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GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

A NEWSLETTER FOR UNIONIZED GOODYEAR WORKERS WORLDWIDE

Global Meeting Produces Structural Changes; Further Commitments to Sharing Information

Some 50 delegates from 12 countries attended the recent Goodyear Global Union Network meeting of the ICEM in Akron, Ohio, USA. A new Steering Committee was selected and Tom Conway, USW International Vice-President is the new chairman of the Network.

Members include Carlos Antonio da Silva, Finance Secretary of Sao Paolo Rubber Workers` Union, Brazil, representing Latin America; Werner Staniewski, Head of Goodyear`s Works Council from IG BCE, Germany, representing Europe; Toshioki Hojo, President of Japanese Rubber Workers` Confederation, Gomu Rengo, representing Asia/Pacific; a yet-to-be-named representative from the National Union of Metalworkers Union of South Africa (NUMSA), representing Africa; and Kemal Özkan, ICEM Officer for Chemical and Rubber Industries, who recently took this position with the ICEM after his 15-year work at the Turkish Rubber Workers Union, Lastik-Is.

Representatives of unions in Brazil, Chile, France, Germany, Peru, Poland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Thailand and Turkey delivered country reports. Information about the situations in Australia and Slovenia was shared by delegates in recent contact with union representatives in those countries. The focus was the overall economic climate in the homeland and the working conditions in the Goodyear facilities located there.

The increase in the use of contract and part-time workers was widely reported. Job and plant security issues were discussed, along with

safety and environmental concerns. The long-standing problem in Thailand was examined and the Network formally requested that Goodyear`s Global Labor Relations director intervene in that situation. The problems there include the company denying collective bargaining rights to many workers and the routine dismissal of union activists, including the president, Anan Phonung, who participated in the Akron meetings.

The guidelines and statement from the Goodyear Global Union Network meetings in Akron on 19-20 March were reviewed and modified during the meetings. They can be found at www.icem.org/goodyear.

Carlyle Group Intends to Purchase Goodyear EPD

Delegates at the Network meeting heard firsthand that a sale of the Goodyear`s Engineered Products Division would be imminent. By the end of the week Goodyear announced its intended sale to the Carlyle Group, a global private investment firm located in Washington D.C., for \$1.475 million (US\$).

The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions, including the receipt of regulatory approvals as well as completion of a labor agreement with the United Steelworkers union.

Carlyle employs more than 200,000 workers worldwide. Goodyear Engineered Products employs approximately 6,500 workers in 32 manufacturing facilities around the globe, including approximately 3,100 workers in the U.S. Carlyle has said that the company`s headquarters will remain in Akron, Ohio and current management will continue to lead the business.

Goodyear Looks to Expand in China

Goodyear will try to expand tire production in China, the company chairman and CEO said in remarks at its annual shareholders meeting in early April. Robert Keegan also said the tire maker will look for more ways to eliminate "high cost" production.

Goodyear also intends to buy equipment and raw materials from suppliers as well as purchasing tires from third-party manufacturers in Asia. The company says it is looking for savings in part due to a 17 percent increase in its raw materials costs last year.

The company already has announced it will close its plant in Tyler, Texas, by the end of this year. It will also shut down plants in Quebec, England, New Zealand and Morocco.

"This is an area where we will continue to take action to assure we have capacity aligned with global demand," Keegan said. "We continue to review opportunities to further reduce high-cost capacity."

Keegan said production sourcing in China saved the company about \$35 million last year. "This initiative will accelerate over the next two years," he said.

There were no specific announcements about new job cuts or plant closings.

Thailand Fire Update: No Date Yet for Resumption of Production

ICEM officials and union representatives in Thailand are having problems with Goodyear management following the recent fire which led to the temporary shut down of production.

The main issues involve the absence of a timeframe for plant resumption and pay during the shutdown. While the plant is down, workers only get 50 per cent of their wages, and 75 per cent for the first three days of the month.

The union is very unsatisfied with the way the management dealt with the issue especially on the announcement for the workers to go home and that they will be called back to work later when the repair is completed and the plant is ready to resume.

Most workers are facing very serious financial difficulty and with so many things unclear, some big changes, including possible lay offs, are anticipated.

Turkish Workers Start to Negotiate This Autumn

Two years after the latest negotiations, Turkish Goodyear Workers will be starting to negotiate with the company this autumn for a new contract covering 2008-2009.

Employed in two plants, located in Izmit and Adapazari, Turkish workers are represented by Petroleum, Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers` Union of Turkey, Lastik-Is, which is one of the long-standing participating unions of Goodyear Global Union Network. There are some 1,200 rubber workers employed at these two Goodyear plants.

In the Turkish tire industry, negotiation talks are made at sectoral level, with Goodyear, Bridgestone and Pirelli are other counterparts of Lastik-Is. Last time, negotiations between the union and Goodyear were very difficult. Lastik-Is signed the agreement just a few hours before strikes were to occur at the three multinationals.

Lastik-Is, through ICEM's Rubber and Chemical Industries Officer Kemal Özkan, will keep the Goodyear Global Union Network fully apprised as these negotiations begin later this year.

Share Your News:

Keep your brothers and sisters in the Goodyear Global Network informed by sending your updates to:
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