



PEOPLE OVER PROFIT

- Panel One - At the crossroads: Choosing people over profit

There is enough wealth in the world to ensure that everybody has a rewarding, dignified life. But the current system is designed to ensure that the wealth is not distributed to those who create it, nor to those who need it most.

Across the globe, human rights go unrealised, inequality is rising and the austerity unleashed after the global financial crisis created unemployment and prompted attacks on public services and labour rights. In many parts of the world, the old colonialism has been replaced by a new economic colonialism. We face a race to the bottom in tax, workers' rights and environmental standards.

As corporate profits spiral upwards, power has shifted to wealthy elites who exercise it to influence governments, media and elections. Market orthodoxy dominates mainstream politics and any alternative discourse is largely excluded, leading to popular disengagement, resentment and social division. As confidence in public institutions declines, we are seeing rises in nationalism, racism and reactionary politics, while action on climate change flounders. Hostility to migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups is growing in many places.

Trade unions and their role in society are often attacked because they are the last mass-based democratic movements advocating for progressive alternatives. These attacks represent a broader accelerating trend to restrict the role of social partners, dilute human rights and undermine democracy.

In a globalised world, each of these challenges seems to be large, complex and contested. But linking them all are simple questions: do we value people over profit? Do we want a world where wealth, power and privilege belong to the few and not to the many? Are we willing to stand up for basic human rights and dignity? There are many examples of people choosing people over profit and fighting back – and trade unions are key to the success of these struggles.