

CHANGE: BY BUILDING WORKERS' POWER !

GEFONT May Day Declaration-2013

1. The journey of sacrifice and efforts for change started from the streets of Chicago one hundred twenty seven years ago is ongoing in a continuity. The efforts and long struggles for dignified, prosperous and decent life for the working people is in continuation passing through ups and downs and a number of turning points of the history. There are tremendous achievements, but returns generated by the developments of human civilization are not in equal access to the working people worldwide. Still we, the ignored, exploited and deprived workers of the least developed portion of the globe are far off the basic freedoms of life. Freedom from hunger and freedom from fear are still the fruits of sky for us. Equality is still a mere word and human dignity just a dream for us.
2. Nepali working class, in spite of being responsible and militant, is not in a situation to feel changes in life from significant political changes in the country. History of the nation is a witness that every democratic and republican movement has reached its destination only through the militant involvement of Nepali working class. However it is a fact that Nepali working class has always been ignored by ruling side.
3. Attacks on trade union activities are increasing in workplaces and labour market. In spite of difficult political situation and labour market chaos in addition to attacks on workers & Trade Unions, we have launched forward the significant and effective activities of far-reaching impacts from last year May day to this eve of the current May Day.
4. On the occasion of May Day 2012, we had expressed our commitments to focus our political, ideological, organisational & other activities & movement on seven agenda relevant to our political & labour market situation. We have become partially successful in our commitment to pressurise for Employment Summit. Third labour & Employment Conference has been concluded with declaration that **Employment**

Summit will be organised, however the Government could not organise the Summit within this year. A number of inevitable tasks were hindered in the absence of Parliament due to, abrupt but in a planned way, dissolution of Constituent Assembly. However, we have been successful to launch forward the process of the revision of Labour laws to a new height which is now close to concluding regime. National Labour Commission for prompt justice to workers and labour inspection system for democratization of workplace also could not be enforced due to absence of Parliament in the country. Ratification of ILO Convention 87 in order to ensure Freedom of Association could not reach the destination due to the political chaos. We have been successful to establish the issue of 10% representation of workers in every representative body of the State as the hot agenda. Though successful to make the draft of Social Security Fund Bill in consensus, we could not push it to the result of scheme design & enforcement only because of the vacuum of the legislature of the country. Now we are in endeavour for enactment through ordinance.

5. This year, GEFONT gained success to take forward the agenda directly or indirectly related to labour and politics as per priority basis.
6. With a motive to strengthen the workplace committees as well as entire trade union movement from below, the Rapid Action Team (GEFONT-RAT) was mobilised from the central level in 31 districts as a campaign to reform and manage our unions. More than 1175 active committees in enterprises and workplaces were well trained; whereas the convention of more than 700 committees, were successfully held. In this course, our campaign was fruitful to increase awareness and create a revitalised enthusiasm among the members and the committees. Because of such high level team mobilisation campaign focused on enterprises and **workplaces**, actions focussed on the organization improvement and extension along with local conventions as preparation for General Congress, leadership development, training, handling of labour disputes & problems, explanation of achievements, identification of the needs and reenergizing the activists were taken forward simultaneously. The zonal level orientation programs

for the elected activists in enterprises and units in addition to local GEFONT representatives were also successfully held in all 12 Zones.

7. By ventilating the message of unity and alliance with a long-term goal of power consolidation, Nepal Independent and Textile Garment Workers Union and Nepal Independent Carpet Workers Union have been unified into a broad national federation. The campaign of unifying our three national unions—NIWU, NICIWU and NIFBWU—to form an extensive national industrial federation is also in the final phase.
8. Despite the hectic schedule of the organizational reforms, GEFONT remained the most influential organization for resolving the labor disputes in 2012. We created the pressure all over the country to hold the elections of Authentic Union and collective bargaining negotiations nationwide at a time. Such demand and pressure have created a new wave in the labor market. Out of 15 CBA elections of authentic unions held under regular process, we have gained the victory in 10 this year. We have been able to solve the chronic and complicated labour disputes of various enterprises like Thai Airlines, Bhrikuti Pulp and Paper, Swavlamwan Bikash Bank, Butwal Power Company including others.
9. Not only in resolving the labor disputes, we have also achieved remarkable success in the welfare campaigns for the workers. Focusing on the health of the workers, programs like Micro Health Insurance Scheme, GEFONT Health Cooperative, Emergency Relief Fund and Women Social Assistance Fund were launched for the health protection of thousands of the workers. On the occasion of previous May Day, GEFONT signed MoU with Helping Hand Community Hospital for a new and additional health care scheme for the workers. Hundreds of workers and their family members have been benefitted by this scheme during the current year.
10. The issue of gender equality has been in the high priority during the period. GEFONT Gender Audit has been conducted this year. The Fifth National Women Workers' Conference has been successfully concluded

with a focus on Violence Against Women in order to abolish the violence from home, society and workplace. The conference also issued the GEFONT Code of Conducts on Violence Against Women.

11. We organized Workers Concert at Khanar of Sunsari District for the first time with the aim of massive awareness building the workers regarding how they have been pondering about their rights. It was the historical beginning on its own which we concluded as an innovative and effective program.
12. Our participation in international programs and the expansion of international relationships during the year has been enthusiastic. We also became able to extend the significant international cooperation for protecting the rights and benefits of the Nepali migrant workers abroad.
13. By holding National Educators Conference, we have taken initiatives for a strategy of far reaching impacts on trade union education in this period. Through the concept of Regular Trade Union School, our trade union education program has become able to launch big stride towards higher level of institutional development.
14. The Workers News publication has crossed a glorious period and its grand 100th edition has also been published. The publicity works of popularising labour agenda through mass media have also reached a new dimension.
15. Our analysis and efforts for cooperation among trade unions on workers agenda amidst multi union competition has been truly verified by the span of time. After the formation of Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre, the third Joint National Trade Union Conference was also held in the course of developing union cooperation. The new culture of forming common position and launching joint activities on workers' agenda has become more effective this year.
16. GEFONT has been successful to initiate stronger cooperation between the working class and political parties on political agenda this year. We

concluded the inaugural program of the National Congress Delegate Council as an unprecedented ideological/political program in a participation of 1800 leaders/cadres. Huge street demonstrations have also frequently been organized hand-in-hand with various mass organizations.

17. With the political crisis in the country the labor polity is also in crisis. Not only the issues of rights but also the issues related to normal livelihood and welfare are undergoing through hardships. There is still a tendency to look at wages as cost. The entrepreneurs and investors have not yet realized that only with the increment in wages/salaries, the demand for goods and services also gets increased. The management side does not seem to internalize the general fact that the more the worker is incorporated under the social security system the higher will be the labour productivity and efficiency. The entrepreneurs and industrialists of contemporary Nepal have a general characteristic of expecting high productivity and quality products & services from the tormented worker who does not get enough wage even to provide a square meal to his family. Therefore, the need of the present time is the radical change in the mindset of capitalists, industrialists, entrepreneurs and the management. The urgent need is to bring about change in the fundamental character of the state which is pro-capital.
18. In South Asia, the real wage has increased less than 2% annually in the last decade as revealed by Global Wage Report. However, the Gross Domestic Product during the period has increased highly. In Asia, Real GDP is above 6% and the productivity of labor is also above 5% per annum, but the share of wages in GDP has decreased in about 70% countries of the world. Though the wage seems to have increased in terms of money, the inflation and the continual price hike have caused decline in the real purchasing power of the money. Decline in share of wages indicates towards increase in the share of profits. The statistics prove that the total returns of the high increase in GDP have crept inside the briefcase of the business class in the form of profit. Thus inequality has widened up much due to pro-capitalist character of the state.

19. In the developed countries, 26 million youths of 15-24 age group are unemployed. The ILO report mentions that about 75 million youths of the age group all over the world are unemployed. The survey conducted by the World Bank shows that about 260 million youths worldwide are economically inactive. The April 27th edition of the Economist has claimed that the number of unemployed youth in the world is equal to the number of total population of the USA, i.e. nearly 310 million.
20. Therefore, for the socio-economic transformation of the country, the priority issues are employment generation, the creation of decent and fruitful employment and to push up the share of wages in the GDP. With proportionally increased share of wages, the discrepancy of income distribution can be gradually reduced through a strategy of Job-rich and wage-led growth.
21. By scrutinizing the facts for a long time, GEFONT has demanded to establish Labour Inspection System and its effective enforcement, the implementation of Social Security System by involving all workers of formal and informal sectors and well managed system of Industrial collective bargaining in local and national levels. For which, GEFONT along with activities on its own, has been focussing on joint actions involving all other trade unions.
22. We would like to celebrate May Day 2013 in a new paradigm of change. With an unwavering belief that the change is possible only by Building Workers' Power, we would like to draw the attention of the entire nation into the basic agenda of workforce development. Therefore, by reviewing and managing our policies, programs, commitments and declarations, we would like to express our commitments on following priorities:
 - Increase of wages and benefits for each worker
 - Collective bargaining agreements across the country at a time
 - Implementation of social security fund

- Amendment and formulation of labor laws to guarantee Labor inspection system, national labor commission for prompt justice to the workers and well-managed industrial collective bargaining system
- Guarantee of Freedom of Association for the workers and inclusion of workers rights as the fundamental rights in the constitution itself
- Election of the Constituent Assembly as soon as possible for the sake of drafting the pro-worker, welfare based and socialism-oriented constitution as soon as possible
- Employment Summit for the employment-led growth strategy
- 10% representation of the workers in the representative bodies of the state so as to make the policy and programs of the state in favor of the workers.
- Ensuring voting right in CA Election to the Nepali migrant workers from their working destinations and Protection of the other basic rights.

GEFONT would like to appeal all Nepali workers working in the country and abroad, state & government, international communities, labor friendly organizations and the employers for addressing and resolving the above-mentioned burning problems of the politics and labor market for which we have been fighting for long. On the glorious occasion of the May Day, we would like to extend the best wishes for Nepali workers and the workers and trade unions all over the world for cooperation for labor friendly systems and decent and prosperous lives of the workers in each country and the globe.

Best wishes on May Day 2013 !

Long live May Day !

Long live GEFONT !