEFONT also honoured Dr. Shiva Sharma, Cde Som Rai, Cde Kiran Mali and Cde Mahendra Shrestha for their year's long contribution to GEFONT.

On the occasion, GEFONT president announced formation of four pillars, namely- Trade Union Policy Institute (GEFONT-TUPI), Trade Union School, National Labour Resource Centre and GEFONT Solidarity Fund.





For workers in Nepal and beyond, GEFONT has grown from small spark to a big, lightening the way for lasting peace for prosperity, and for progress for working people.

Bro. Guy Ryder, Director General- ILO

ILO stands with GEFONT **striving towards social justice**

I extend my heartfelt congratulation to the General federation of Nepalese trade unions (GEFONT), as you celebrate milestone of your Silver Jubilee. In long after history span of 25 years is earlier flicker your federation, which started underground in fragile conditions played by political critical turmoil. Your silver jubilee is truly a major milestone. I have personally have the privilege of sharing some of more dramatic moments with you that remember visiting your leaders and hiding in Kathmandu in 2005. You have my deep respect to my admiration for the work that you do. Over the course of 25 years GEFONT has grown, grown into force to be reckoned with in Trade union movement in Nepal and beyond. In November 2006 you were also one of the founding members of the International Trade union body the ITUC, which we established together in Vienna.

GEFONT 27 affiliates cover Agriculture, Industries and Services and represent over three hundred thousand workers. Your membership is a diverse Nepal striking landscape from tourism to Tea-Plantation, Rickshaw driving to tax counselling and many other activities. And I want to recall the sacrifices made by Nepali workers under the banner of various National Federations including GEFONT, calling for restoration of democracy in your beautiful country. In the current critical transition, I have no doubt, that you continue as always have, to play important and constructive role to ensure the fundamental rights of working women and working men are enshrined in the new constitution. You can count in the ILO support. The ILO & GEFONT have been working closely together in many areas including safe & just labour migration, which must be a priority for us. Social dialogue, the elimination of bonded labour and child labour, social protection and emerging from many years of insurgency, Nepal faces many challenges on its way to a job reach growth process. For Nepal as well all post-conflict, social dialogue is extremely important role to play in meeting over these challenges. For example social dialogue can be a great

asset an establishing fair market governance system. Fair labour-that is also a compatible strategy, to attract in investment and stimulate economic growth.

South Asia is home to millions working poor. The majority, lacking jobs security and basic social protection. And while it resolves experiencing good economic growth, it's also saying a rise in attack in Trade union and Human rights. Unfortunately, there sometime seems to be the perception the choice has to make between either economic growth or respects for workers rights including those of migrant workers. However the evidence & reality is the decent work is a crucial driver of development not simply a by-product of development

GEFONT can make an important contribution in the strengthening social dimension of globalisation through its regional general action, through ITUC Asia Pacific, and in the context of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Working together with the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council, you have a really a great opportunity to bring the labour agenda to the next SAARC Summit which will meet there in Nepal in November this year.

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters,

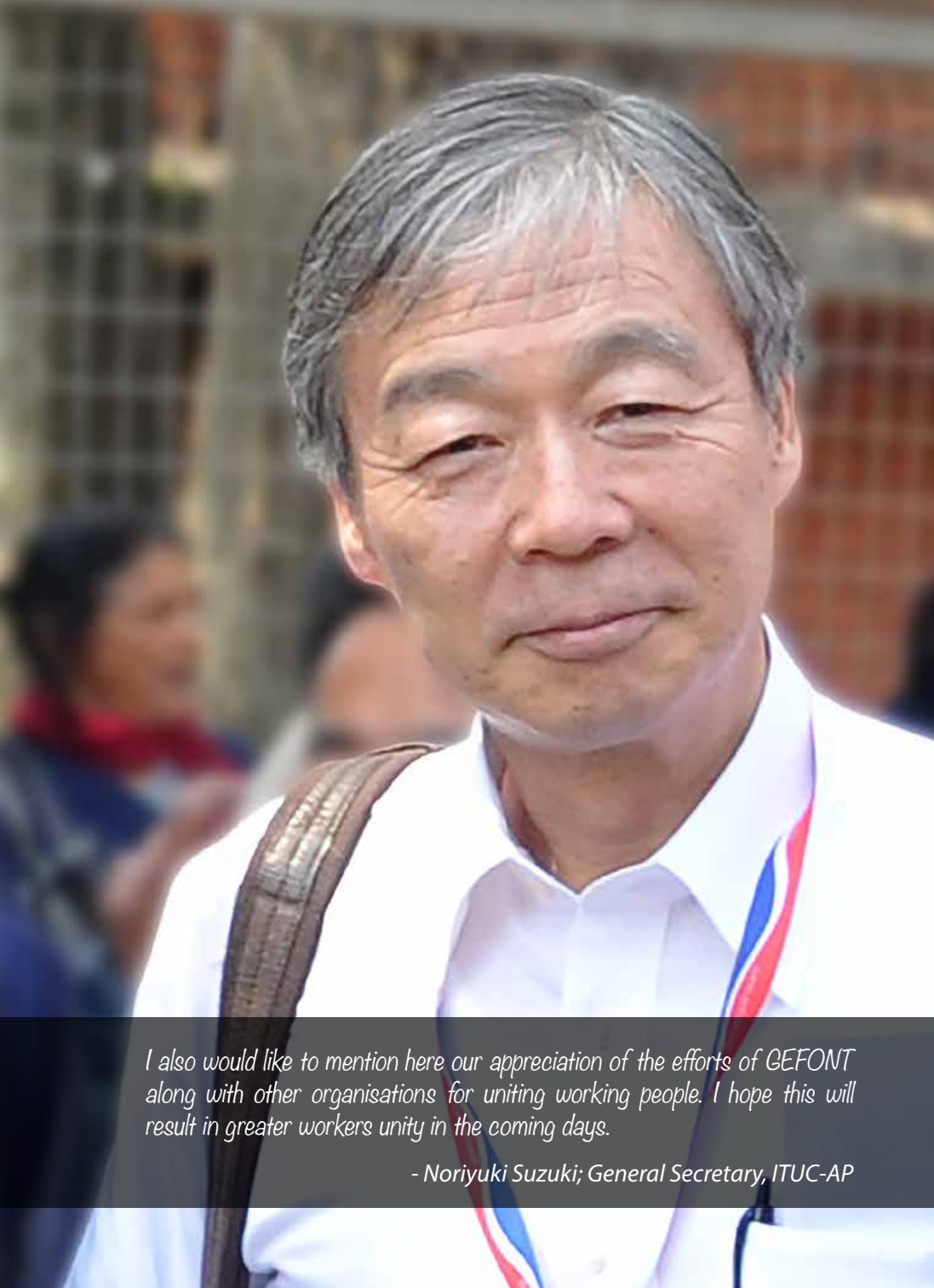
For workers in Nepal and beyond, GEFONT has grown from small spark to a big, lightening the way for lasting peace for prosperity, and for progress for working people. As you celebrate your silver jubilee, I urge you to continue in the spirit of solidarity, for which you have worked so hard; which will drive you strength to strength.

Now I want to close by congratulating my friend Mr. Bishnu Rimal who re-elected GEFONT President for second term as well as other newly elected officials. Likewise, my congratulation goes to Binda Pandey on her re-election as deputy member here in ILO Governing Body. Looking to the future, I am confident to the GEFONT sanctions to serve to make real difference, a positive difference to the course of the history in your country and social justice in the world. The ILO stands with you, striving towards that common goal -the Social Justice.

Good Luck.

July 20, 2014; Geneva

(Decoding from Video Message)



I also would like to mention here our appreciation of the efforts of GEFONT along with other organisations for uniting working people. I hope this will result in greater workers unity in the coming days.

- Noriyuki Suzuki; General Secretary, ITUC-AP

GEFONT efforts for **uniting working people, appreciable**

I am extremely delighted to be present at this historic occasion to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union GEFONT. On behalf of the International trade Union Confederation - Asia Pacific (ITUCAP) I am glad to convey greetings to the leaders and members of the GEFONT. The ITUC has a membership of 175 million workers and the regional organization brings together more than 30 million workers.

Ever since its foundation twenty five years ago, we have keenly watching the activities of your organization and you can legitimately be proud of many achievements towards improving the working and living conditions of the working people of this country and in ensuring workers' rights.

Colleagues, you are holding your Silver Jubilee at a time when the country has enters another crucial moment with a new democratic government taking over and we hope that now the process of constitution making will be completed within the stipulated time frame. All efforts of the trade union movement should be directed to ensure incorporation of the workers' concerns in the new statute in making.

Your country has achieved democracy after a long and arduous struggle by the people of this country. The workers and the trade unions were in the forefront of the struggle for freedom in the several people lost their lives. I salute the working people of this country who were in the forefront of that struggle for democracy. Several trade unionists made the supreme sacrifice with their lives.

Universal and full respect of trade union rights constitutes a key objective of the ITUC and AP and the current global economy architecture which is heavily loaded against the working people adds to the urgency of its achievement.

Already signs are visible where many rulers would resort to the easy way out of dispensing the workers' rights while dealing with the economic crisis. We have to just look into the recent past of your country when trade union rights were denied to the workers.

The ITUC had its Congress in May in Berlin which has given a clarion for "Building workers power". This was in response to the realization that trade union density all over the world is abysmally poor and unless we bring more and more working people in to the union movement we will not be able to influence the governments to make changes we want.

In Nepal too the number of working people in the union fold is very low. We have to build the trade union movement in this country. Since workers right to form and join unions is restored we should be making all out efforts to bring more workers into trade union fold. Special targeted action is required for unionizing women, informal economy and youth. Especially informal economy since the informal economy constitutes more than 80 percent in Nepal.

I also would like to mention here our appreciation of the efforts of GEFONT along with other organisations for uniting working people. I hope this will result in greater workers unity in the coming days.

Nine years ago, we had our Regional Conference in Kathmandu where we witnessed firsthand democracy being taken away from the people in a palace coup. Next year, precisely after ten years, we will be holding our Regional Conference in Kathmandu and I am happy this is being held at an atmosphere of freedom and democracy.

I wish you Silver jubilee celebrations all success. I hope you will come out with concrete plan of actions with renewed vigour.

Dhanyabaad!

20 July 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal



GEFONT is a treasured partner of UNI APRO. Our relationship is an example of meaningful partnerships built upon a shared vision and a strong commitment towards the common goal of a better world for all.

- Christopher Ng, UNI APRO Regional Secretary

GEFONT is a **treasured partner of UNI APRO**

I deem it a privilege to be invited to join you in celebrating the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of GEFONT - one of the most progressive and dynamic trade unions in the Asia and Pacific region.

GEFONT is a treasured partner of UNI APRO. Our relationship is an example of meaningful partnerships built upon a shared vision and a strong commitment towards the common goal of a better world for all. As your close partner, we are inspired by your success and motivated by your union's vision.

I salute the present and past Officers on their many achievements on behalf of their members and your GEFONT's critical role in protecting trade union rights of workers in Nepal. I also want to commend GEFONT for their active role in the global struggle for socio-economic justice for workers and defend of human and trade union rights all over the world.

UNI and GEFONT share many common aspirations and our memberships are confronted by many common challenges including the impact of globalization and technological innovations.

The processes of globalisation, economic liberalization, privatization and technological upgrading all have a direct impact on the supply, demand and utilization of labour. Under global competition, ensuing structural changes in the economy mean changes in the way workers are employed, deployed, redeployed or worse, made redundant, in each business undertaking.

In turn, these changes in the economy and in employment have serious ramifications for workers and their trade unions. Labour shedding and labour flexibilisation have been widespread. And so are the efforts of capital to roll back labour's rights. Sometimes, rights won by the workers in decades of struggle have been thrown overnight out of the window by the simple ruse of relocating industries in places where such rights are not recognized or exist only on paper. Clearly, it is a brave new world for the trade union organizers of the 21st century.

And what should our response be as trade unions in the face of all these changes and challenges? I think one phrase encapsulates what we must and must not do. We **MUST** build bridges, **NOT** dig trenches. We must resist the temptation to assume an essentially defensive position: building walls and digging trenches to protect only our gains while ignoring the bigger challenges that face the trade union movement itself.

Trade Unions in the Global Economy are retooling trade unions to meet the challenges of change. I have outlined in a background paper that was circulated - what I think should be the tasks, old and new, for the trade union movement in the light of a changed and changing global economic environment.

Therefore, I will only highlight some of them for the purpose of introducing the theme for discussions.

The Asian region has become an economic powerhouse of the world economy. But as UNI Apro has repeatedly pointed out - this enviable performance will not be sustained unless Asian businesses bring back the social and labour mission of business. The recent economic and financial crisis has reminded us that wealth creation is meaningless if we are not able to protect the environment and respect human rights and improve the social conditions and close the social divide that is prevalent all over the world.

UNI Apro has long held the belief that corporations should have a soul. Business cannot go into business without fulfilling its responsibility to society and accord labour and the host community the respect that they deserve.

In this context, we see the present global business in particular, to fulfil this responsibility. This is why everyone today is blaming greed, corporate greed, as being at the roots of the global financial bubbles. Globalization is not just about the free flow of capital. To UNI APRO it must also be directed at globalizing social justice and union rights.

Clearly, we need to bring back the social and labour mission of business. We need to shape a new global economic order with clear social and labour rules. We need to put people first into the globalization process and in every consideration.

The economic and social problems facing workers in most countries and the pains and sufferings associated with structural adjustments and globalization has awakened the worker's will to unite. Trade Unions all over the world must take these challenges seriously and initiate pro-active measures to influence the process of change and cause and cause reform to ensure that ordinary working people and their families are at the core of the development of the global economy.

Despite all difficulties, the trade union movement must move forward. It must upgrade, if not modernize, their organizational structures and processes to make the trade union movement relevant to a changed work environment, responsive to the emerging issues and demands of a network economy and meaningful to all workers, including the new groups of workers.

It must remain united to promote the growth and influence of the trade union movement as an instrument to:

- protect and advance human and democratic rights for all people,
- defend worker's rights and their dignity,
- eliminate poverty and inequality,

Trade Unions in the Global Economy - Retooling Trade Unions to meet the challenges of change

- ensure social and economic justice for all within and among
- nations,
- enhance equal opportunity for all people,
- preserve and create jobs, and
- build peace and prosperity within a nation and the interdependent world.

A global economy requires global forums for social partnership between trade unions and with employers and governments. We want to build global partnership with employers and governments based on a shared commitment to equity and justice and respect for human and trade union rights.

All of us in the labour movement have a vital role to play in fostering a strong spirit of international solidarity and developing the capacity and capability of trade unions to renew the trade union movement and infuse it with a new

vitality capable not only of providing services to its members but also in leading the struggle of humanity for growth with equity and justice, for a global economy where people really matter. Together, we can build a better society where income, wealth and opportunities are equitably distributed.

These are challenging times for workers and trade unions all over the World. UNI APRO is determined to develop its strength and influence to act as an effective counterweight to employers and the forces of capital to prevent socially unacceptable arrangement that institutionalize social divide as it is the globalization agenda today.

We look forward to work closely with GEFONT to build the new global economic order. Together, we can formulate and fight for the new rules that must govern the global economic order for the 21st Century and contribute to the building of a better society where income, wealth and opportunities are equitably distributed.

20 July 2014, Kathmandu Nepal



Responding feminisation of labour market, 0 to 33 percent women participation in its whole structure and being counted as one of the 100 unions of the world for the “Count Us In” campaign of ITUC, is internationally big recognition. I do congratulate all the member and supporters of the union movement who contributed for this achievement from their segments of world of work.

Cde. Binda Pandey

Former Dy Secretary General & Secretary, CWWD

A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

I'm sorry that I won't be able to participate in the GEFONT anniversary due to my earlier commitment." Cde Ambet said- "I would have wanted to attend your anniversary. I have been a witness of the rise and growth of GEFONT in the past 15 years. The first time I meet you in 2003, you shared with me GEFONT vision and plans.

BWI is the staunch promoter of GEFONT to unionise the construction industry inside and beyond the country. And I have the privilege to see your development year by year and I can say that I am proud to be part of the GEFONT supporter.

Viva GEFONT!

Proud to be part of the GEFONT supporter

- BWI GS Ambet Yuson

*Personalities felicitated in
Silver Jubilee Ceremony*

They deserve it!

Three outstanding personalities have been felicitated in the celebration of Silver jubilee of GEFONT. Their role before & from the founding day of the GEFONT has been quite significant in the development of working class movement in Nepal. However, the nature of their active involvement varies both from the point of view of years they devoted and tasks they performed. In spite of the varying nature & degree of contribution, GEFONT will remember them and respect them as leaders of historical importance. Previously during the celebration of 20 years of GEFONT in 2009, a number of personalities from the first generation of initial days of Biratnagar movement in 1946-47 and from the second generation active in development of first National Union-NIWU, were given high honour by GEFONT. We have now felicitated Cde. Mukunda Neupane, Cde. Pradip Nepal and Cde. Hari Prasad Sharma in the Silver Jubilee ceremony as they have played quite significant role to establish GEFONT in underground existence and to push it forward to move crossing a number of milestones. A short profile of all three dignitaries has been presented here.



Cde. Mukunda Neupane

Birth : June 4,1950/ **Birthplace:** Gogane Rachane Village of the district of Bhojpur /
Current Address : Kirtipur MNCP – 1, Kathmandu

He was Chairman of GEFONT from 1992 to 2009 around 17 years of the movement. The relations of Cde Neupane with factory workers started from district of Jhapa. During his involvement in the political movement, he started first to organise Bidi factory workers of Jhapa, but expanded his activities with workers in many towns of the eastern part of Nepal.

He joined underground movement after injuries during a struggle in Jhapa along with C P Mainali and treatment in Biratnagar. As a member of the Jhapa District Coordination committee, which was the outcome of division in Nepal Communist party, Cde Neupane continued his active involvement in the districts of Jhapa & Morang. He was one the 8 founding members of Coordination Centre in 1976.

Comrade Neupane continued the task of organisation expansion based on the jute mills of Biratnagar where there were workers in large number mainly in Biratnagar Jute Mills and Raghupati Jute Mills.

Later on while in the party work, he was entrusted the responsibility of Narayani Zone. In Narayani, He worked as ploughman at Himalibas in the district of Rautahat in order to organise peasants in Bara and Rautahat. He also worked to strengthen organisational work in Janakpur zone. Under his leading role, workers committees were formed in Birgunj Sugar Mills, Agricultural Inputs Factory and Steel industries of Jitpur-Bara.

Similarly, workers in Hetaunda Textile Industry, he managed the organisational activities. As a result of these significant organisational activities, the workers active participation in the movement of 1978 proved to be important in spite of loss of life of the 3 workers including Prabhakar Poudel due to suppression by the autocratic regime. In 1979, the special gathering of the workers representatives from Biratnagar, Janakpur, Birgunj and industrial estates of Balaju, Hetaunda & Patan established Nepal Independent Workers Union. It was the first central level organisation of the second edition of Nepali trade union movement where the contribution of Cde. Neupane is of utmost importance.

Cde. Neupane was one of the architects of the establishment of GEFONT. Now after the handover of the leadership from 2009, he is the Chief of the GEFONT's Congress Delegate Council.



Cde. Pradip Nepal

Birth : Jan 11, 1954/ **Birthplace**: Gogane, District of Bhojpur/

Current address : Kathmandu Metropolis – 15

With the aim to work as school teacher after the study of Bachelor in Education, he enrolled his name in Trichandra Collage of Kathmandu where he was arrested during student movement in 1970 with other 18 students though released same day from the custody. He was not involved politically anywhere

but when he returned back in the vacation to his village police tried to arrest him as 'Anti national element'. (The jargon was used by Panchayat autocracy to suppress the political movement). He had to escape and then he joined politics. In 1971, he joined one of the communist faction, but when he was in prison in 1977, he became member of All Nepal Revolutionary Communist Coordination Committee, the party which later converted itself into CPN (ML).

He came close to the workers from 1975, when he along with few young revolutionaries formed a group named Muslo (Flame) and started night classes of political education to factory workers in Kathmandu. In 1977, they distributed a pamphlet with an appeal to celebrate 86th May Day. He was arrested along with other 17 young political activists. He was jailed for 10 years with other 15 comrades, but just after 11 months, he could break the Prison along with revolutionary communist activists successfully. He became central leader of the Coordination Centre.

He was one of the leaders from the underground in Jute movement of peasants & farmers in 1982 in the districts of Jhapa & Morang. In 1987, he was entrusted responsibility of underground political work as Valley Committee Secretary in Kathmandu valley, then his link with factory workers and hotel workers became more- lively once again. Based on the party decision, he came forward to assist the process of the formation of GEFONT. Later on when political ban was lifted in open air environment after the success of mass movement in 1990, he became minister for information & communication. Still he is active in central level politics of the party and allied activities in addition to continuous literary writing. A number of novel based progressive social realism written by him is published. He is also well known as columnists.



Cde. Hari Prasad Sharma

Birth date: Jan 19, 1954/ **Birthplace:** Bhirkot village, District of Dolkha

Comrade Sharma originally from a low income hill family had started working life from Hotel Mourya of India. He worked in various Indian cities in different hotels and gained high experience as cook. Cde. Sharma returned back to Nepal in 1977 and started worked in Hotel Soaltee Oberoi in Kathmandu.

He had the knowledge of trade union activity during his job in India and he became active in Soaltee to start organisation of workers. The hotel was under the heavy share of Royal Palace with almost full control of royal family where the activities for labour rights meant a serious risk. Soaltee workers welfare committee was formed and he was the vice president. Frequently there were struggles. When Nepal Independent Hotel Workers Union was formed he was the founder president. He was arrested and jailed in 1982.

Finally he was released but lost the job and after few months of unemployment he joined hotel Yak & Yeti. From 1978 he was involved in CPN UML. He also assisted Trekking workers organisation as organiser in the initial days based on party decision to work for organising the workers in the sector.

Again he was arrested in 1984 by the autocratic regime and was tortured badly in the police custody. After release from the jail he continued political and trade union activities. In founding gathering for GEFONT formation, he was one of the participant and became founding vice-president of GEFONT. He also worked to unionise carpet workers based on GEFONT decision in the initial days.

As an efficient professional chef, he has been honoured and awarded by an Institution of Spain. In spite of his Restaurant business in Kathmandu & Pokhara, he is still active in social & political work. He is the executive member of Man Mohan Memorial Foundation and Man Mohan Polytechnic Institute.

We honoured them because...

Dr Shiva Sharma

He was transmission belt to connect expert-intellectuals with labour activism since 1994. Join National Labour Academy as the founder member and thus, associated with GEFONT.

GEFONT has been fully benefitted by the expertise of Dr Sharma to analyse facts & figures in order to steer Kamaiya liberation campaign. Dr Sharma has completed satisfactory journey to develop NLA as a common platform of expert-intellectuals & trade union activists; and contributed continuously in his capacity of Board member, General Secretary and now the President. Dr Sharma is a living answer to those who have negative note towards labour & working class.

GEFONT recognises the role of Dr Sharma and felicitates him for his wonderful contribution.



Cde. Som Rai

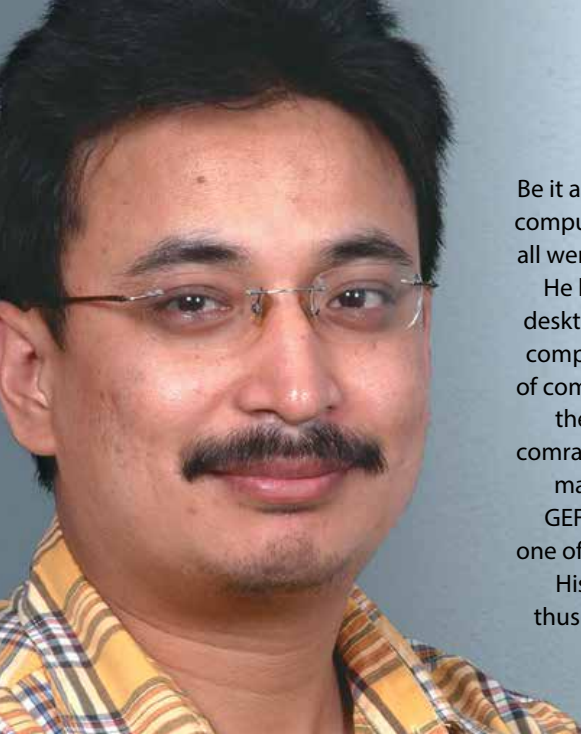
He was associated with GEFONT as a desktop publishing designer; for layouts and design of GEFONT's funding manifesto to first Pamphlet urging all working people to join 1990 popular movement. An artist as well as a campaigner Cde Som Rai played a crucial role in GEFONT, assuming various responsibilities ranging from Office Secretary in HQ to education secretary and director to digitise GEFONT. Various comrades now a days in the leadership of GEFONT & its affiliates, at least once, were the participants in training courses run by Cde Rai. Within 25 years in our history we can feel footsteps of Cde Rai. Today while celebrating silver jubilee of our National Centre- GEFONT family is privileged to honour his contribution.



Cde. Mahendralal Shrestha

'Worker'- this was the first cartoon-book published by GEFONT. And Cde Mahendra was its graphic designer. Since in early '90s, that publication to date, Cde Mahendra's role as the graphic designer of the various publications as well as publicity-planner in GEFONT is continued. Almost all attractive covers of GEFONT publication in addition to campaign posters are the creation of Cde Mahendra Shrestha. An image of the organisation doesn't emerge all of sudden; for this we need an image maker! And Cde Mahendra is one of those personalities in GEFONT family. GEFONT acknowledges his continued dedication of the 25 years.





Cde Kiran Mali

Be it a Macintosh colour classic brand of apple computer or dos operating system of IBM –PC; all were beneath Kiran’s fingers since 25 years.

He has an electrifying speed while typing in desktop computer and perfect knowledge on computing and operating almost all software of computers. ‘Give me a catalogue- I will pilot the aeroplane’; listening such a remark, his comrades tagged him with a nick name; Auto-man! He played a significant role to launch GEFONT first ever website early in 1993 and one of the principle figure in GEFONT IT Team.

His role is inseparable with Cde Mahendra; thus GEFONT felicitates for his special role to digitise GEFONT in these 25 years.



Cde Swasti Bajracharya

At a time when there was zero woman members in GEFONT leadership, she shouldered responsibility as the coordinator of newly established Central Woman Workers Department. As one of the educated and intellectual woman activists with none personal expectations, she helped to empower lot of woman activist in GEFONT. She successfully handed over responsibility Cde Bidhya Bhandari; GEFONT recalls her role as the founder of CWWD-GEFONT; and honours!

GEFONT: 25 Years in Building Workers' Power

Nepal was under yoke of tyrannical *Panchayat* System. Political parties were banned. Workers were oppressed, exploited and distressed. The work, wage and rest were set in the mercy of employer. All the rights of the worker were curtailed including political and Union rights. There were few Unions but underground. The situation was such that workers wanted to get stand for their rights but incapacitated to do so.

Alliances were forming against the *Panchayat* system. Nepal Independent Workers' Union (NIWU), Independent Transportation Workers' Association of Nepal (ITWAN), Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union (NIHWU) and Trekking Workers' Association of Nepal (TWAN) were unionising workers of their sector against *Panchayat* System. Even though these unions represented their sectors, it was not possible for them to coordinate with workers across the country. There was no structure to coordinate and mobilise the workers of the country and it weakened trade unions to play any significant role in the movement against *Panchayat* system. So, Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-ML), the then underground political party, realised that in order to organise the workers of the country and to mobilise the 4 unions effectively there should be a strong Confederation of the trade unions.

There were several attempts made to form Confederation. However, these attempts were turned to futile; sometime due to security reason of the leaders or sometimes because of weakness of internal management. But the day in July 20, 1989 there was a different dawn. The CPN- ML, leaders- Cde Pradip Nepal and Cde Mukunda Neupane along with group of leaders active in world of work, including Cde Bishnu Rimal and Cde Lalit Basnet silently converged together early in the morning in a safe den in Kathmandu. The meeting declared formation of an umbrella organisation of trade union– General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) to meet the dire need of the time. It formed seven members in ad-hoc committee with Cde Lalit Basnet as president. Press release on the same day read "We believe in the strength of our two arms and earning from its vigour.

We already rejected the benevolence and charity in the movement of 1947. We are committed for the emancipation of workers' community from injustice, oppression, inequality and harassment." But three days after the formation of GEFONT, few comments were published with surprising critics in a paper terming the confederation as 'mysterious'.

During that time not many workers were aware about trade union. Most workers had limited understanding of the union and took union as means to fulfil the financial demands. So, they would only participate in movement with financial agenda. Challenge was to serve workers' professional interest together with breaking the limitation and having wider role. GEFONT initiated its campaign in such contradiction. Working against the contradiction, GEFONT focused its campaign opposing *Panchayat* system. GEFONT campaigned to help the political parties fight against the *Panchayat* system. The system was overthrown in 1990 and democracy was established. GEFONT organised its first ever public programme in Institute of Engineering in Pulchowk, Kathmandu; Cde. Madan Bhandari was the Chief Guest. At that time numbers of GEFONT affiliates had reached nine. In the programme GEFONT made public its logo-a 'wheel with 9 gears' that was representing its 9 affiliates.

Nepal faced industrial unrest post People's movement of 1990. Workers called on strike in factories with demands whatever; be ita reasonable or an obsolete. By the time the country had no labour law to manage labour relations. It was guided by out dated Nepal Factory and Factory workers Act of 1959, which itself was amended before implementation curbing those Rights like Freedom of



The first National Congress of GEFONT, 1991

Association and Collectively Bargain. In such context GEFONT led the campaign to draft new Labour legislations together with its counterparts; as a result-Labour Act was promulgated in 1991. And Trade Union Act was promulgated in 1992. Enactments of the labour legislations helped in managing labour market. And, as per the Trade Union Act-1992, GEFONT was registered in Department of Labour in May 17, 1995 as the first ever Trade Union Confederation of Nepal.

In 1990 Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC) was formed and it emerged as strong competitor. It was very natural to have a sharp competition between two confederations, guided by different ideologies. Healthy competition was welcoming one, however, the two confederations sometimes engaged in unhealthy competition such as- if one confederation called a labour action- the other would act differently; which ultimately benefitted the employers. Even some occasion, the competition dragged unions to spontaneous strike countering each other with a unreasonable demands.

GEFONT had only 25 thousand members when it became public. Because of lack of awareness, it was not able to expand its membership. Therefore, to expand



Cde. Mukunda Neupane
The Immediate past Chairman

union and mobilise members, GEFONT adopted a policy—*“Many Unions- More members”*. Probably this policy did not help as much. So’ GEFONT amended its policy within 10 months. In its first Congress held in 1992 in Kathmandu, GEFONT adopted the policy *“Strong union and many members”*. In its Second Congress held in March 1995 GEFONT ended the policy adopted in first congress and formulated a new policy *“Strategic & Smart Organisations, Organise unions in new sectors for more membership Expansion”*. In the Second Congress GEFONT declared to recruit 1 million members by 2000; ironically even till 2014 it has membership of around 400,000. This proves that the declaration was not based on facts.

In this period, though, GEFONT has brought huge change in traditional thinking and understanding. Initially in Nepal, Trade union was considered only for factory workers. People working in banks, insurance companies, schools and colleges were not ready to identify themselves as workers. GEFONT focused to hammer on such mind-set; and expanded its membership in these service sectors. Similarly, it expanded its union network from tea plantation to agriculture, Street vendors and emancipation of bonded labourers. GEFONT believed that people working in hairdresser’s saloon and beauty parlour, health sector and aviation sector could

In my memory, the small gathering in the house of garbage cleaner on July 20, 1989 is lively though the long 25 years have elapsed. It was a turning point in my life. Myself, Pradip Nepal, Bishnu Rimal, Lalit Basnet and Hari Sharma sat together and formed the first national trade union centre in Nepal. We also allocated responsibilities of different sectors to each other. As a result, the labour movement of Nepal could take new height. Just after 10 months of the formation of national centre, Panchayat system collapsed and multiparty system replaced it. We came to the open-air movement. In the course of several ups & downs, democratic republic displaced the autocratic monarchy after the 17 years of GEFONT formation. Moreover after 8 years of republican democracy, we have celebrated the silver jubilee of the founding of GEFONT. The moves of the political parties in the full fledged support of workers caused Panchayat to collapse and later monarchy to come to an end; however the transition still exists. The responsibility of drafting of Constitution is entrusted to political parties, which failed once and now the parties are in second test. Still workers and working class is in doubt. But entire working people are optimistic and hopeful that political parties will provide us new constitution within our Silver Jubilee Year.

be organised. Home based and domestic workers are also directly related with it. GEFONT exists in rickshaw pullers of Southern Terai to people who plough land & herd cattle in hills and those trekked in hills & climbed the high Mountains. GEFONT is on the journey to realise its motto "*Where there are workers; there is GEFONT!*"

Inhuman-practice of bonded labour (known as Kamaiya system) was very evident in the Western plain areas of Nepal. These labourers wanted freedom from the slavery of landlords. GEFONT launched a forum *Kamaiya Liberation Front* as a union to carry a campaign to relinquish bonded labourers from slavery & forced labour system with a slogan, '*Let's make Slaves- the Poor.*' Other organisations too initiated movements for emancipation of the bonded labourers. After 10 years of continued campaign the Government of Nepal was forced to declare the emancipation of the bonded labourers in July 17, 2000.

Now workers of all sectors have right to unionise. Every worker has right to bargain collectively to settle his or her wage, benefits and terms of work. There is law for gender equality at work and for wage. All of these rights are guaranteed by Constitution as fundamental rights of workers. GEFONT played leading role in fighting for these rights.



Cde. Lalit Basnet
The Founding President

A worker has right to protect himself/herself from slavery, forced work, bonded labour and exploitation. Workers cannot be discriminated against gender, caste and religion. This is a workers' constitutional right. These rights are based on ILO Core Conventions and these international standards are domesticated in Nepal's Labour legislations. For this GEFONT has been playing as important role in coordinating with ILO, Parliament and Government and other social partners. Of eight fundamental ILO Conventions, Nepal has ratified 7 except the Convention No 87. GEFONT is pressurising to pressure the Government and seeking support with stakeholders to ratify the Convention. However, the campaign is not successful so far.

Child labour is sometimes a reason for anarchic labour market. Employers opt to employ children because children are 'voiceless' one; so they can easily exploit child's labour. Such grave issue, which also was main reason of anarchy in world of work, was not touched upon until 1990. GEFONT had put in a lot of effort to establish the problem of child labour as trade union issue. Figure says, approximately 2 million child labourers still exist in Nepal's labour market; which proves ineffectiveness of GEFONT's campaign against this issue.

We focused on the struggle against autocratic Panchayat system through May Day mobilisation. We used to work in the factories during the day and then enter villages in the darkness of night where factory workers and other working people used to live. We used to educate them about the rights of the workers in order to organize them. During this process we felt that Nepal Independent workers union and few scattered unions in enterprise level cannot produce significant achievements and hence we came to the conclusion to establish GEFONT in 1989. The inclusion of workers from various sectors after the establishment of GEFONT became possible. From 1989 as a significant departure point, we have achieved a lot in these 25 years. Political parties are still ignoring the workers and trade unions. Trade union unity is thus inevitable.

GEFONT has formulated a fundamental policy to increase the participation of women in trade union. It broke the existing tradition, either forming separate trade union for women or forming a separate women department within trade union. GEFONT established a Central Woman Workers' Department (CWWD) and recognised it as an affiliate. It adopted an interesting policy of 25% women participation in all of its programmes and 25% men participation in CWWD's programmes. This not only encouraged women participation, it also helped the majority faction realise what it is like to be in a minority group. GEFONT said – *Not mere Representation but Equal Participation* which meant women leaders and cadres are not things for embellishment and should actively participate in union movement. As a result of which, even if only in numbers, GEFONT has 33% women in all of its structures from centre to local before the expected time.

The past two and half decades are quite long in the life of we individual activists, but for an institution like GEFONT, it is a short span of time. We have gained highly significant achievements in the labour market, labour politics and in the lives of individual workers and families. Organization building has expanded in a new dimension covering informal economy and self employed workers, too. Wages have been reviewed timely with high strength in the bargaining table. Social security system from almost zero level has come to a visible item in the economy & society. Collective bargaining has become able to gain a number of fringe benefits and incentives to the workers of the formal sector. Workers education has taken a new high height from just informal education programmes to a stable education system. Policy intervention exercise by GEFONT and in association with other unions has gained high momentum. Media mobilization in favour of working class has opened up new avenues in thinking and activities. The significant activities for the protection of Nepali migrant workers abroad and expanding role of GEFONT in international trade union movement as well as in South Asian sub region & Asia pacific regional level are visible & important during the past years. We have become inevitable in the national scenario but still the political space of the workers is not ensured & stabilized as an unavoidable part of the entire system. While reviewing the activities & achievements of my long involvement through various executive positions in the organization, I feel a high degree of satisfaction in spite of a list of unfinished tasks to be undertaken in future. Now I have shifted my role from executive responsibilities towards intensive policy work. I hope based on the experiences & achievements of the past, organization & movement will continue to go ahead with new colleagues in executive positions where I will extend my supportive hand as a committed activist to supplement the team with full-fledged dedication as before.

In the beginning Trade Unionists defined labour relations as 'give and take' relation among the two opposite economic classes as a 'class war'- 'fight to finish'. Therefore they understood labour relations as relation between tiger and lamb. As if workers were helpless as lamb and employers powerful as tiger. This psyche worked even while formulating and implementing state-policies. Employers were influential in all of the state mechanism. But today is different. Workers are gaining more access in several structures of the state. Central Labour Advisor Committee (CLAC) is a tripartite structure. From National Development Council to Industrial Promotion Board, workers are gaining more access and influence. In short, the notion "wherever the employers, there will be workers" is being recognised. This is no petite-success for labour movement. GEFONT together with other trade unions have played important role in establishing this phenomenon.



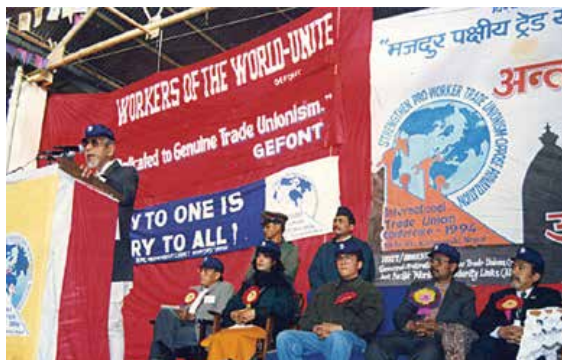
Cde. Umesh Upadhyaya
The Outgoing Secretary General

Historically, Trade Union was treated as a branch of a political party. But now trade union is treated as an autonomous institutions and social counterpart. Trade union itself is gaining more access in politics and political parties. Currently, three GEFONT leaders are representing workers in Constituent Assembly. Taking CPN-UML's example, the central committee of the party has seven GEFONT leaders as its members.

Workers in HRC sector now earn at least 1 thousands to 15 thousands extra income along with their salary due to their victory in the struggle for 10% service charge. They fought for this above 2 decades. Being a initiators of this campaign, GEFONT played a role of coordinator/facilitator to win 'battle' for 10% service charge.

GEFONT has put in a lot of effort to institutionalise Trade Union movement. Through labour studies and Trade union education GEFONT started TU campaign in 1993 to empower union. GEFONT has been publishing 'Shramik Khabar (Workers' News) since one year of its establishment. It has published about hundreds of books in both Nepali and English on different trade union issues. To raise awareness among the workers about their rights and to make them well informed, GEFONT conducts Radio and Television programme called "Labour & Creation". Now it also uses digital medium and social networks. Believing that in order to have a strengthened union it needs to have a well managed finance and secretariat; GEFONT has established and developed a grand office in Man Mohan Labour Building in the capital city. GEFONT has played significant role in formulating labour policies and globalising Nepal's trade union movement.

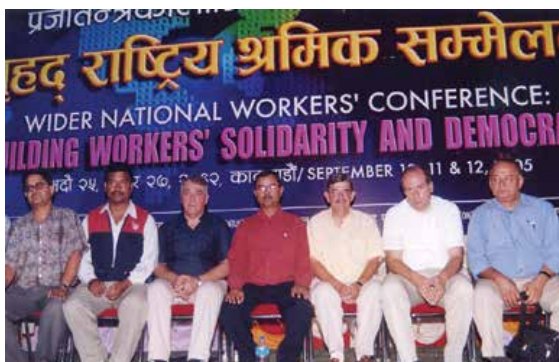
International Trade Union Conference on Pro-worker Trade Union Movement, 1994



Democratic Republic was established in 2006. Then All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF), which grew alongside the violent insurgency hatched by CPN- Maoist, entered Nepali World of Work. And, again like in 1990, it created unrest in labour market. Unnecessary conflicts arose among unions. In some institutions ANTUF targeted GEFONT. GEFONT has expressed it as difficult period in its journey. In some of its documents it has also assumed that such time might come. As mentioned in its scenario forecast, GEFONT was forced to limit its localise labour action; it had to concentrate more on consolidating power for the time being rather than mobilising masses for a huge movement.

But such unfavourable situation lasted only till General Election of 2008. Since then, the large confederations of the country have been working in coordination. For the purpose they have established Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC). They have worked collectively for issues like fixing minimum wage, establishing contributory social security fund and several other burning labour issues. GEFONT claims to have assumed leadership role at policy level to foster coordination among confederations. GEFONT initiated the effort since 2000. In its third Congress, held in 2000, GEFONT had adopted a policy to form Single union; and, formed high level Task-force with Nepal Trade Union Congress.

Not only has GEFONT played important role in uniting national trade union movement, it has also played equally important role in uniting international trade union movement. It was not affiliated to any umbrella confederations formed after division in trade union movement during cold war. GEFONT has always maintained that the international trade union bodies active during cold war like ICFTU, WCL and WFTU should have a common centre. In order to achieve



*Wider National
Workers' Conference,
2005*

this goal, a Contact Group of ICFTU, WCL and Independent Trade Union centres was formed and GEFONT was the only National Trade Union Centre representing the Asia Pacific. WFTU did not participate in the process of unifying but ICFTU and WCL dissolved to form ITUC. And GEFONT was one among the 17 founding independent trade union centres of the world.

Safe migration for employment is another issue raised by GEFONT. GEFONT has paid attention to its motto "*GEFONT is there wherever the workers are*" and tried to implement it not only within the country but also in foreign lands where Nepali are working. After 1994 GEFONT started organising Nepali nationals working in South Korea. Apart from Hong Kong and Malaysia, GEFONT is organising Nepali workers through GEFONT Support Group in Gulf States like Qatar, Bahrain, UAE and Kuwait. GEFONT has signed bilateral memorandum of understanding with trade unions of destination countries and working in coordination with them.

GEFONT is celebrating Silver Jubilee of its foundation today and many workers maybe working in foreign countries without work permit. Even after working hard for a full month, many workers maybe agonised with less than established minimum wage. Many might be forced to work in precarious condition just to earn daily bread. Many may not have got permanent appointment letter even after working for more than 240 days. Informal sector workers who are not protected by existing labour law might be pinning their hope on GEFONT. How many may have been victim of gender discrimination? And how many might be victims of sexual harassment?

Hotel industry workers had to wait for 28 years to reach an agreement on service tax. Maybe workers are asking how long we have to wait for the employers to contribute in social security fund as agreed by trade union and employers. It was declared that several programmes like unemployment allowance, Medicare, accident insurance and maternity protection will be funded by sums collected in social security fund from 1% tax in workers' wage.

Wonder what is happening about those issues? If we analyse closely, of the 16 millions labourforce, majority does not have access to trade union. Ultimately, all these are challenges for GEFONT.

(Text prepared in Nepali by Cde. Manoj Pandey)

Those Who Represented GEFONT in highest policy making body

(The Legislature Parliament and the Government)



Cde. Mukunda Neupane
(The Immediate Past Chairman)
MP – 1992; 1994
Minister – 1997



Cde. Salim Ansari
(Then Vice-Chair for Region)
MP – 1994
Minister – 1994



Cde. Bidhya Bhandari
(Former CWWD-Coordinator)
MP – 1993; 1994
Minister – 1997



Cde. Lalit Basnet
(Founding President)
MP – 1999



Cde. Chudamani Jangali
(Former Vice-President)
Interim Legislator – 2006
CA Member – 2014



Cde. Bishnu Rimal
(President)
CA Member – 2008



Cde. Binda Pandey
(Former Dy. Secretary General)
CA Member – 2008



Cde. Jogi Lal Yadav
(Former President of Zone)
CA Member – 2008



Cde. Shanti Jirel
(Former CWWD Member)
CA Member – 2008



Cde. Binod Shrestha
(Former Sr. Vice-President)
CA Member – 2014



Cde. Pemba Lama
(Former Dy. Secretary General)
CA Member – 2014



GEFONT represented in Constituent Assembly

Cde. Binod Shrestha

Founding Treasurer, Former Secretary General and Sr. Vice President, currently in GEFONT Governing Council responsible for Central Workers' Cooperative Promotion Committee

Cde. Pemba Lama

Former Deputy Secretary General, currently responsible for Parliamentary Affairs

Cde. Chudamani Jangali

Former Vice President, currently in GEFONT Governing Council responsible for Parliamentary Affairs



It's our History

GEFONT'S previous Congresses



प्रथम बाकिंकोत्सवको सन्वर्भमा

स्वस्थ
औद्योगिक सम्बन्ध कायम गर्न
र
एकीकृत मजदुर यूनियन
निर्माण गर्न समर्पित



नेपाल ट्रेड यूनियन महासंघ
GENERAL FEDERATION OF NEPALESE TRADE UNIONS
IS DEDICATED TO
PROPER INDUSTRIAL RELATION &
UNIFIED TRADE UNION



(NIWU)

नेपाल स्वतन्त्र मजदुर यूनियन



(NIHWU)

नेपाल स्वतन्त्र होटल मजदुर यूनियन



(ITWU)

नेपाल यालाघात स्वतन्त्र मजदुर संगठन



(TWN)

नेपाल ट्रेकिङ्ग मजदुर संघ



(IPWUN)

नेपाल स्वतन्त्र रेश मजदुर यूनियन



(VGWU)

उपत्यका गामपट्ट मजदुर यूनियन



(ISUN)

नेपाल स्वतन्त्र कर्पाई मजदुर यूनियन



(NICWU)

नेपाल स्वतन्त्र काँस्टे तथा उनी धारणो मजदुर यूनियन



(TGWU)

नेपाल चिया मजदुर यूनियन

A promising Union Centre is born!

The Founding Congress (July 20, 1989)

The Year 1947 is the date always memorable for Nepali working people. The year laid foundation for young trade union movement in Nepali soil of the South Asian sub-continent. United and common, basically converging with two political ideologies- the Communist and Social Democrats, first trade union organisation was launched through the historic workers strike in the eastern Nepal. Through coup d'état of the then monarchy, in 1960 all of the unions of the time along with political parties and their mass organisations were declared banne. Subsequently most of the mass-organisations lost their existence.

After 19 years of continuous repression, in 1979 a historical people's movement broke out. It brought up more than half a dozen trade unions in centre. However, due to lack of coordination and understanding among trade unions in different trade and industries, the formation of national centre of trade unions could not be realised. In order to fix such lacks, an initiative was taken on July 20, 1989 marking centenary date of declaration of May 1st movement- the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) was established by the association among four federations of Nepali trade unions related to industries, transportation, hotel & tourism, trekking, tours and expedition. The event was held secret to avoid repression of the then autocratic regime. Founding Secretary General Cde Bishnu Rimal recalled the context of the formation of GEFONT as following:

It was a rainy day of July in 1989. A group of senior activists of Nepali working class movement quietly gathered in a secret den, hiding themselves from wolfish eyes of the agent of the reactionary establishment- the *Panchayat* and its police. The very gathering launched GEFONT as a coordinating mechanism to fulfil a historic task of forming an umbrella, a long-felt need in the trade union movement of Nepal.

The founding meeting also expressed its rage with political parties which claimed to be custodian of working people, but in practice often went to the opposite. Thus, the newly launched GEFONT

expressed in its manifesto, "... those political parties could do any justice, to workers who first started the movement in 1947 which uprooted the *Rana Oligarchy*... They always expected that the *sky would fall and the larks would be caught* for the liberation of the labourers, and that they would one day be liberated from the reactionary system." With the sacred intention of making GEFONT as a common platform for all workers, the manifesto expects- "we believe that all political parties in want of progress and prosperity of the labourers will help us move ahead successfully towards the attainment of our goal."

GEFONT was launched in such context; there were no political and human rights. A party-less system was imposed by the then regime led by absolute monarchy. Thus all policies were basically concentrated on people's fundamental & democratic rights by opposing the hereditary system of monarchy. GEFONT formulated basic policies as follows:

- People and nation are the supreme source of power; the sovereignty lies in people
- The prosperity of nation is fully possible only when enemies of the people, e.g.; feudalism, imperialism, hegemonism and bureaucratic capitalism are abolished
- The revolutionary solidarity among the people of all suppressed and exploited profession is a key force of workers' union
- The exercise of all means of peaceful movement such as dialogue, pressures, and strikes can solve the workers problem.

The plan of action was to focus to on the attainment of democratic rights and oppose the existing dictatorial regime. Thus, immediately after the formation of GEFONT, it decided to join popular democratic moment of early 1990 declared by the then underground political parties.

Thanks to the people and workers in Nepal, despite heavy repression and arrest of GEFONT activists, multiparty system became possible within 52 days of popular movement that began from 18 February 1990. This change led GEFONT and its movement to new destination.

Since its foundation, GEFONT has convened 6 National Congresses so far. Summary is as follows:

The leadership

- **Chairman:** Cde. Lalit Basnet
- **Vice-Chairman:** Cde. Hari Prasad Sharma
- **Secretary General:** Cde. Bishnu Rimal
- **Members:** Cde. Madav Neupane, Cde. Nuru Wang-Xu Sherpa, Cde. Chudamani Jangali, Cde. Lok Nath Pandey

There was change in leadership just after Peoples' movement of 1990 by the 1st Open-Air Programme held in July 14, 1990.

Board of Directors

- *Director General:* Cde. Mukunda Neupane
- *Deputy Director:* Cde. Surya P Sharma
- *Secretary General:* Cde. Bishnu Rimal
- *Treasurer:* Cde. Binod Shrestha
- *Member:* Cde Hari P Shurma
- *Patron:* Cde Mohan Chandra Adhikari

Executive Committee

- **President:** Cde. Lalit Basnet
- **Vice- Presidents:** Cde. J.B. Rai, Chudamani Jangali
- **Secretary:** Cde Madhav Neupane
- **Members:** Cde Hari Datt Joshi, Kabindra S Rimal, Rupchand Uraun, Antalal Dhimal, Prem Pratap Sen, Dorji Sushil Sherpa, Yugeswor Shah

"Workers of the world unite"

SOCIAL JUSTICE & ECONOMIC PARITY

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH & WORKERS'

SOLIDARITY



Let us join

1st National Congress

of the

**general federation of nepalese
trade unions (gefont)**

28th - 31st March 1992

in Kathmandu

Social Justice and Economic Parity, Industrial Growth and Workers Solidarity

The First National Congress (March 28-31, 1992; Kathmandu)

Major policy departure: GEFONT had high emphasis on “struggle and workers mobilisation” to end exploitation of working class since its foundation. Based on changed political context and in the outset of newly declared Constitution in 1990, it was felt necessary to reformulate future course of our struggle. Recognising the need of a long battle yet to fight against exploitation imposed on working class in order to achieve social justice; the Congress set policy for industrial growth & parity in balance with workers solidarity. For this, a policy was adopted to institutionalise achievements of decade’s long struggle. First Congress decided to carry forward the struggle along with social dialogue, rather than repeating directionless rhetoric of “class-struggle”. GEFONT actively participated by mobilising workers in the first parliamentary election held after 3 decades. Through the elected Member of Parliament including its the then president, GEFONT had gone into determined lobbying to enact labour legislations. Thanks to the understanding of all concerned parties and hard work of our member, Labour Act-1990 and Trade Union Act-1992 were adopted for the first time in Nepal’s history by the parliament.

First National Congress was successful. From this Congress GEFONT made a policy departure as well. It declared policies compatible to the changed political scenario. Various programmes were launched such as:

- A unique trade union education programme popularly known as TRUE-Campaign (Trade Union Education Campaign);
- Initiation of free Legal Service to the working people;
- Fight against Child labour problem;
- A programme to aware workers on OSH; and
- Establishment of some sort of *solidarity fund* entitled Emergency Fund.

The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

- **Chairman:** Cde. Mukunda Neupane
- **Vice-Chair:** Cde. Lalit Basnet
- **Secretary General:** Bishnu Rimal
- **Treasurer:** Binod Shrestha
- **Vice-chairs for region:** Cde. Chudamani Jangali, Cde. Hem Raj Regmi , Cde. Salim Ansari (*vacant after being minister 1994 November*) and Cde. J.B Rai
- **Members (all Ex-officio representing national federations)**
Cde. Hari dutta Joshi, Cde. Madav Neupane, Cde. Jitendra shrestha, Cde. Rup Chan Uraun, Cde. Kabindra Shekhar Rimal; Cde. Prem Kumar Shrestha, Cde. Lok Nath Pandey (*replace by other member of his unions after restructuring NEC*), Cde. Yugeshwor Saha, Cde. Medini Kharel; Cde. Swasti Bajracharya (Resigned at June 12, 1993)- Cde Bidhya Bhandari (nominated); appointed by NEC restructure at May 9, 1995 Cde. Om Koirala, Cde. Raghunath Khulal; Cde. Ganesh Regmi; Cde. Uddav K. C; Cde. Bishnu Bhkta Phuyal, Cde. Rajendra Raj Hamal;, Cde. Ang Phuri Shrerpa, Cde. Narayan Rajbamsi, Cde. Balram Khatri, Cde. Siddhi Maharjan, Cde. Bina Shrestha, Cde. Mohan Nepali
- **Office Secretary:** Cde. Som Rai

राष्ट्रियता, प्रजातन्त्र, विकास र शान्ति
हाम्रो श्रमनीति - मजदुर हित र
औद्योगिक क्रान्ति



राष्ट्रियता
प्रजातन्त्र
विकास
शान्ति
National Congress

नेपाल ट्रेड यूनियन महासंघको
द्वितीय राष्ट्रिय मध्याधिवेशन

दिनांक ३-६, २०७२, काठमाडौं

Towards Labour Welfare and Industrial Revolution; Let us translate our Policy into Action

The Second National Congress (March 16-19, 1996; Kathmandu)

Major policy departure: This congress had continued and concretised the policies adopted by the First National Congress. As aimed by the 1st National Congress, GEFONT concentrated itself to formulate National Labour Policy through this congress in order to further institutionalise achievements gained by the past struggles. GEFONT argued and asked the state to enact *National Labour Policy*. By the time, many of the planners and policy makers were considering Labour Law as the labour policy; thus GEFONT put forward a concept of National Labour Policy correcting the erroneous understanding of concerned stakeholders.

The 2nd National Congress was the last GEFONT Congress of 20th Century, thus it adopted programme entitling “GEFONT BY 2000”. The aim was- preparing GEFONT to grab opportunity and become capable to face challenges of 21st Century.

To this, the TRUE Campaign was focused to clarify what and what not is the Labour policy. Various intellectuals were invited and experts were involved to discuss in GEFONT’s concept. A proposal of “One Class- One Organisation; One Enterprise- One Union” was forwarded to end multiplicity of unions at workplace. Campaign to liberate *Kamaiya* (the bonded agricultural labourers) from slavery and unionisation of agricultural workers was initiated. Programme against the use of child labour was continued. In order to build up higher capacity of GEFONT to face future challenges, new programme “GEFONT Cadre Top-100” was introduced. A special programme to increase woman participation in union movement was launched with a slogan- “Not mere representation, but equal participation.” GEFONT restructured its larger federations in line of their nature of work. It continued OSH campaign and ask its members to pay one-day wages to construct its own Building by 2000.

Today in bullet points, we are proud to enlist here-

- National Labour Policy was declared in 1997 in the line of GEFONT stand & concept;

- *Kamaiya* (Bonded Agricultural Labour) were declared free on July 17, 2000;
- Entire Tea Plantation was declared “child labour free” in 2000; and
- Man Mohan Labour Building was inaugurated as GEFONT HQ in May 1st 2000.

The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

- **Chairman:** Cde. Mukunda Neupane
- **Vice-Chair:** Cde. Lalit Basnet
- **Secretary General:** Bishnu Rimal
- **Treasurer:** Binod Shrestha
- **Coordinator for regions:** Cde. Bidhya Bhandari (CWWD), Cde. J.B. Rai (Deserted), Cde. Raghunath Khulal , Cde. Udav K.C., Cde. Chudamani Jangali;and Cde. Hem Raj Regmi
- **Members:** Cde. Rajendra Raj Hamal; Cde. Som Kumar Rai; Cde. Hari Dutta Joshi; Cde. Om Koirala ; Cde. Umesh Uppadhaya; Cde. Jitendra Shrestha; Cde. Narnath Luitel; Cde. Narayan Rajbansi ; Cde. Balram Khatri ; Cde. Madav Neupane; Cde. Raju Silwal (Deserted)
- **Office Secretary** Cde. Som Rai replaced by Cde. Sujita Shakya- Again Cde. Sujita replaced by Cde. Kabindra Shekhar Rimal (March 31, 1998)

समृद्ध जीवनको लागि
सुदृढ संगठन र एकीकृत ट्रेड यूनियन आन्दोलन !



नेपाल ट्रेड यूनियन महासंघको
तेश्रो राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशन

मे १-३, २००० (बैशाख १९-२१, २०५७), काठमाडौं

GEFONT-3rd National Congress
May 1-3, 2000, Kathmandu



Unified Trade Unionism for Prosperous Life

The Third National Congress (May 1-3, 2000; Kathmandu)

Major policy departure: This congress was held after celebration of 10th founding day of GEFONT. Thus, the policy programme carries wide reflection of decade long experiences. This congress was begun with inauguration of new building as its Head Quarter. A pair of policy review was made entitled-“Glorious Ten Years of our Struggle” and “Moving ahead within the First Decade of 21st Century!” The set of policy review documents carried an analysis of GEFONT efforts for the development of unified trade union movement, its organisation and mobilisation work, major struggles and labour action of the decade; workers’ education campaign; GEFONT involvement in the issue of social concern, activities on social security, labour legislation and trade union rights; and GEFONT and contemporary politics. First time since its inception, GEFONT made public its SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis.

Followed by this policy analysis & Review of activities, 6-points Policy Recommendation was adopted under following broader headings:

- Politics, political party & Trade unions
- International Trade Union movement
- Recommendation for Unified trade union movement
- Contemporary issues and GEFONT position (Globalisation, privatisation, wage & industrial policy, class structure & struggle etc)
- Action focused policies (Agriculture, Services, social issues, big business house, TNC and trade union member etc)

The 16-point Plan of action entitled-“GEFONT Campaign in the New Millennium” was based on the policy recommendations. Through this plan of action, GEFONT proposed NTUC, to form high-level taskforce to materialise One Voice Dream. It was the first time in union movement asking categorically to competing partner to balance labour market flexibility with social security.

The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

- **Chairman:** Cde. Mukunda Neupane
- **Vice-Chair:** Cde. Lalit Basnet
- **Secretary General:** Bishnu Rimal
- **Treasurer:** Binod Shrestha
- **Coordinator for regions:** Cde. Chudamani Jangali , Cde. Udav K.C; and Cde. Om Koirala
- **Head of Departments:** Cde. Umesh Uppadhaya (DFA); Cde. Hari dutta Joshi (DLR); Cde. Binda Pandey (DEd)- replaced by Cde. Budhi Acharya when she went for study leave (on 2001 Jan 12) and she kept continue as NEC meber
- **Members:** Cde. Bina Shrestha , Cde. Budhi Acharya (promoted to Head of DEd 2000-2003); Cde. Goma Timilsina, Cde. Bidur Karki, Cde. Madav Neupane, Cde. Deepak Paudel, Cde. Narayan Singh Rajbansi ; Cde. Bal Ram Khatri ; Cde. Jetendra Shrestha; Cde. Narnath Luitel; Cde. Mohan Nepali; Cde. Janak Choudhary; and Kalicharn Basnet (resigned at Sept 26, 2000)
- **Ex-officio:** Cde. Rajib Ghimire; Cde. Jogi Lal Yadav; Cde. Krshina K.C replaced Tribikram Gyanwali (*July 15, 2001*); Cde. Dinesh Kumar Rai; Cde. Madhusudan Khatiwoda; Cde. Krshina Bhahadur Ghale; Cde. Surya Mohan Subedi; Cde. Kamal Gautam; Cde. Kasav Raj Giri; Cde. Dharma Nand Pant;
- **Office Secretary:** Cde. Kabindra Shekhar Rimal

प्रजातन्त्र, शान्ति र अग्रगमनका लागि एकल यूनियन !
Enhance One Union For Democracy, Peace and Overall Change!



चौथो राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशन

4th National Congress

१२-२१ बैशाख, २०६१ / 1-3 May, 2004

One Union for Democracy, Peace & Overall Change!

The Fourth National Congress (May 1-3, 2004; Kathmandu)

Major policy departure: GEFONT Fourth National Congress was the congress convened in the period of political crisis. On one side, the monarchy assumed as Constitutional, was moving towards autocracy, parties in mainstream were exhibiting high ineffectiveness to govern; on the other the violent insurgency was gaining momentum. There was looming confusion among the public and high degree of frustration was growing. Workers were trapped in crossfire. In that outset, GEFONT first made political scenario forecast; warn entire working masses to fit collectively to face any crisis. The word- **One Union** was signifying progress towards collaboration between the then competing two national centres GEFONT and NTUC. The effort was to initiate possible trade union unity with involvement of other existing trade unions as well. Democracy and peace as we expected, according to the Fourth Congress, were possible if there would be structural change!

Through this Congress report, GEFONT questioned-

- How to dissociate the middle class and families from the lust of land ownership having good earning from other alternatives sources and how to eliminate absentee ownership?
- How to make tens of thousands of landless families (agricultural workers) the owner of sufficient land, who depend on land for employment; and how to increase their wage to the level that could provide them a decent living?
- How to increase the share of land of the poor families who have just small pieces of homestead land with them?

The Fourth Congress derived a conclusion- contemporary Nepali society is confronting a challenge as to how to lead the society towards positive end placing class issue at the centre while addressing tactfully gender, caste/ethnicity and regional issue. Thus the Congress concluded- "Our final destination is the achievement of free, dignified and prosperous life of the working people. Socialism is therefore our long term political goal!"

This Congress paved way to shift GEFONT policy on international relation-from non-aligned to critical engagement. "Unity in diversity"- keeping this mantra in centre, the congress sided towards the creation of **single international trade union centre**.

Fourth Congress elected new Secretary General, replacing incumbent secretary General who served GEFONT in this capacity for 15 years. A policy was taken to demarcate mobilising and thinking functions. The Congress also modified its existing structure and launched a new think tank wing- Central Planning Commission to be headed by a designated vice-chairperson.

The programme adopted by the Congress incorporated the spirit of the policy document. Partnership with political parties for social transformation, One union in the country and one centre in global trade union movement, package deal in the labour market reform under the slogan- the more social security- the more flexible labour market were the major areas focused by the Plan of Action.

The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

- **Chairman:** Cde. Mukunda Neupane
- **Vice-Chairs:** Cde. Lalit Basnet, Cde. Bishnu Rimal
- **Secretary General:** Cde Binod Shrestha
- **Deputy Secretary Generals:** Cde. Umesh Uppadhaya; Cde. Hari dutta Joshi ; Cde. Binda Pandey
- **Coordinator for regions:** Cde. Chudamani Jangali , Cde. Udav K.C; Cde. Om Koirala, and Cde. Bina Shrestha(CWWD)
- **Secretaries:** Cde. Budhi Acharya(DFA), Cde. Jeetendra Shrestha (DPub); Cde. Madav Neupane(DSS); resigned (on Jul 05, 2005) and replaced by Cde. Balram Khatari ; Cde. Bidur Karki (DEd); Cde. Jitendra Jochne (Dfin); Cde. Ramesh Badal (DLR); Cde. Pemba Lama(CWWD)
- **Members:** Cde. Dinesh Rai; Cde. Motiraj Sunuwar (2005-2009 Resigned); Cde. Santa Rai; Cde. Bishnu Lamsal; Cde. Mohan Nepali; Cde. Narnath Luitel; Cde. Janak Choudhary; Cde. Chabilal Upreti
- **Ex-officio Members:** Cde. Rajib Ghimire; Cde. Jogi Lal Yadav; Cde. Tribikram Gyewali; Cde. Kamlesh Jha; Cde. Madhusudan Khatiwoda; Cde. Deepak Paudel; Cde. Surya Mohan Subedi; Cde. Kamal Gautam; Cde. Kasav Raj Giri; Cde. Dev Bahadur Bam; Cde. Dharma Nand Pant; *CWWD-Regions-* Cde. Renuka Pandey, Cde. Goma Timilsina Cde. Amala Shrestha
- **Principle Secretary:** Cde. Kabindra Shekhar Rimal



5th National Congress
unity *नेहरू*
for transformation
पाँचौँ राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशन
रुपान्तरणका लागि
April 4-7, 2009, Kathmandu
२२-२५ चैत २०६५, काठमाडौँ

नेपाल ट्रेड यूनियन महासंघ
पाँचौँ राष्ट्रिय महाधिवेशन

२२-२५ चैत २०६५, काठमाडौँ



www.gefont.org

Unity for Transformation!

*The Fifth National Congress (April 4-7, 2004; Kathmandu
and Leadership handover: April 30; Kathmandu)*

Major policy departure: The Fifth National Congress was held in an entire new political atmosphere. By the time, new power structure had emerged; the politics was passing through a transitional phase, which is still lingering. Centuries long monarchical system was replaced by the historic revolution; Nepal was declared secular Federal Democratic Republic. The country entered into the new political course signing in Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the then rebel (CPN- Maoist). A new initiatives began; three options were given to almost 20 thousands Maoist combatants barracked at 28 Cantonments as-integration with national security agencies, rehabilitation in the society and package for voluntary retirement.

This context demanded new policy discourse in the trade union movement. GEFONT proposed the theme- Unity for Transformation! GEFONT opinion was- Those who have been enjoying their rights have control over power and resources. Those deprived of their rights are also denied an opportunity to access power and resources. Unless this socio-economic pyramid is altered, economy of Nepal will not undergo transformation. The essence of transformation is to end the existing social order that protects the interest of those powerful exploiters, and establish a new order that provides social justice and ensures rights to all, not least the marginalised and oppressed.

For this, GEFONT expected Unity among trade unions specifically and with other stakeholders in general for social transformation. Launching of Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) was one of the outcomes in this regard.

Thus, the Fifth Congress proposed major programme - Unity for Transformation. This programme had politically covered education/training to enhance workers' awareness and coordination with political parties and Constituent Assembly members to formulate pro-worker constitution. In addition to Organisation Building and, Expansion and mobilisation of workers, the programme focused on Intensifying Campaign for social protection and labour legislations reform.

Besides ongoing woman leadership development programme, a new initiation was launched to bring youth in the trade union movement by establishing GEFONT Youth Committees at national & various levels.

We are Proud to mention that the political parties have agreed at least in principle for 10% representation of working class in state bodies whereas adjustment of labour agenda in the drafts by Thematic Committees of Constituent Assembly and formation of parliamentary committee related to Labour Relations were implemented.

Our Policy coverage was much wider to strengthen local structures and struggles, to increase membership in agriculture-construction-self employed sectors particularly street vendors, to promote social image of the union movement through mobilisations basically for fair wage and decent work agenda.

The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

- **President:** Cde. Bishnu Rimal
- **Senior Vice-president:** Cde. Binod Shrestha
- **Vice-presidents** (Ex-officio): Cde. Chudamani Jangali, Cde. Haridutta Joshi, Cde. Uddav K.C , Cde. Bina Shrestha
- **Secretary General:** Cde. Umesh Upadhaya
- **Deputy Secretary Generals:** Cde. Pemba Lama, Cde. Bishnu Lamsal; Cde. Janak Choudhary
- **Secretaries:** Cde. Jitendra Jochne (DFin), Cde. Bidur Karki (DEd), Cde. Ramesh Badal (DFA), Cde. Jeetendra Shrestha (DPub); Cde. Deepak Paudel (DSS);
- **Members** (All Ex-officio):
 - **Rep of Union Council:** Cde. Dinesh Rai; Cde. Kasav duwadi, Cde. Ram Naresh Singh; Cde. Madan Rimal; Cde. Kedar Aryal; Cde. Narnath Luitel (Member Secretary to Union Council); Cde. Gun ram Acharya; Cde. Mohan Nepali; Cde. Kamal Gautam;
 - **Prez of Zones:** Cde. Santa Kumar Rai ; Cde. Jogi Lal Yadav (Replaced by Kul Bahdur Khatri)-replaced by Cde. Kishor Dhamal after convention (2013); Cde. Tribikram Gyewali; Cde. Surendra Rai- replaced by Cde. Ram Naresh Singh after convention (2013); Cde. Kamlesh Jha; Cde. Madhusudan

Khatiwoda (Member Secretary to this sector); Cde. Tulasi Sivakoti- replaced by Cde. Ramhari Nepal after convention (2013); ; Cde. Youba Raj Paudel *replaced by* Chandra P Gurung (after dissolving existing committee)- replaced by Cde. Mina Gurung after convention (2013); ; Cde. Hari Karki; Cde. Purna B K.C; Cde. Dev Bahadur Bam; Cde. Chandra Ram BK (vacant after dissolving committee in 2012)

- Women Members: Cde. Amala Shrestha; Cde. Sita Lama; Cde. Beli maya Ghale; Cde. Subhadra Upprety (vacant since 2014); Cde. Maya Devi Pode; Cde. Guma Devi Acharya; Cde. Kamala Devi Tamang; Cde. Mina Sharma (Resigned 2010); Cde. Sukmati Dewan; Cde. Manju Thapa; Cde. Deepa Bhandari; Cde. Maya Gurung; Cde. Mina Choudhary; Cde. Bindu Shrivastav; Cde. Aruna Thapa
- Youth: Cde. Bal Gopal Thapa replaced by Cde. Damodar Sapkota after 2nd convention (2013)

- **Cogress Deligates Council**

- **Chief:** Cde. Mukunda Neupane/ **Dy Chief:** Cde. Lalit Basnet

- **GEFONT Veteran Network**

- **Coordinator:** Cde. Om Koirala
- **Member- Secretary:** Cde. Kabindra Shekhar Rimal
- **Members:** Cde. Goma Timilsina; Cde. Madav Neupane (Died 2011); Cde Keshav Raj Giri, Cde Shridhar P Shrestha and Cde Phiparaj Subba (nominated)

GEFONT AT A GLANCE

Our History

The history of Nepali trade union movement goes back to 1947. The formation of All Nepal Trade Union Congress (ANTUC), reorganised in 1950, was the first trade union centre in Nepal. This federation could not exist after 1960, when autocratic Panchayat System was forcefully imposed and unions along with political parties were banned.

After 19 years of continuous repression, in 1979, a historical mass movement gave birth to second generation of Nepali Trade union movement by launching Nepal Independent Workers Union (NIWU). After the struggle through NIWU, other federations gradually emerged in Hotel-tourism sector and transport sector along with others. In order to meet demand of the day- the necessity of proper coordination and understanding among trade unions of different sectors, finally, an initiative was undertaken on July 20, 1989. The significant outcome was General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions in an underground existence as a national centre for coordination of the movement and organizations. Active mobilization of workers by GEFONT in the successful popular mass movement of 1990 and open air environment for union work as the result of the movement paved way for fast unionization. GEFONT was formally registered as the FIRST National Trade Union Confederation in the country in 1995 based on Trade Union Act-1992.

Our vision

Dignified, prosperous and creative life of the working class is our vision statement.

Our Mission

Our mission is to establish socialist production relations in Nepal by eliminating the existing feudal production relations. To achieve the mission, we educate,

organize and build capacity of the working class to enable them to influence policy formulation and process of political decision. We pay high emphasis to international solidarity to back up our efforts for labor rights including universal human rights.

Our Goal

To establish Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, in which the working class has access and decisive role in all representative structures and bodies of the state.

Our Objectives

- To continue the struggle for social transformation with class vision
- To create a policy environment in which universal rights of the workers are promoted, protected and fulfilled
- To materialize single unionism as unified trade union movement in Nepal
- To ensure decent work for all

General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions:

Membership in Past Five Years

In 5th National Congress, **General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions** represented 27 affiliate federations and few local level unions. The Confederation then had membership of 340,619. After five years the total membership of the Confederation is 3, 87,418 with the increment by 46,799 (13.7%)

1. **Industrial Sector Union Council:** Nepal Independent Workers' Union, Nepal Food and Beverage Workers' Union and Nepal Independent Chemical-Iron Workers' Union have unified now through a merger process and established a giant size Whole Industry Trade Union Nepal. The Total membership added together has now further increased by 9.6%. There is high possibility for membership expansion.
2. **Garment Carpet and allied sector Union Council:** Nepal Textile Garment Union and Nepal Independent Carpet Workers' Union have merged to form Jute, Garment, Carpet, and Textile Workers' Union of Nepal. Jute sector has witnessed an increased membership but the union in overall has 5%

membership decline. The basic reason for this decline is the closure of various carpet factories.

3. **Transport and Allied Sector Union Council:** In comparison to last National Congress, membership has rapidly increased in this sector. Nepal Petroleum Workers' Union, a separate union till 5th National Congress is now merged in Independent Transport Workers Association of Nepal. Some of the major reasons for substantial increase are – a) expansion of road transport, b) Increased flow of transport workers towards ITWAN and c) re-established link in previously armed conflict affected areas. The membership has increased by 57.3%. Weak union leadership has resulted into the decline of membership of Rickshaw Pullers' union by 61.3%. Similarly, membership of Nepal Auto mechanics Trade Union has declined by 1.9%
4. **Tourism Sector Union Council:** With the dawn of Peace Process, tourism industry took a new hope for expansion. Nepal Independent Hotel, Casino and Restaurant Workers' Union has increased its membership by 34%. Similarly, Membership of UNITRAV (including trekking, travel, rafting, and cargo and airlines sector) has increased by 113.6%. Nepal Independent Cargo Courier Union is merged in UNITRAV after UNITRAV started unionizing cargo sector.
5. **Agriculture and Plantation Sector Union Council:** Agriculture and Plantation sector occupies a huge share of informal sector; Membership of FAWN has decreased by 15.8%. Vast scattered nature of the sector and weak unionization is the major cause for this decline. With empowerment of Union leaders, it can be expected to expand membership significantly. Membership of Nepal Independent Tea Plantation workers' Union has increased by 7.9%.
6. **Education, Communication, Finance and Service Sector Union Council:** Membership of Independent Press Workers' Union has increased by 15.9%, but membership of Private and Boarding School Employees' Union has declined by 3.6%. In spite of huge possibility of the union expansion, union's organizational weaknesses have hindered the potential success. Similarly Courier Cargo Workers' Union is merged with UNITRAV. GEFONT has delisted Nepal Tax Counselling Workers' Organization from

its list as the union was not active enough to meet the criteria set by the confederation.

- 7. Non- agriculture Informal Sector Council:** All the affiliate federations under this Council have increased membership. CUPPEC- Nepal in organizing construction and building sector has increased its membership by 11.7%. Expansion of construction sector and expansion of union in new districts have resulted into the increment. Nepal Street Vendor's Union has 15% membership increase and membership of Nepal Security Workers Trade Union is increased by 30.4%. Major factors contributing to this significant growth are attraction of workers towards these unions and Union expansion in new work sectors/sites.
- 8. Urban Informal Sector Union Council:** Nepal Independent Garbage Cleaners Union has insignificant changes. The union mainly organizes workers working in Cleaning Service in Municipalities, but it has not expanded to private sectors. So, it has limited scope at present; Union has to initiate organizing private sector also to increase membership. Affiliates like Nepal Independent Domestic Workers' Union, Home Based Workers' Union, Gold and Silver Ornament Workers Trade Union and Thanka artists Trade Union have merged and formed Home Union of Nepal (HUN). Expanding contacts in new worksite has added to the growth of HUN membership by 84.4%
- 9. Health Sector Union Council:** Initially, the health sector was organized only through membership in few hospitals without federation. After 5th National Congress, two unions have been developed and registered namely, Nepal Health Volunteers Union and Nepal Health Workers and Staff union. Internal problems in Nepal Barbers' Trade Union have affected the union and its membership. The membership has declined by 61.4%. But National Beauticians' Union of Nepal has increased its membership by 94.3%.

Affiliates Membership: Up or Down

SN	Union Councils	Affiliates during 5 th Congress		Affiliates and their membership now		Increase (↑) Decrease (↓)
		The Affiliates	Membership	The Affiliates	Membership	
1	Industrial Sector	Nepal Independent Workers' Union	9,522	Whole Industry Trade Union, Nepal (WHIN)	30229	9.6%↑
		Nepal Independent Food and Beverage Workers' Union	5,554			
		Nepal Independent Chemical- Iron Workers' Union	12,496			
		Independent Textile Garment Workers' Union of Nepal	8,234	Jute Textile Garment & Carpet Workers' Union of Nepal (JTG-CWUN)	14925	5%↓
		Nepal Independent Carpet Workers' Union	7,558			
2	Transport & Allied Sector	Independent Transport-Workers' Association of Nepal	56,772	Independent Transport-Workers' Association of Nepal (ITWAN)	90221	57.3%↑
		Nepal Petroleum Workers' Union	560			
		Nepal Auto-mechanics Trade Union	5,177	Nepal Auto-mechanics Trade Union (NATU)	5079	1.9%↓
		Nepal Rickshaw Pullers' Union	15,959	Nepal Rickshaw Pullers' Union (NRPU)	6170	61.3%↓

SN	Union Councils	Affiliates during 5 th Congress		Affiliates and their membership now		Increase (↑) Decrease (↓)
		The Affiliates	Membership	The Affiliates	Membership	
3	Tourism Sector	Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union	18,322	Nepal Independent Hotel Workers' Union (NIHWU)	24605	34%↑
		Union of Trekking-Travel-Rafting & airline Workers, Nepal	5,232	Union of Trekking-Travel-Rafting & airline Workers, Nepal (UNITRAV)	12536	113.6%↑
		Nepal Courier & Cargo Trade Union	636			
4	Agri- and Plantation Sector	Independent Tea plantation Workers' Union of Nepal	5,315	Independent Tea plantation Workers' Union of Nepal (ITPWUN)	5735	7.9%↑
		Federation of Agricultural Workers-Nepal	68,019	Federation of Agricultural Workers-Nepal (FAWN)	57271	15.8%↓
5	Education, Communication, Finance & Service Sector	Independent Press Workers' Union of Nepal	2,534	Independent Press Workers' Union of Nepal (IPWUN)	2939	15.9%↑
		Private & Institutional/Boarding School Employees' Union, Nepal	5,627	Private & Institutional/Boarding School Employees' Union, Nepal (PABSEU)	5422	3.6%↓
		Tax Councillor's Organisation of Nepal	1122	This Union is no more remained Affiliate due to non-compliance of GEFONT standard		
		Local unions at Banks and financial institutions	315	Local unions at Banks and financial institutions	1125	257.1%↑

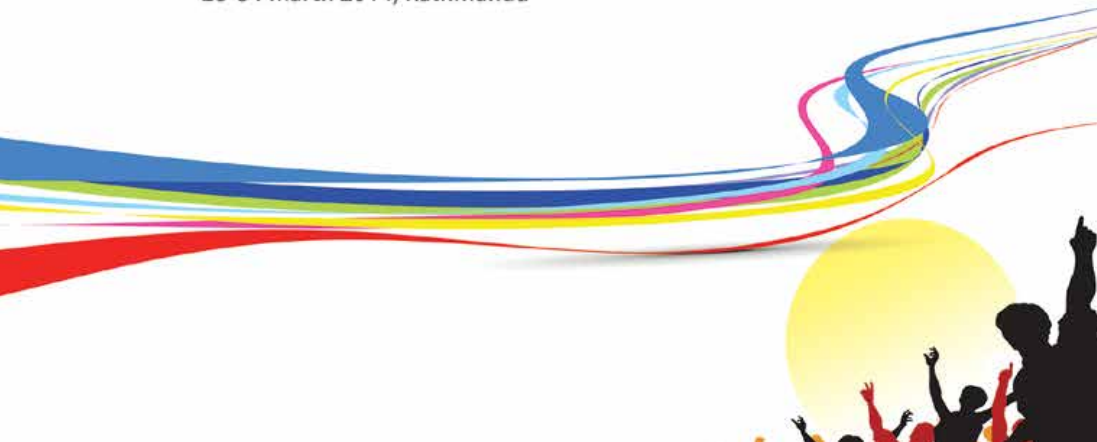
SN	Union Councils	Affiliates during 5 th Congress		Affiliates and their membership now		Increase (↑) Decrease (↓)
		The Affiliates	Membership	The Affiliates	Membership	
6	Non-agriculture Informal Sector	Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electro and Construction Workers-Nepal	80,130	Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electro and Construction Workers-Nepal (CUPPEC)	89541	11.7%↑
		Nepal Street Vendors' Trade Union	13,256	Nepal Street Vendors' Trade Union(NEST)	15250	15%↑
		Nepal Security Service Trade Union	2,517	Nepal Security Labour Trade Union (NSTU)	3282	30.4%↑
7	Urban Informal Sector	Independent Garbage Cleaners' Union of Nepal	5,222	Nepal Garbage Cleaners' Employee's Union (NEGU)	5224	0.03%↑
		Nepal Independent Domestic Workers Union	605	Home Workers' Trade Union of Nepal (HUN)	5224	84.4%↑
		Nepal Home-based Workers Union	1030			
		Gold & Silver Trade Union of Nepal	915			
		Nepal Thanka Artists' Union	811			
8	Health Sector	Nepal Barbers' Trade Union	6081	Nepal Barbers' Trade Union (NEBT)	2345	61.4%↓
		National Beauticians' Union of Nepal	575	National Beauticians' Union of Nepal (NABUN)	1117	94.3%↑
		Local Union at Hospital	523	Nepal Health Employees Union (NHWEU)	3521	
				Nepal Health Volunteers Association (NEVA)	5657	
Total Increase (46,799)		340,619		387,418	13.7%↑	

Transformation : By Building Workers' Power



6th National Congress

28-31 March 2014, Kathmandu





“You are aware that 30 persons per hundred are unemployed and some 30 per cent of the total population is poor. As we commence this National Congress, we want the concerned to be reminded once again that the unequal society stunted under the shadow of high-rise buildings is not what we are struggling for. And we do not call any show a progress that builds on the deprivation of the weak.”

The unequal society stunted under the shadow of high-rise buildings is not what we are struggling for

TODAY, on the 28th of March, the authoritarian Rana regime of the day was forced to bow before the working people 63 years ago. A 23-day labour strike not only forced the regime to raise the wage by 15 per cent but also to pay the wage for the entire strike period. Perhaps it was the first time the rulers, who used to treat people as their slaves, were forced to negotiate with agitating workers.

TODAY, on the 28th of March, in 1981, the tradition was begun of the non-violent protest of national strike (known as Nepal bandh), in the involvement of trade union movement of our generation. Taking away the absurdities linked to the culture of strike today, the tradition we began was the decisive force to shake the foundation of the then authoritarian regime.

TODAY, on the 28th of March, in 1992, we began the historical 'First National Congress' of our union with the slogan of "Social Justice and Economic Parity – Industrial Growth and Workers' Solidarity".

From that day on, we have completely dedicated our attention and energy to the welfare of the working class. Now, as I recollect the past, I feel obliged to record the note of my honour to all colleagues and co-workers who have been with us throughout this journey; and, pay deepest tributes to the martyrs who left us while fighting the tyranny.

And to you seniors: I reiterate the commitment that we would not let the movement deviate from your dream of building an ideal society!

While taking over the leadership five years ago, I had made this promise on behalf of the National Executive Committee: "GEFONT will organise all workers of all trades of all sectors of investment. It will reach all workers wherever they will be".

- ONE UNION, ONE VOICE – is our institutional mantra and ideal. We are following this ideal for long.

- AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL – is our institutional motto, which we have adopted from the world union movement. In our context, we elaborate it as the following: “Let us take care of each other; love each other; and, respect each other.” For the working class who have “nothing to lose but their chains” and the whole “world to win”, nothing could be more important than this institutional culture of mutual care and respect. Indeed, we are proud of this culture of ‘collectivity’ that has taken us far above than the despising competition marred by the binary opposite of “gain versus loss” and “you versus me”. “We GEFONT, Our National Centre” has been our collective culture.

Five years ago, we had dreamed of the following:

- Establishment of a state that would free itself from the clutches of the over-voiced and bring itself down to the voiceless, and
- Building a society in which the weak and marginalised would not further weaken but would have an opportunity to climb up the ladder of progress, a society that would open the door to dignified, prosperous and creative life for the workers



We had taken an oath that “we would leave no stone unturned in the movement for equality and justice.”

Five years later, standing before you, I wish to ask you very sincerely: Did we deliver on our promise? This National Executive Committee is available for your scrutiny as to whether it could live to the commitments made five years ago.

Dear Comrades,

As workers, our dreams are very simple.

- Some savings from our earning after the fulfilment of daily needs – to address emergencies, which is state’s responsibility, but it does not fulfil
- A piece of encouraging news, about the redress for pregnancy-related deaths in rural areas or dowry deaths – not just the news of a VIPs being taken abroad for treatment in an air ambulance

You are aware that 30 persons per hundred are unemployed and some 30 per cent of the total population is poor. We wish to see the progress of our society measured against the income of the working class people NOT against the names of those billionaires listed in the Forbes Magazine.



As we commence this National Congress, we want the concerned to be reminded once again that the unequal society stunted under the shadow of high-rise buildings is not what we are struggling for. And we do not call any show a progress that builds on the deprivation of the weak.

We are tired of such expressions as “labour disputes” or “the fault of unions,” which often comes our way linked to the closure of a certain industry or some work-related issues. These date-expired slogans build on the rhetoric of workers’ emancipation as well as on the design to frame workers for the owners’ inefficiency. In the last five years, we came across such tuneless singing many times.

- Bhrikuti Pulp and Paper and Momento Apparels were closed not because of workers but due to other reasons. The workers have yet to get their wages despite several agreements. Who is accountable for this?
- Who is there to listen to the story of the workers displaced from the Pizza Hut and Casino in this capital city itself? Is there any one to care for the fate of the self-employed eking out a living as street vendors? Who is there to aid the workers who do not get the pay in time in the construction and service sectors?
- Thousands of workers in the tea estates are deprived of the minimum wage fixed by the state. So are agricultural workers – in want of legally mandated periodic review of wages. Who listens to their agony?

We humbly ask: Is unionism an obstacle to industrial operation? Or is it the fault in policymaking and implementation?

We have no confusion that our interests do not match with those of industrialists and businesspersons. It is therefore we are different. But their businesses do not run without us. It is therefore we are together despite differences. We are also clear that:



- Capital should survive even for our living
- Labour should benefit to transform the Nepali society
- It is nonsensical to expect high productivity and quality product and services from those deprived of basic rights and minimum wages
- And, we are also aware of the extreme exploitation in the agricultural and construction sectors; of comparatively less exploitation in the industrial sector; and, also of the comparatively better pay structures in the service sector. However, the gap in wages between high-ranking officers and the workers in the service sector is disheartening.

We are aware that the world of work has two categories of investors. One of them is proudly identified in society as an 'employer' – who invests his/her property to produce services and goods. The other, who is hesitatingly identified as a worker, invests his/her entire life in the production process. In return for the investment, both these investors expect at least three guarantees.

- RETURN – in the form of a profit or a wage; SUSTAINABILITY – in the form of a long life of business or continuity of employment; and, SECURITY – in the form of the physical security of property or social security of life.
- As we have seen, the state machinery has always stood in favour of the first, while abusing the latter. We have only this question: Why this double standard?
- What we are saying is just a minimum: not just only wages in return for the work and a few hundred rupees at the end of life, but a system that ensures a pension and unemployment allowances from the fund set up with contributions from the workers themselves; and, a system of state support for universal social security such as education and health that each of us are eligible as voters.



- Be aware! Trade union is not a part of a machine to follow the orders of a party when it is in power. Neither is it a barrack of the followers of the opposition ready to swarm in the streets in protest against the price hike by the Nepal Oil Corporation

We want the state to stand as a fair regulatory mechanism between the two investors. Capital should not be left unchecked, just because it is in demand. To the extent it happens, we will not cross the fair line of discipline we need to obey as workers.

Dear Comrades,

As in the past, 'transformation' is our main theme even in this Congress. Five years ago, we had concluded that transformation would not be possible without unity. Unfortunately, our society remained divided, unlike people's expectation. As a result, we are almost in the same situation we were on 28 May 2008.

As the tool of transformation, we divide "revolution" into "political" and "socio-economic" halves. In Nepal, we concluded "political" revolution, and this rhododendron revolution replaced the age-old institution of feudal monarchy with republic. The new regime will be institutionalised once a new constitution will be promulgated by the Constituent Assembly, now in business. But the "socio-economic" aspect of the revolution, which is central to social transformation, has not begun yet.

To address this problem, we have added "building workers' power" in the word transformation as the theme of the 6th National Congress; this is the theme because building of the workers' power forms the backbone of the process of peaceful transformation. To balance the movement for rights and interest with the process of production, reinvestment and redistribution is the best way to operate what we call "class struggle".

In our understanding, we need a triangular strategy to develop and strengthen Nepal's workforce, a strategy that addresses all at once the in-country wage-labour workforce, self-employed workforce and the workforce beyond the country. To consolidate the in-country workforce, we propose a focused intervention in the agriculture, construction and urban informal sectors – for numerical reasons; in the modern service sector – for quality reasons; and, as a block- the manufacturing sector.

The intervention should be made in five activity-areas, namely workplace democracy, wage, social security, social dialogue, and productivity & efficiency. To make the outcome sustainable, following five activities should be implemented:

- Get Involved through the policy of ‘where there are workers, there is union’
- Organise each worker in contact to enhance the number of members
- Educate to enhancement skills of members through workers’ education and trade union education in such skill areas including agenda setting, issue prioritisation and public policies
- Agitating of the workforce to propagate union agendas, issues and activities
- Intervene to guarantee workers participation in state processes and further consolidation of the union movement so that it can influence public policies

This year, GEFONT is celebrating its silver jubilee. In our movement of the second generation, since it began in late 1970s, we have both grandparents and grandchildren together. We take the zeal and courage of the young generation and the wisdom of the old as the energy to keep the union movement more active and vibrant. As such, in this National Congress some of us in the old generation will quit from executive positions and hand the leadership over to the young generation.

We will, however, develop a transitional mechanism through which we will mobilise the wisdom of the old generation for policy analysis, trade union schooling and union expansion so that the new leaders will be able to further develop themselves to work freely and independently.

This is how we are prepared to hold the sky above us. We have similar expectations from those below us that they also become prepared to hold the sky above them.

There is a saying- Happiness is a place between too little and too much! We are enjoying similar feelings in your presence.

I would like to thank you all for accepting our invitation and sincerely welcome your presence on behalf of the GEFONT family.

Thank you!

(Inaugural speech of the President, March 28, 2014, Academy Hall, Kathmandu)



GEFONT Sixth National Congress

Concludes with discussing the plan for Building Worker's Power

GEFONT Sixth National Congress concluded grandly; it was unique due to composition of technology, participation and solidarity sentiments.

There were 607 delegates and observers elected by 387,418 members throughout the country. Organised in capital city Kathmandu on March 28-31, 2014; there was participation of 45 international guests from 25 countries in the Congress. Inaugurated by former Prime Minister Cde JN Khanal in Nepal Academy Hall; ITUC General Secretary Cde Sharan Burrow addressed the Congress directly from its HQ Brussels via Video-Conferencing.

Aiming to make the congress a paperless one, the organisers provided all guests similar name-tag. It was with 8GB USB drive, which contained Congress-documents, GEFONT Videos, a collection of music album-Melody of Labour and Creations along with some relevant information.

GEFONT's all sessions were open for all. All media personalities were given full access; thus there was no closed-door session as such. A side-line event was organised in first day focusing on the issue of migration; where a documentary Bruise of Qatar was screened. All of the sessions were live streamed through GEFONT website.

Second Day in the main session; former Prime Minister Cde MK Nepal addressed to the Congress. Former Deputy Prime minister Cde Ishwar Pokharel was the key speaker in Day-III main session.

A mini-TV studio was established in the congress venue. A live broadcast was arranged simultaneously; where most of the delegates were delivering their views continuously.

Third Day, there was election of new leadership. The Congress unanimously elected entire National Executive Committee and re-elected Cde Bishnu Rimal, as the President. The Congress elected Cde Bishnu Lamsal as the new Secretary-General; whereas Cde Ramesh Badal has been continued as the Secretary for Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for next tenure.

Along with the president, GEFONT NEC has five Vice Presidents and a Secretary General as the National Office Bearers (NOB); whereas three Deputy Secretary Generals and eight Secretaries in the Central secretariat headed by the Secretary General.

This Congress endorsed a plan of Organising Academy with the proposals of establishment of regular Trade Union School for a sustainable and systematic trade union education and Trade Union Policy Institute (TUPI) for policy analysis.

As the transitional structure; the Congress has formed GEFONT Governing Council consisting of ex-office bearers from Ex-Deputy Secretary Generals to the Ex-Presidents. Immediate past former Secretary General Cde Umesh Upadhyaya has been designated to be Executive Director of newly established institution, the GEFONT-TUPI.



Congratulations GEFONT! You had indeed on incredible journey to democracy to right based constitution and for which, your own unions have fought for that ever since last time I was in Kathmandu too many years ago and that terrible coup.

– Sharan Burrow, General Secretary-ITUC

We want to see our job transform to decent jobs ... I know that GEFONT you will be right there with me!

Thank you Mr. President!

Good morning or Good afternoon GEFONT!

I am delighted to be with you. Bishnu, Binda and Bro. Laxman other colleagues!

This is an amazing experience; I am going to actually address you from Brussels to one of my favourite cities in the world, Kathmandu. So I am delighted to be with you. I very much regret not being there with you. But let me say a few words of congratulations first.

Congratulations GEFONT! You had indeed on incredible journey to democracy to right based constitution and for which, your own unions have fought for that ever since last time I was in Kathmandu too many years ago and that terrible coup.

So you are central to the future of your country and I salute you. There is no doubt that your commitment not just to democracy and a right-based constitution but to organising workers for just future, for decent work, for development, for rights; it's legendary around the globe. But you are not only organising for the future of your own country in Nepal, with you we are doing great things in organising migrant workers. Your commitment to Nepali workers outside of your country is allowing us to fight for the rights of the migrant workers everywhere. But not more seriously than in Qatar and the other Gulf States. Your contribution to the campaign for an end to slavery, *Kafala* system in Qatar and other Gulf States is allowing strength on the ground. When we have union like yours, who can organise on the ground; we are determent to fight for rights and decent work! That as global labour movement we have an incredible chance to change the world. And, so again I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

You understand my views when I say to people I have seen a lot of poverty. You have seen a lot of poverty every day that it breaks your heart. But when you have freedom, when you have freedom of association and right to build unions then you have optimism. But when you go to countries like Qatar and you see that this is the richest country in the world and they treat your people, our brothers and sisters not just from Nepal but from India, the Philippines, Sri

Lanka wide across the Asia Pacific, and eventually to Africa. When they treat our brothers and sisters less than human, when they are forced to live like animals ... and indeed even when they cannot go home because they have this dreadful system called the *Kafala* system. On labour camp they are forced to live in unhygienic condition; eight-nine-ten men in a room, grown men with no dignity, no privacy, no recreation facilities. And they go to work on poor nutrition in incredible degrees of heat, six sometimes seven days a week with long hours. This is not a life that we would call decent work. It's not a life where you have constitutional rights. And with GEFONT and your collective union in Nepal, we will keep fighting for rights for migrant workers.

But I particularly wanted to salute you and thank you for your commitment, your humanity and sheer organizing to workers. But we also know your contribution to women because Binda you and we worked together in Governing Body of the ILO. We know that you believe in Gender equality. And indeed it would be a major issue for us to think about in the context about forthcoming congress. So Climate, and I again come back to very early days when we started to campaign for climate action. You know that Dorje Sherpa, our brother who actually climbed to top of Mt. Everest and planted the ITUC flag. Well that flag has come home. So at next congress we will campaign for every Nepali who climbs for climate action. We want to see our job transform to decent jobs for future ... And I know that GEFONT, you will be right there with me.



Let me say a word or two about World Congress. This Congress will be very different. I know all of you cannot come that makes me sad. But your delegates, representatives will be there. And indeed we will debate big issues for working people; but we will do it in a very different way because we will have a traditional plenary, we will certainly have the space of our leaders on regular basis; there will be discussions about state of work for working people. But we will also have sub- plenary.

Let me tell you what happens in workforce. We have around 29 million workers. And indeed the tragedy is 60% of those informal sectors are basically facing precarious work and then we have 40% of our brothers and sisters in informal sector with no rights. We are organising in both formal and informal sector. But we need to build more workers' power to change the world. Because of what we are the biggest democratic force on earth we should be very proud of that with rather 118 million members we know that's only 7 percent of global workforce. But we need to break that 7 percent barrier. And I want to challenge the congress to study if we are going to get 20 million more workers, union members by the next congress. We also know that we are going to look at this sub-plenary and others through different eyes. First plenary...it will be stories of workers of organizing, the very things that union stands for. That would be the same for economic situation, inequality, climate action; women and... participation in work... all those things we will deal with in second sub plenary which is indeed about secured future in terms of jobs and social protection. And third sub plenary will of course be about realizing rights. But whether unionised or not unionised we want decent work, social protection, secured income and rights for every worker and around social protection, fundamental rights.

There is a lot to talk about. I know that your time is indeed very limited. But I also know when we arrive at congress that GEFONT, Bro. Laxman I know your union, I know ANTUF you will be all, as Nepali brothers and sisters saying that we can change the world. It does require us to organise, organise and organise.

I salute you. You know that your country has my heart. And indeed I come from your region, I am so very proud of my Nepali brothers and sisters. Stay strong. Enjoy the conference. And I very much look forward to hearing the outcomes they will certainly enrich our struggle.

Solidarity!

(Address through video conferencing from Brussels/ March 28, 2014)



A Long Fight beyond Boarder:

A Forum on GEFONT efforts for safe migration & migrant workers rights was organised

With the aim of sharing the GEFONT's struggle to organize Nepali migrant workers and telling stories; the story of sorrows, odds and challenges, and to some extents, the proud story of success, and to discuss on the situation of migrant workers and Trade Union Solidarity at International level as well, GEFONT organised a sideline meeting during its 6th National Congress in Kathmandu.

In the programme, GEFONT President Cde Bishnu Rimal presented on the pioneer GEFONT movement to organise Nepali workers in foreign lands- 'A Long Fight beyond Borders'. President explained how the movement was built in Korea and Hong Kong and later on in Malaysia and Lebanon. President highlighted the GEFONT initiation and trade union solidarity at international level for organising the Nepali Workers.

Drawing the attention on the issue of workers working in GCC state, President Rimal said, "In Arab world, we have variety of experiences in organising migrant



“We should stop the impunity of FIFA and its serial exploitation in the host countries like Brazil, Russia and Qatar and call for support to the BWI global sports campaign in Qatar and give a Red Card to FIFA.”

- Cde Per Christensen, President of 3F, Denmark

workers. Glorifying and Gloomy part of the efforts made by us are witness to this. MOU made with KTUF and GFBTU have surely boosted our moral to represent our citizen in the land of difficult regimes. However, ineffective implementation pushed us to share gloomy part of our success in this region. From Saudi Arabia to Oman & Jordan including all GCC countries, sizable number of our citizens is toiling to build their economy. However, we are helplessly glancing towards them who are offering inadequate solution. We, the GEFONT as a member of international working class community would like to share our feelings about our efforts in one of the GCC state, the much talked state-Qatar”

Addressing the GEFONT Forum on Migration Per Christensen, President of 3F called for support to the BWI Red Card to FIFA Campaign.

Similarly, Mr. Lee-Sang-jin KCTU, Korea informed about the KCTU strategy project to organise and legalise migrant workers through the involvement of migrant workers and community.



Main problem of Korea is lack of effective implementation of labour laws and many migrant workers are being exploited in the name of work permit system.

-Cde Lee-Sang-jin Vice-pres, KCTU, Korea



Undocumented labour and false documents are huge problems which makes it difficult for trade union to intervene and help the migrant workers. It is necessary to standardise contract papers with specific wage, leave and work details for safe migration.

- K. Soma Sundaram, Asst Secretary- MTUC, Malaysia

Mr. K. Soma Sundaram, Assistant Secretary (Education) of MTUC, cited two cases of Nepali women workers in Malaysia; he said migrant workers are ignorant of domestic laws and it adds to the already difficult task of intervening. He added pre-departure orientation, accessibility of the sending countries' embassies to the workers are necessary to safe migration.

ITUC-AP lead organiser Mr. Apo Leong briefed about the problems faced by migrant workers particularly domestic workers, construction workers and security guards. Mr. Leong expressed his commitment to work in solidarity for migrant workers. Mr. Leong also cited two success stories where Hong Kong union collaborated with migrant workers for their cause.

Condemning the inhuman working environment in the Arab world, Mr. Mustapha Syed, ILO/ACTRAV shared learning of ACTRAV during mobilising and working for workers in Lebanon.



Arab workers and citizens are facing similar kind of abuses and are demanding for Civil Rights and Trade Union Rights. The main challenge could be a proper approach to organise migrant workers of different nationalities.

- Mr. Mustapha Syed, ILO/ACTRAV; Arab Area office



The systematic attack and lack of legal mechanism has affected Lebanese and migrant workers. Trade Union collaboration with GEFONT to organise domestic workers in Arab world brought positive change not only for Nepali but all migrant workers.

- Cde. Castro Abdullah, Fenasol-Lebanon

On the occasion, Mr. Castro Abdullah, Fenasol-Lebanon shared about the domestic union's struggle to break off the restriction imposed on the workers and citizens in the country.

In the programme, Mr. Mohammed Abdul Rahman, GFBTU-Bahrain spoke about the ongoing collaboration with GEFONT through MoU signed in 2013 and stressed the need for its implementation.

Reflecting on the discussion, Moderator Mr. Apolinar Tolentino, BWI-AP Coordinator summed up discussion.

On the occasion, Documentary focused on the situation of Migrant workers in Qatar- Bruise of Qatar also shown.

More than 200 national and international guests attended in the programme and shared their views on the issue.



The union always held up slogan of 'Don't believe in any political propaganda to differentiate between migrant and domestic workers' to gather public support for the cause of workers.

- Mohammed Abdul Rahman, GFBTU-Bahrain

Transformation: By Building Workers Power

A brief summary of Policy document adopted by the congress

- 1. The change after 2006:** Revolution can be categorised into political and social with the viewpoint of transformation. Political revolution transforms the political system n governance. The declaration of democratic republic by knocking down the traditional feudal monarchy is the transformation of political regime by our Rhododendron Revolution. Social revolution on the other hand refers to the transformation of socio-economic system, which establishes new production relation among the classes and new social relation among the social groups. This significant aspect of transformation is yet to complete.
- 2. Nepali Society on the path of overall transformation:** The 5th National Congress had analysed Nepali society as a “transitional and post peasant society”. Transition exists in all political, economic and social dimensions of our society. Feudalism is deteriorating very fast and the new face of post peasant society is being witnessed. Feudalism has lost its political base. But since the task of socio-economic transformation is not yet complete, Nepali society is just heading towards capitalism. Our society has yet to build its capacity to break the vicious circle of rural and land based exploitation and discrimination. Hence the reflection of modernity in various sectors and segments of business, services and urban life has not set any concrete foundation to represent capitalism.

Even with rapid urbanisation, majority of people, almost 83%, resides in rural area. Among them, 60% or almost 2.3 million families cannot fend for themselves through income from agriculture. They have to look for alternative sources of income outside agriculture.

Even after abolishing the system of bonded labour there are instances of slavery-type land relation. Lack of modernisation and commercialisation of agriculture has also contributed to the continuation of feudal land relations. Even though influence of capitalism is increasing in the form of consumerism, production relation in agriculture is still traditional and hence collective bargaining is not effective even in commercial farms.

In current transitional society whatever development is explained as capitalism is just the outcome of changing consumption pattern based on the remittance sent by the workers in foreign employment to their agro based families.

The trend clearly shows all the three sectors – agriculture, manufacturing and service - are under exploitative production relations. In agriculture and construction sectors this is very obvious and more visible, whereas it is less visible in manufacturing and in service sectors. Despite high salaries/ wages compared to former sectors, there exists alarmingly huge salary gap between workers and top officials.

- 3. Productive Force and Workers' Power:** The concept of production relations is central to Marxist Economic Analysis. The coordinated form of physical factors of production and human resource is productive force. Physical factors of production also include natural resources. Human resource or workers' power means worker's skill and capacity which is negotiable/ exchangeable on wage for specified work and specified time. If a worker's work power is devoted to one employer forever then it is not selling and buying, it is slavery with a relation between slave and master. Therefore, buying and selling of worker's power is based on bargaining and agreement. Working hours, shifts of work, wage rates, fringe benefits and various other work-related basics are determined by tussles, interaction and negotiation between employers and workers.

Human resource includes human knowledge too. At this advanced stage of science and technology, human knowledge has emerged almost like a separate input of production. Human workforce creates surplus value. The business class always strives for minimisation of labour cost and maximisation of profit. For the purpose, their universal agenda is to maximise the surplus value.

- 4. Our contemporary phenomena:** By the end of the 20th century, capitalism reached the stage where it could not be seen but its adverse effects could be felt. For the immediate profits, it discarded human values. Some of its adverse effects are – increase in poverty, decrease in wage share in national income, increase of precariousness and informality, declining social security, tax evasion, unstable financial market with high degree of speculation etc..

The 20th century capitalism has become different in the 21st century, which, according to Economists, is “financial capitalism”. Financial capitalism is characterised by sale & purchase of and investment in financial instruments like bonds, securities, treasury bills and shares for immediate profit. Marxist analysts criticize this interest-based system of being exploitative and anti-worker and promoting the commission-agents. In financial capitalism agents and brokers have a wide role ranging from money market to capital market, from product market to factor market and from banks to finance companies. Therefore, its role is not limited to transactions and turnovers and influences entire economy policies and political process. A grave adverse effect generated by the financial capitalism is inequality.

- 5. Nepali Workforce:** A large number of Nepali work-force is considered self employed and less than one third of population is wage employed within the country. The number of wage employed workers working outside the country is more than the wage employed within the country. Large numbers of wage workers outside are the self employed and unpaid family workers who are counted as self employed in the country. Of the 5 million workers working outside the country, excluding poorest group of the Nepali working class in Indian labour market, all others are working in third countries in Asia, Europe and America. Thus the real number in self employment within the country is much less than what the census reveals. Therefore, we need a triangular strategy- wage employed labour force within the country; self employed labour force within the country and labour force working outside the country for improving and developing workers' power.

To improve the productivity and ensure qualitative change, the workforce should be organised, disciplined and skilled with high degree of awareness. For this we have to develop and ensure the continuity of a cycle of

“higher wages- higher productivity- higher economic growth – and equal distribution system”

The basis of building workers’ power is organising. To organise and strengthen Nepali workers’ power, three areas of concentration should be emphasised:

- (a) *Quantitatively*– Agriculture, construction and urban informal sector;
- (b) *Qualitatively*- Modern service sector;
- (c) *Block wise*- Manufacturing sector

Agriculture, construction, manufacturing and service sectors are the focal points for ‘Building Workers’ Power’. There are several sub classes based on income level within these broad Class-groups. For practical purpose, these sub classes should be taken in totality. In all these categories, there are “White Collar” and “Blue Collar” workers. These four groups can lead the process of transformation of society, work and labour market.

6. Plan to Develop Workers’ Power: To face this challenge and build workers’ power, trade union movement should be based on “Three Guarantees”– Return (decent wage), Sustainability (regular employment), Protection (social security) and following five Prerequisites:

- **Freedom:** for union rights and democratic exercise at workplaces
- **Wage:** base of minimum wage, demand for fair wage and aim for decent wage
- **Protection:** implement all social security programs mentioned in ILO Convention 102 based on agreement among tripartite social partners.
- **Dialogue:** make labour relation workplace-friendly through collective bargaining
- **Productivity and efficiency:** Fulfilling our responsibility to ensure “high wages – high productivity”

To confirm these five prerequisites into a sustainable system, five major works have to be continued:

- **Get involved:** Build connections everywhere with workers wherever they work
- **Organize:** Organize workers at every workplace to increase the membership
- **Educate/train:** Increase awareness and technical skill of workers through trade union education and technical trainings
- **Mobilize:** Mobilize workers' power, agitate if required for promoting agenda, issues and activities of the union. Utilize mass media to maximum possible extent
- **Intervention:** Trade union movement should intervene in ensuring representation of workers in state mechanism and reforming public policies.

7. Realistic Ground for Labour Relation in days to come: The method of class struggle being used by the union movement is a major factor to build workers power. The essence of the class struggle is also the upliftment of working class.

In contemporary Nepal, 40% of Nepal's population constitutes the poorest class. Half of the total population in the middle class is flourishing and the journey of the upper class is continuing upwards. Thus, whatever may be the method of struggle, our goal is to transform the condition of 'poor to sweat and rich to own' into decent work and equal share. Hence our movement has to uplift poor and poorest classes at least as par to today's middle class in Nepal.

As we know, a labour relation should not be understood as production relations. If a labour relation is understood as production relations, then union movement will have wrong conclusion to consider 'labour action' as a class struggle 'to change production relations.' Naturally this type of conclusion will promote anarchy and wildcat strike in the name of 'revolutionary' unionism.

In a labour relation, the adequate method of settlement of disputes is social dialogue. Collective bargaining is the most effective tool of social dialogue. The process of collective bargaining depends on the nature of economy adopted by the political system. In socialist economy, it will be based more on cooperation. In capitalist economy, particularly in CMEs,

both regulation and control work together, thus bargaining goes through dialogue in cooperation in a centrally bargaining frame. However in the capitalist economy, basically in LMEs, bargaining is decentralised and more conflicting as the system believes in laissez-faire where both employers and employees are left free to touse or interact. Employers engage in hire and fire and employees go into spontaneous strikes.

After the Comprehensive Peace Accord, of November 2006, the character of mixed economy adopted by Nepal has been explained as a 'Three Pillar' policy. A preliminary draft prepared by the dissolved CA has also integrated this policy. If the new CA designs our economic roadmap in accordance with the same policy, then economic policies to be implemented in Nepal will take the form of almost that of Centrally Coordinated Market Economies. Whether it is a 'new democratic system' termed by traditional communist parties or the system with the norm 'not to kill capitalism and also to benefit the working class'; the essence of the labour relation is 'Co-existence of Labour with Capital'. Hence, the model of collective bargaining should be based on co-existence.



Cde. Bishnu Lamsal
newly elected Secretary General

Policy Review of the Past and Proposal of Future Programme

During the current period, our programme for transformation has covered on education/ training programmes to enhance workers awareness, to coordinate with political parties and Constituent Assembly members to formulate pro worker constitution.

Political parties have agreed in principle for 10% representation of working class in state bodies. Adjustment of labour agenda in their drafts by Thematic Committees of CA and formation of 'Labour and Finance Committee' by the Parliament as the institutional recognition of the utmost importance of labour relations is countable achievement.

Our Policy coverage was much wider to strengthen local structures and struggles, to increase membership in agriculture-construction-self employed sectors, to promote social image of the union movement through mobilizations in special days and to mobilize workers for fair wage and decent work agenda.

In order to implement the broad-based policy different activities were conducted at different phases, which are as follows:

- A team including President and General Secretary to conduct training/ education on structural reform during Zonal Conferences with direction to form local committees in accordance with new structures.
- Geographical area based mobilization of eight teams in order to clarify the role of local GEFONT Delegates, District Committees, District Union Councils and local committees for union formation, membership expansion and Dues collection (based on '17 paisa for 17 Rights' pamphlet).
- Union- based Team Mobilization for solving problems of coordination between committees of Affiliate unions and GEFONT geographical structures.

- Mobilization of 10 high level central teams for continued three months at workplace level to solve the problems faced at grassroots.
- Adhering to the comments of big enterprise unions that their problems are not considered with special emphasis, GEFONT organized National workshop of union Presidents of those enterprises with more than 100 workers employed. The workshop focused its attention on the ways to push forward interest based demands and strongly stressed on the labour inspection system as a focal point of local unions.
- One week national campaign for management of unions in difficulties
- Formulation of Youth Committee as a new structure focusing on Youth and nationwide campaigns
- First phase campaign for the formation of Workers' Community Club outside our committee hierarchy.
- Preparatory works to mobilize Veteran Unionists Network to coordinate the club and work as a bridge between senior generation and new generation of trade unionists.

Several proposals /suggestions were put forward during 5th National Congress for restructuring confederation and affiliates. Many works/ activities designed to function after the formation of federal states have been postponed for the coming term. Still there were some problems in mobilising the existing structures in current situation like –Geographic structures, union Councils, Youth, Women and Labour Relation.

- **Geographic Structure Coordination Committee** was formed to strengthen zonal and its subordinate structures. Main objective of this committee was to facilitate discussion at micro level based on the decisions of National Executive Committee and creatively design plans for effective implementation by Zonal committees. Zone committee is authorized to help or coordinate the unions and district committees along with their local committees under its jurisdiction. Responsibility of GSCC is to coordinate the work of zone committee. But during this term, GSCC Coordinator and Member Secretary were expected to attend all the zone, district and local level meetings! This trend negatively affected the independent functioning and leadership development process at Zonal & local level.

- **Central Union Council** was formed as a Nepali trend for Workers controlled union movement. There is risk of over representation of some sector and under representation of others in following the policy of 'one individual one designation'. To minimize this risk all affiliate federations are grouped under 9 union councils. Each Union council sends two of its members (one woman and one man) to represent in GEFONT-NEC. The centre of all the union councils - Central Union council is responsible to collect problems of all affiliates and submit recommendations to NEC. Based on the recommendations, NEC would make new decisions. The central Union Council is expected to plan organizing, training and mobilization which would be followed up and implemented by union councils. However, union councils themselves were less proactive in their role. Hence the unions unknowingly tried to limit the role of Coordinator & Member Secretary of CEC as guests in their programs.
- **Central Labour Relation Council** was formed to facilitate Collective bargaining in a dynamic way. It was imperative to discontinue the usual method of linking a single enterprise union leader and/or single central union leader to deal with employer/s for collective bargaining. It was planned to analyze the problems of local level and categorize them under 'right-based' and 'interest-based demands and to assess how violations are taking place, so that 'labour inspection system' could be developed to maintain minimum labour standards. In past five years central union council was linked to zonal structure and necessary check list for labour inspection was developed. But local level activities could not be monitored regularly by CLRC and hence tasks related to LIS could not be materialized.
- **Veterans Network and GEFONT Community Workers' Club** could not be mobilized effectively. The club was misunderstood as 'sports club' in many cases and only youth were expected to be part of it. Similarly, Veterans Network was misinterpreted at grassroots as 'dumping site for retired unionists'. Hence we could not aware the grassroots about workers collective culture at the residential areas to ensure balance of 'work – life- family'.
- Membership expansion and organizational strengthening has brought expected results visible at growth rate of membership by 13.7% with additional members 46,799 during this five-year period. To create

awareness on and public pressure for the ratification of ILO Convention 87- concerning Freedom of Association, several campaigns were organized along with attractive promotional materials in many places at one time. This issue was raised from the street and pushed to the Constituent Assembly/ Parliament. General Secretary of International Trade Union Confederation and Director of ILO-ACTRAV discussed this issue with leaders of political parties, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Constituent Assembly and President of the Republic in their visit. Though the Convention is not ratified, but the campaign has been highly significant

Building Workers Power is the necessary condition for Transformation. Major areas of work for building workers power may be put in a formulae type expression as **Involvement-Organizing-Educating-Mobilizing**. Hence focusing these major areas of work, Following will be our future programme:

1. Transformation: By Building Workers power

The Programme for Building Workers Power has two aspects – Related to Right-based works and Related to organizational works. Following two headings will include both the aspects:

a) **Ask Them: Where is our space?**

- Major aspect of trade union movement is the struggle for political rights. The long run goal of GEFONT is Dignified, prosperous and creative life for working class. Hence to achieve this goal, we will continue the demand for 10% representation of workers in various representative bodies of the state with the slogan 'Where is Our Space?'
- In order to ensure political & constitutional rights of the workers, we will continue strong voice to insert the provisions in new constitution which were already included in the drafts of the committees of dissolved CA
- Continue dialogues, struggle and partnership with Constituent Assembly, Government and political parties for the demands not mentioned in the previous drafts

b) Mobilise- Organising Academy

- Effective Mobilization of Geographic Structure Coordination Committee and Central Union Council as envisioned during its conceptualization.
- Launching 'From Centre To Door to Door' Program effectively by coordinating Veterans Network, Workers' Community Club and Workers Cooperatives.
- Central Labor Relation Council will coordinate Organizing academy with involvement of the Union Councils, Zonal Committees, Women Committee and Youth Committee.
- Short Duration Campaign will be planned and conducted by Zonal Committee; Union focused campaign by concerned Union Council and Special campaign by GEFONT Centre.
- Planning- Strengthen the unions having lower possibility of heavy membership expansion by capacity building of their members. Considering the irregularity in continuation of existing members and flow of new members in Informal sector, Let us pay emphasis to new membership recruitment and Explore potential areas/ sectors for new opportunities of union expansion.
- Goal- Maintain the rate of membership growth of 13.7% to increase membership as well as to balance the number of 'disappearing' members in the forthcoming tenure.

2. Action for Secured Future: Social security is not the issue of donation, but the concept of citizen's rights. Promotional activities at public level on the concept of Social Security helped significantly to clarify the position of Social Security as a Right rather than a charity to the employees. During the campaign, the informative materials about what and why social security was distributed nationwide on a single day - in 87 places only in Kathmandu. This event helped much the issue of social security to finally enter into the concern of thematic committees of Constituent Assembly. The concept and scope of Social Security and Social assistance, whether universal or contributory, came into debate involving a wide range from policy makers to general public. As a result, the then CPN-UML led Government established a social security fund based on 1% tax in salaries/ wages to be

regulated by a tripartite board of Trade Union- Employers' Association and Government representatives. Based on this fund, workers' agreed to add 10% more as provident fund and employers agreed to add 20%. Now the discussion is no longer on whether social security fund is desirable/viable or not, but on the schemes of social security and how to implement. The only remaining task is to submit the already finalised draft agreed by tripartite body as a bill in the Parliament.

Therefore in the forthcoming days, we will

- Continue the policy of 'higher the social security, larger the labour market flexibility' along with the activities to aware, promote and pressurize for the 9-themes of social security. Focusing on ILO's concept of 'Social Protection Floor', GEFONT will play role to ensure the state's Social Security Scheme towards universal Social Security system.
 - Because as of now there is no social security schemes implemented for the overwhelming segments of working class. In order to provide minimum relief to the workers, continue and upgrade the agreements done with private hospitals to provide minimum relief to the workers. On the Silver Jubilee ceremony of GEFONT in July, new program will be declared to involve local unions in this process.
 - Continue dialogue with state to develop & implement scheme to utilize the National Welfare Fund for the benefit of the workers.
 - Upgrade and continue the programs for Women health.
- 3. 'Count Us In' Program:** Women Workers' Department established in 1992 was replaced by Central Women Committee formed by 5th National Congress. During the current tenure, GEFONT could manage 33% women participation in several of its committees, however, the role of women committee could not be made effective to the desired extent. Towards the end of this term, Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) was conducted. Along with appreciation of GEFONT model, The Audit has given some recommendations for efficacy of the Women's Committee. Moreover, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has started a program 'Count us in' for gender equality. It has invited 100 affiliates from all over

the world to participate in its 3rd Congress. ITUC has also forwarded preconditions for participating affiliates requires unions involved in 'Count Us in' policy to have at least 30% women in policy-decision level and 5% women membership by 2018 as well.

Therefore, in the coming term, GEFONT will

- Get involved in ITUC Program for Gender Equality - 'Count Us In'
- Hold women's committee election suggested by PGA, in National Women Workers Conference next year March 8. The Conference will also design/ concretise the policy for increase in women membership and leadership.

- 4. One Union-One Voice:** Under One Union campaign, several activities based on the principle of Initiatives- Competition-supremacy have created a wider structure for platform of single unionism. During this period, partnership with All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) along with Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC) has been strengthened. After Affiliation of ANTUF in ITUC, the bilateral frame of ITUC-NAC is now widened to include ANTUF also from 2013. Despite the disagreements in some issues, GEFONT has continued partnership with the two confederations. Agreement among the confederations on the issues of minimum wage, labour laws and other labour related issues is a positive indication of success in the campaign of One Union One Voice.

Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) is in the process of taking a solid structure from a loose forum. It is being recognized by state and concerned structures practically.

GEFONT relationship with Confederation of Nepali Professionals (CONEP) is more cordial than before but is not upgraded. GEFONT-CONEP Relationship should have been special in comparison to that with NTUC or ANTUF but it is not the case.

Therefore in the coming term,

- Upgrade JTUCC and continue dialogue with other unions to get recognition by law
- Continue partnership of GEFONT- NTUC – ANTUF
- Emphasis on more upgraded GEFONT- CONEP partnership

- 5. Struggle and Co- Existence:** (*Program to Reform Labour Law and Improve Labour Market*) In previous term we proposed 'one law- many rule' to reform the labour law in a package. As we are in continued discussion on Social Security Fund Act, Unemployed Insurance Act, Labour Act (1992), Trade Union Act and other related laws, review and reform is going on. Special resolution on Labour Law reform has explained these issues. Positive aspect of this tenure is the plenty of discussions and there are no confusions. Our challenge is that these issues have been debated for over 12 years but not reached to conclusion.

Therefore, Labour Law related issues will be concluded as follows,

- Labour law formulation and reform on two approaches– Right based and interest based
 - Labour relation to be based on coordinated economic policy and formulation of laws to implement social Security and Labour Inspection System.
- 6. GEFONT Y-Gen Program:** "If we are not able to address and solve the problem of inheritance at national level then it will create chaos. Some of Veterans may not be with us whereas some may be unable to work actively. ... People at 40 will be 47/48 then, this is not youth generation. And, those of us who are at 50s will be over 60 by the time. I am afraid most of us present here are in our 60s, very few of us belong to youth generation. What will happen after 7 – 8 years? All of us will be in 70s. We have to think about this seriously!"; These words relevant to our context are of Chinese leader Deng Xiao Ping, July 2, 1981 addressing the conference of State Committee Secretaries.

Youth and adults of Trade Union movement of second generation developed alongside People's Movement of 1978/79 are now heading towards older generation. If our aim was to build a union with longevity of one lifetime, then we would not bother so much. But our aim is to build union to continue workers' movement for centuries. Therefore, to handover responsibilities to the future generation becomes imperative and we focus our work on youth generation. If we calculate the time spanning from 1947- 89 and the present, then three generation has participated in this movement. We need to remember that the third generation is the product of digital age.

Thus, in forthcoming tenure, the structure for involving youth generation should be upgraded to educate and aware the potential youth leaders about labour and politics to develop their leadership capabilities.

7. Connecting the Globe: GEFONT is now a familiar name in international trade union family. This is the outcome of our collectivism in struggle and partnership since past 25 years. GEFONT is well recognized from ITUC to ILO Governing Body and from labour policy research bodies to multilateral social forum.

- Therefore, in the forthcoming term, we will continue to contribute in world trade union movement and GEFONT will maintain the necessary connections with International bodies of sub regional, regional and international level, GUFs and national centres of all continents.

8. Organising Beyond Borders: For the past two decades GEFONT is organizing migrant workers in the destination countries with the slogan 'GEFONT among Workers Wherever They Are'. In some instances our efforts are enviable whereas in others our efforts have not bore fruits. Keeping in mind, the failures and challenges of past two decades in this term, we will

- continue promotional activities for Safe migration and fruitful employment
- continue efforts in Korea, Hong Kong and Malaysia and focus on Arab nations – Lebanon, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia
- Continue partnership and coordination with Diplomatic agencies, Trade Unions of destination countries, International Trade Union Movement, Trade Union Solidarity Organizations and Social movements for support to migrant workers.

9. GEFONT-TUPI for Policy Analysis: As mentioned in the Policy Document, we will establish and operate Regular Trade Union School for building the base for new generation trade union movement. We will establish GEFONT-Trade Union Policy Institute (GEFONT – TUPI) with a view to facilitate the school with necessary policy analysis. We will also focus our attention to

strengthen National Labor Academy for comprehensive research on labour issues.

- 10. Information and Communication:** In this term, GEFONT's Publicity work has been satisfactory and this will be continued in forthcoming term as well. We will further strengthen broadcast and Information communication, and continue partnership with media persons to ensure more favourable social image of GEFONT. We will pay emphasis to further maximize the digital medium like website and smart phones in the coming term.
- 11. Self-reliance programme:** The Programme to promote investment could not garner much result in the current period. Even though our financial situation is not discouraging we could not fulfil the dream of initiating a sustainable base for investment. Therefore, in the coming term, to strengthen our financial programme, following activities will be undertaken:
- Survey for investment and its promotion from new angles
 - In order to uplift the economic status of the members at local level, skilfully mobilise the ongoing workers' cooperatives through promotional campaigns.

The New Institutional Initiatives from 6th National Congress



The Leadership (NEC-National Executive Committee)

President



Cde. Bishnu Rimal

Vice-presidents (Ex-officio)



Cde. Haridutta Joshi



Cde. Bina Shrestha



Cde. Bidur Karki



Cde. Madhusudan Khatiwada

Secretary General



Cde. Bishnu Lamsal

Deputy Secretary Generals



Cde. Janak Choudhary



Cde. Jitendra Jonchhe

Secretaries



Cde. Ramesh Badal
(DFA)



Cde. Jeetendra Shrestha
(DPub)



Cde. Deepak Paudel
(DEd)



Cde. Gunaram Acharya
(DFin)



Cde. Keshav Duwadi
(DSS)



Cde. Kamal Gautam
(Geography)



Cde. Dinesh Rai
(Union Council)

Members (All Ex-officio):

Rep of Union Council:



Cde. Amar Yadav



Cde. Kul B. Khatri



Cde. Bhakta B. BK



Cde. Ram Budhathoki



Cde. Chandra Gurung



Cde. Tulashi Siwakoti



Cde. Mohan Nepali



Cde. Uttam K. Shrestha

Prez of Zones:



Cde. Santa K. Rai



Cde. Kishor Dhamala



Cde. Tribikram Gyawali



Cde. Ramnaresh Singh



Cde. Kamlesh Jha



Cde. Ramhari Nepal



Cde. Mina Gurung



Cde. Hari Karki



Cde. Purna B. KC



Cde. Dev B. Bam

Women Memebrs:



Cde. Beli Maya Ghale



Cde. Amala Shrestha



Cde. Sita Lama



Cde. Maya Devi Pode



Cde. Guma Devi Acharya



Cde. Kamala Devi Tamang



Cde. Sukmati Dewan



Cde. Manju Thapa



Cde. Deepa Bhandari



Cde. Maya Gurung



Cde. Mina Choudhary



Cde. Bindu Shrivastav



Cde. Aruna Thapa

Youth:



Cde. Damodar Sapkota

Congress Deligates Council



Chief: Cde. Mukunda Neupane

GEFONT Governing Council



Chair- President NEC (Cde. Bishnu Rimal)

Members:



Cde. Mukunda Neupane
(Congress Delegates Council)



Cde. Lalit Basnet
(Congress Delegates Council)



Cde. Binod Shrestha
(Workers Coop. Promotion Central Committee)



Cde. Chudamani Jangali
(Constituent Assembly)



Cde. Umesh Upadhyaya
(GEFONT-TUPI)



Cde. Bindu Pandey
(ILO and International Affairs)



Cde. Uddhab KC
(GEFONT Vetran Network)

Cde. Pemba Lama (denied to join, thus removed by 1st meeting of GC)

GEFONT Veteran Network



Coordinator: Cde. Uddav KC

Members:



Cde. Kabindra S. Rimal
(Member Secretary)



Cde. Om Koirala



Cde. Goma Timilsina



Cde Keshav Raj Giri



Cde Shridhar P Shrestha



Cde. Surendra Rai



Cde. Phip Raj Subba



Cde. Bal Ram Khatri



Cde. Bishnu Bhakta Fuyal

SOLIDARITY: We who expressed our solidarity

- American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), USA
- Alliance of Progressive labour (SENTRO), Philippines
- All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICTUC), India
- All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), India
- Anti Slavery International (ASI), London
- Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Australia
- Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), Geneva
- Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), Italy
- Workers Central Union of Cuba (CTC), Cuba
- Free Trade Zone & General Service Employees Union (FTZ SEU), Sri Lanka
- General Federation of Oman Trade Unions (GFOTU), Oman
- Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), India
- International Labour Organisation, Bureau for Workers' Activities (ILO-ACTRAV), Geneva
- International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), London
- Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Laos
- The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), Denmark
- National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), Sri Lanka
- New Trade Union Initiatives (NTUI), India
- Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), Vietnam
- Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organising (WIEGO)
- National Confederation of Trade Unions (ZENRON), Japan



PARTICIPATION: We who participated



Chief Guest
Cde J.N. Khanal
Former Prime Minister and
then Chairman of CPN (UML)



Guest of honour
Cde Madhav Kumar Nepal
Former Prime and
then Sr. Leader of CPN (UML)



Guest of honour
Cde Bidhya Bhandari
Former Defence Minister and
Vice-Chair of CPN (UML)



Guest of honour
Cde Ishwar Pokharel
Former Dy Prime Minister and
General Secretary of CPN (UML)



Guest of honour
Cde Shankar Pokharel
Former Minister and
then Secretary of CPN (UML)

International Delegates

- Special Guest: Sis Sharan Burrow, General Secretary - ITUC (Live address via Video conferencing from her Brussels office)
- Cde. Ambet Yuson, General Secretary, BWI, Geneva
- Cde Bishwa Nath Pyakurel, President, CONEP
- Cde Shalikram Jamkattel, President-ANTUF
- Bro. Khilanath Dahal, President - NTUC
- Bro. Indra Dev Mishra, President-INTUC
- Bro. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary-SARTUC
- Bro. Suresh Man Shrestha, Secretary-MOLE
- Mr. Manish Agrawal, VP-Employers' Council, FNCCI
- Bro. Jose Assalino, Country Director - ILO -Nepal
- Cde Wang Xuemei, ACFTU-China
- Bro Noriyuki Suzuki, ITUC-Asia Pacific
- Bro. Karamat Ali, PILER, Pakistan
- Bro. N. Basudevan, NTUI-India`
- Cde Amarjit Kaur, AITUC-India
- Dr. Sharan KC, SASK-Finland
- Bro. Rajendra Acharya, UNI-APRO
- Bro. Hitoshi Takezume, JTUC Rengo - Japan
- Bro. Marcus Strohmeier, OGB-Austria
- Bro. Gilles Letort, CGT-France
- Bro. Mikel Nilsson, LO-Sweden
- Bro. Tom Deleu, ACV-Belgium
- Bro. Floro Francisco, LO-Norway
- Bro. Per Christensen, 3F-Denmark
- Bro. Arne Grevsen, 3F-Denmark
- Cde. Vanhna Duangphachan, LFTU-Laos
- Cde. Vilay Vongkhasuem, LFTU-Laos
- Bro. Apo Leong, ITUC-AP
- Bro. Qamarul Hassan Siddiqui, IUF-SA
- Bro. Peter Sjostrano, SPU-Sweden
- Bro. Apolinar Z. Tolentino, BWI-AP
- Bro. Anup Srivastav, BWI-AP
- Bro. K. Somasundram, MTUC-Malaysia
- Bro. Sujasuddin Qureshi, PILER-Pakistan
- Bro. Jeoren Roskams, WSM
- Bro. Bismo Sanyoto, WSM
- Bro. Bruno Deceukelier, WSM
- Cde. Antonio Lisboa Amancio do Vale, CUT-Brazil
- Bro. Mohammed Abdul Rahman, GFBTU-Bahrain
- Cde. Buddhi Acharya, ASI-UK
- Bro. Cesar Garcia Arnal, Streetnet International
- Bro. Ariel B. Castro, ILO-ACTRAV India
- Sis. Jobaida Perveen, BGWEF-Bangladesh
- Bro. Castro Abdullah, Fenasol-Lebanon
- Bro. Elie El Khoury, Fenasol-Lebanon
- Bro. Devraj Dahal, FES-Nepal
- Bro. Mustapha Said, ILO/ACTRAV-Beirut
- Bro. Sailendra Kumar Sharma, AICCTU-India
- Sis. Charito Riley, AFLCIO-USA
- Sis. Omana George, AMRC-Hong Kong
- Bro. Ravindra Sandrasekera, CWC-Sri Lanka
- Bro. Leif Isaksson, LO-Sweden
- Cde. Lee Sang-jin, KCTU-Korea
- Cde. Uday Rai, GSG-GEFONT/KCTU-Korea

Major Events: that took place in the World of Work

(July 20, 1989 – July 20, 2014)

1989

- Establishment of GEFONT by four federations, NIWU, ITWAN, NIHWU and TWAN

1990

- GEFONT played a significant role to gear up popular movement as a co-ordinating body of all workers. The movement became successful, multi-party system restored
- GEFONT organised the first-ever open-air programme; existing Central Ad-hoc Committee reorganised forming Board of Directors & National Executive Committee
- Government formed National Labour Advisory Committee; GEFONT was a key member
- GEFONT mobilised Workers for timely promulgation of New democratic Constitution

1991

- Bills to introduce various labour legislation tabled in the parliament; new Labour Act promulgated
- GEFONT Convened first women workers workshop
- Workers' News, the official organ of GEFONT published
- Rate of minimum wage reviewed by increasing significant amount

1992

- GEFONT first National Congress convened (March 28-31)
- Documentation of history of Nepali Trade Union movement began
- Parliament promulgated first Trade Union Act in Nepal

1993

- Labour Rules adopted
- GEFONT established Labour Resource Centre
- GEFONT launched Trade Union Education Campaign (TRUE- Campaign)

1994

- GEFONT hosted International Trade Union Conference
- GEFONT established an Emergency Fund Scheme

1995

- GEFONT registered as First National Confederation in the country
- Formed *Kamaiya* Liberation Forum as an affiliates of GEFONT in order to relinquish bonded agricultural labour in western Nepal
- GEFONT represented Nepali workers in ILC for the first time
- Trade Unions and individual academics formed National Labour Academy (NLA- Nepal)

1996

- GEFONT convened Second National Congress (March 16-19)
- Nepal ratified ILO Conventions 98 and 138

1997

- GEFONT Chairman Cde Mukunda Neupane appointed as a Labour Minister
- First National Labour Conference convened
- NTUC divided, DECONT recognised as third national centre

1998

- Labour Act amended with granting trade union rights to the agricultural workers
- GEFONT declared Kamaya Appeal movement to relinquish them form slavery

1999

- GEFONT Celebrated 10th founding day
- Government adopted national Labour Policy
- National Minimum Wage for agricultural workers fixed first time
- National Welfare Fund created

2000

- GEFONT convened Third National Congress (May 0 1-03)
- Man Mohan Labour building (GEFONT's HQ) inaugurated
- Government declared Kamaiya liberation
- GEFONT established workers Health Cooperative
- GEFONT /NTUC agreed to form high level taskforce for joint trade union initiative
- Trade Union Committee for Gender Equality and Promotion (TUC-GEP) formed by three trade union centres
- Hotel workers began nationwide movement for 10% service charge

2001

- Organised South Asian child labour workshop
- GEFONT launched new web-portal, labournepal.org

2002

- GEFONT with other unions finalised & adopted workers' common agenda
- Unions made declaration on gender equality and promotion in world of work
- GEFONT organised South Asian Women Workers' Conference
- GEFONT established Women Workers' Relief Fund

2003

- Nepal Street Vendors Union (at present- Nepal self employed workers' union) won registration
- GEFONT organized 2nd National Women Workers' Conference
- GEFONT organised Central Policy Workshop targeting to forthcoming National Congress
- Hulas Metal Craft in Biratnagar went in strike; Police made intervention in Hotel Yak & Yeti strike
- Minimum wage reviewed by increasing Rs. 444
- National workshop on Gender mainstreaming in Trade Union Movement held
- GEFONT handed over protest letter to Korean Embassy in Nepal against the grave workers' right violations in republic of Korea
- GEFONT and ILO jointly organised interaction on Status of Implementation of "Strategic plan on poverty reduction"

2004

- GEFONT participated World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai, India

- GEFONT declared Micro-health Insurance Scheme for workers two districts of Bheri Zone
- GEFONT convened 4th National Congress in Kathmandu replacing founding Secretary General by his new successor
- GEFONT invited 10 Danish Trade Union representatives for Educational Visit to Nepal
- Terrorists brutally killed 12 Nepali workers in Iraq; Recruiting agencies in Kathmandu were vandalised; GEFONT organised memorial service to pay tribute to the 12 workers killed in Iraq
- Nepal Barbers' Trade Union got registration
- High-level mission of ICFTU/GUF visit Nepal; an interaction organised with GEFONT leadership. GEFONT agreed to be part of Contact Group committee created between ICFTU/WCL and Independent national centres

2005

- 2nd National Labour Conference in Kathmandu
- Police raided and padlocked in GEFONT Central Office after coup de' ate by the then monarchy
- The regime banned 8 March Rally organised by Trade Union Committee (TUCGEP)
- Trade Unions organised a huge workers'-march on May Day as the first open programme in challenging the dictatorship of the King
- Three trade union confederations organised a programme opposing the registration of the fictitious trade union created by King Gyanendra
- GEFONT, NTUC, DECONT and Nepal Teachers' Union jointly organised a wider National Workers' Conference under the Theme- 'Building Workers' Solidarity for Democracy'
- GEFONT along with 3 other trade union confederations presented protest letter to Ministry of Labour opposing the ordinance to amend existing Labour Act by royal regime
- GEFONT, NTUC and DECONT organised nationwide rallies and gatherings in opposition of the labour ordinance
- GEFONT on the street against the Government's ordinance to ban Citizen's Right to Information

2006

- GEFONT Chairman Cde Mukunda Neupane and Secretary General Cde Binod Shrestha arrested by the Government. National and International trade unions, and several organisations sent protest letter to the King against it

- GEFONT Chair Cde Mukunda Neupane & Secretary General Cde Binod Shrestha released from police custody after strong pressure from national and international trade unions and organisations
- Trade unions declared 35 days ultimatum along with charter of demand to solve the problems of informal and formal sector workers
- Interaction between 4 trade union centres and leaders of Seven political Parties' Alliance (SPA) was held in Hotel Radisson; trade unions decided to support fully the People's Movement declared by the SPA
- Nationwide popular movement called-on by SPA; entire workers went to general strikes from factories, schools/colleges, transportation, construction, civil service, health and other public service. GEFONT Vice-chair Cde Lalit Basnet along with hundreds of workers arrested
- Victory of People's Power! On the 19th day of general strike King Gyanendra forced to reinstate dissolved parliament and accepted the roadmap of SPA
- Trade Unions asked SPA to scrap Labour ordinance with 72 hours ultimatum; reinstated Parliament responded it by scrapping the Ordinance; declared trade union rights to employees in civil service till to under-secretary level
- GEFONT activist Cde Dorje Khatri successfully hoisted GEFONT flag on Mt. Everest
- Joint delegation of GEFONT, DECONT and NTUC submitted Memo to PM Koirala asking relevant legal frame to form Single union in the country
- GEFONT addressed 75th International labour Conference held in Geneva
- GEFONT organised 3rd National Women Workers' conference
- GEFONT along with 3 other Trade Union Centre submitted their issues to the Interim Constitution
- Minimum monthly wage increased by NRs. 750; (28.89% up in monthly wage & 39.9% up in daily wage)
- Tea plantation workers went on strike demanding to revisit their wage-rate; concluded after 14 days
- GEFONT organised National Women Conference; the theme was- Women Participation: Inclusive and proportional
- Asia Regional Workshop of StreetNet concluded in Kathmandu
- ITUC Founding Congress concluded in Vienna, Vice-chair Cde Bishnu Rimal elected in General Council
- IUF organised Hotel tourism Conference of South Asia in Kathmandu
- Agreement was made to implement 10% service charge in HRC sector; workers in HRC sector won their continuous 2 decades long battle

2007

- Declaration of Interim Constitution with the provision of National Workers Commission and workers' right as fundamental right
- GEFONT launched first union of teachers and employees working in private and boarding schools
- GEFONT formed first Union of Domestic Workers
- Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC) submitted Charter of Demand to Constituent Assembly for 10% representation of working class in peoples' representative bodies of the state
- GEFONT organised a high level interaction program on Social Transformation
- GEFONT declared Voters' Educating programme making aware Constituent Assembly election
- GEFONT organised an interaction program on Women Workers' rights in constitution
- JTUCC formalised through a workshop of union leaders – world of work fix a historical milestone

2008

- GEFONT Vice-chair Bishnu Rimal, Dy Secretary General Binda Pandey, NEC member Jogilal Yadav and CWWD member Shanti Jirel elected member of Constituent Assembly
- Government increased minimum wage by NRs. 1300
- GEFONT organised 2nd South Asian Conference of Women Trade Unionists

2009

- GEFONT Fifth National Congress concluded in Kathmandu Chairman Cde Mukunda Neupane replaced by electing Cde Bishnu Rimal as President.
- Workers in 7 Jungle Resorts inside Chitwan National Park declared strikes
- GEFONT celebrated 20th founding Day; submitted memorandum for Ratification of ILO Convention 87 to Chairman of Constituent Assembly-
- GEFONT launched massive public campaign to make awareness on C 87 and Social Security
- GEFONT organised Interaction with newly appointed labour Attachés
- GEFONT organised an interaction with members of Constituent Assembly and Trade Unionists on labour agendas to be enshrined in the constitution

2010

- GEFONT organised First National Youth Workers' Conference

- 'Equal Right, Decent Work and Dignified Life'- under this theme 4th National Women Workers' Conference was held
- Hotel Workers in Biratnagar called-on strike demanding to implement 10% service charge
- GEFONT started Wage Card campaign demanding overall wage increment
- Supreme Court orders Indian Airlines to implement provisions of Nepali Labour Laws
- GEFONT and KCTU (Korean Trade Union) signed MOU to safeguard the Rights of Nepali workers working in Korea
- GEFONT mourned untimely death of its founding leader Cde Madhav Neupane

2011

- A historic agreement was made between Trade Unions under JTUCC and Employers' Associations to implement of social security and increase minimum wage, however it was disputed by some quarters
- UNITRAV-GEFONT leader Cde Dorje Khatri hoisted ITUC flag on world's highest peak- Mt. Everest
- GEFONT CPC member Cde Binda Pandey elected Deputy member of ILO Governing Body
- Workers in tea plantation reached in agreement with plantation employers to increase minimum wage
- Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre organised 2nd National Trade Union Conference
- GEFONT made an interaction with newly appointed labour Attachés for South Korea, Malaysia, Kuwait and UAE

2012

- GEFONT declared a campaign in 6 different places for Labour Inspection
- GEFONT organised National Conference of presidents from big enterprises consisting more than 100 workers
- GEFONT established two award in the memory of its founders- Cde Madhav Neupane (Madhav Neupane Memorial Award) and Nuru Wang-Xu Sherpa (Nuru Wang-Xu memorial Award)
- UNITRAV-GEFONT leader Cde Dorje Khatri submitted Mt Everest for 8th time with the flag of newly established Global Union Federation- the IndustriALL
- 3rd National Labour and Employment Conference held
- 100th special issue of Shramik Khabar (Workers' News) was launched in a grand ceremony

- GEFONT organised interaction on migrant workers problem under the theme of “Migration: Possibilities and Policies”
- Two clothing sectors GEFONT affiliates – ITGWUN and NICWUN organised merger convention establishing ITG-WUN
- UNITRAV activists attacked by hooligans patronised by employer’s association-TAAN (Trekking Agents Association of Nepal); UNITRAV padlocked the TAAN office
- GEFONT organised an Interaction between UML, GEFONT and other mass organisations on Decent Work
- GEFONT organised historical Workers’ Concert for the first time in Eastern Nepal; about 20,000 audience participated- the theme was decent work, domestic & workplace violence and safe migration
- GEFONT’s Participatory Gender Audit held

2013

- GEFONT organised National Conference of Trade Union Educators
- ITWAN-GEFONT organised huge taxi rally against fuel price hike; ITWAN Narayani zone called on transport strike against the killing of driver Ajay Dewan
- CWC-GEFONT organised 5th National Women Worker Conference
- GEFONT marked May Day by mobilising large-meetings across 8 main cities of Nepal including Capital City with a theme ‘Change: By building Workers’ Power’
- Management of Highland Distillery, Kathmandu Illegally locked-out company, workers staged protest programme
- Three major affiliates in entire Industrial sector launched new federation, WHIN-Whole Industry Trade Union, Nepal, merging together NIWU, NICIWU and NIFBWU. Merger Conference was held in Birgunj
- Minimum wage increase by 29% across the board, tea plantation sector and agriculture received separate rate
- 7 Nepali workers lost life in landslide occurred in India’s Uttarakh and State; 64 Indian workers working as bonded condition in Siraha Brick Kiln rescued by Nepali Police
- GEFONT organised 2nd Youth workers Conference; the slogan was- ‘Youth workers for Change and Decent Work’
- GEFONT National Congress Delegates Council 4th meeting concluded in Kathmandu
- Founding Convention of Home Based Workers’ Union of Nepal (HUN) concluded; four domestic & home based unions merged together during founding convention.

- GEFONT mobilised workers in Election of Constituent Assembly (CA-II)
- Janak Education Material Centre (a public enterprises fully funded by state) dismissed 5 Union leaders the fight is still continued

2014

- Three GEFONT leaders- the then Sr. Vice-prez Cde Binod Shrestha, then Vice-prez Cde Chudamani Jangali and then Dy Secretary General Cde Pemba Lama elected in Constituent Assembly; GEFONT felicitated them
- Street Vendors staged Protest rally against government decision to displace them from their work place; StreetNet international expresses its concern on Street Vendors movement in Nepal
- NEVA submits the Memorandum to the Ministry of health & population regarding the issue of Health volunteers
- Agreement on minimum wage implementation in Tea estate, which was declared by the government
- ITUC draws the attention of Saudi authorities on the issue of Nepali migrant workers
- GEFONT reached in an agreement with Department of Foreign Employment (DOFE) to launch awareness prior to departure through its volunteers in DOFE premises
- GEFONT Sixth National Congress concluded re-electing Cde. Bishnu Rimal the President; outgoing Secretary General Cde Umesh Upadhyaya assigned new responsibility as the Executive Director to newly established GEFONT's policy institute- Trade Union Policy Institute (GEFONT-TUPI); Cde Upadhyaya was replaced by his successor Cde Bishnu Lamsal as the new Secretary General
- Avalanche in Mt. Everest killed UNITRAV Vic- president Cde Dorje Khatri including 14 other UNITRAV members, the world mourned on sad demise of well-known class-A climbers
- Five Nepali workers lost life working in Goa- India in a building collapsed
- ITUC Third World Congress, concluded in Berlin, established an International Award in memory of late Cde Dorje Khatri recognising him a climate campaign trade union hero
- GEFONT nominee GC member Cde Binda Pandey re-elected Dy member of ILO Governing Body for 2nd term
- GEFONT Celebrated Silver Jubilee of its foundation, Celebration was address by ILO DG Bro Guy Ryder, TUC-AP General Secretary Bro N. Suzuki, UNI-APRO Regional Secretary Bro Christopher Ng and other dignitaries
- GEFONT declared NRs 10 million worth GEFONT Solidarity Fund

TWENTY FIVE YEARS IN BUILDING WORKERS' POWER

Twenty-five years ago when GEFONT was formed, we had our office in a bag with a few sheets of paper and some files. Our total fund was personal savings accumulated together about 1,250 rupees. Those of us who were working full-time in the union had no fixed place to sit or time to eat.

But we had limitless passion to work for the working class. In crisis, we asked our cadres to contribute a day's salary to the union. The well-equipped GEFONT office today and its property of about 120 million rupees is the earning of those hardships.



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