



## Press release on the occasion of the International Labour Day

### Governments, producers and trade need to respect and protect rights of flower workers

Brussels/Cologne/Münster/Prague/Vienna, April, 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. On occasion of the International Labour Day, the European campaign “fair flowers – for human rights” demands governments and flower producers and traders to respect and protect workers’ rights in the flower industry. Mainly the rights to organise and to collective bargaining and the right to occupational health and safety are violated by the flower farms. Many governments in developing countries do not implement the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and thus do not protect workers adequately against exploitative working conditions. The members of the campaign “fair flowers – for human rights” therefore ask governments of flower producing countries to implement the core labour conventions and the convention on occupational health and safety (no. 110) of the ILO.

The lack of the realisation of the adequate workers right has led to similar consequences in Colombia, Zimbabwe and Uganda. “In Colombia, flower companies employ groups of workers as free lancers without any right of association and collective bargaining”, explains Gertrud Falk from FIAN Germany one measure of employers to undermine workers’ rights. Furthermore, big companies have tried to take advantage of the economic crisis to close especially those production sites where independent trade unions are strong. Workers can hardly exercise their legal rights, even from the respective authorities, without the assistance of international campaigns like “fair flowers – for human rights”.

The declining flower industry in Zimbabwe forwards the losses of sales and income on workers. “Flower workers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) report that employers do not provide protective gear”, says Sophie Vessel from FIAN Austria. This causes a great health risk for them. “The Zimbabwean government does hardly care about the working conditions of agricultural workers,” adds Marketa Novotna from the Ecumenical Academy Prague in Czech Republic.

Only as a result of an international campaign the right to organise and to collective bargaining has been implemented in the Ugandan flower sector. But still, many employers try to deny those core labour rights. “Many employers don’t care about adequate protective gear of flower workers and the Ugandan Government does not enforce the existing labour laws. This has led to severe injuries and even to the death of flower workers,” complains Stéphanie Lecharlier from FIAN Belgium.

European governments, flower traders and consumers can support fair labour conditions in the flower production by buying fair produced flowers which are certified by the Flower Label Program (FLP) or by Fairtrade. “Those two labels guarantee that workers enjoy labour rights by their strict rules,” explains Barbara Janssens from the Belgium Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken. “We want local authorities to take formal decisions on the procurement of fair produced flowers,” adds Steffi Neumann from Vamos e.V. in Germany. “That will have a light house effect on traders and consumers.”

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**More info: [www.flowers-for-human-rights.org](http://www.flowers-for-human-rights.org)**