

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

ACTION NOW!

THE GENEVA CHARTER ON QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Adopted by the Council of Global Unions, 24 January 2011

1. Quality public services available to all enhance the quality of people's lives and are fundamental to the creation of societies that are equal, prosperous and democratic. By 'public' we mean serving the general interest rather than particular or individual interests. By 'quality' we mean a culture of service that responds effectively to the needs of people.
2. These services must be universally available and of the highest quality. Access to them must be fair. These conditions enable public services to nourish and enrich our lives and to promote solidarity within our communities.
3. These benefits will not be achieved automatically. In today's world, people yearn for security and lives free from want and fear. But their aspirations will not be realised unless governments and all stakeholders in society work together to create a new vision of quality public services for all.
4. The great challenges of the 21st century will remain unmet unless there is a renewal of commitment to services that will deliver people and communities from ignorance, poverty, conflict and neglect.
5. Therefore, we call for the adoption of a global agenda for quality public services that will provide social justice, sustainable development, equity and a better quality of life for all. Such an agenda requires:
 - ▶ commitment to the right of all people to public services that are universal in their reach and availability, irrespective of social, economic or geographic conditions, and that promote gender equality and equity;
 - ▶ recognition that quality public services are required in developing, emerging and advanced economies for sustainable economic growth and for an equitable distribution of the benefits of growth;
 - ▶ adoption of policies and strategies for human development that meet the fundamental needs of everyone for water, food, energy and housing; enable all to have access to education, health, communications, transport and a plurality of information; preserve cultural diversity and freedom; and ensure the right to decent conditions at work;
 - ▶ good administration that is transparent and free of corruption, in the service of a pluralist, open society.
6. With this in mind, we reaffirm that quality public services can meet the challenges of our times to:
 - ▶ reach the Millennium Development Goals, providing hope for hundreds of millions of women, men, young people and children, bringing them out of poverty, really improving their lives and building a decent future;
 - ▶ respond to the threats of climate change by seizing the opportunities to create green economies;

- ▶ provide a foundation for the future through better education and health for children and young people;
 - ▶ ensure the mobility of people, communication among people and respect for cultural diversity;
 - ▶ defend the social wage for working families, their social security and pensions;
 - ▶ attain gender equality and the empowerment of women;
 - ▶ protect and create opportunities for disadvantaged groups and those who suffer discrimination; and promote diversity of media and information.
- 7.** In meeting these challenges, Global Unions will work together and with others to create a culture of quality in the delivery of efficient, affordable, accountable, well-run and responsive public services for all communities. Global Unions will support actions to reinforce the framework of democratic pluralism supported by transparent institutions, including:
- ▶ legislative bodies that provide good governance and enact just laws and fair rules;
 - ▶ executive authority exercised at all levels that is accountable, is responsive to the needs of people and provides responsible leadership in the application of laws and administration;
 - ▶ institutions of justice that operate independently;
 - ▶ effective international institutions, working with all levels of government to respond to global challenges in an increasingly interdependent global community;
 - ▶ an enabling environment in which the fundamental rights of all people are guaranteed and in which freedom of expression and of media, the freedom of academic research, the right to communicate, and the right to free assembly and freedom of association are paramount;
 - ▶ national and regional regulations that provide for diversity in the media and access to culture;
 - ▶ capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to emergencies, national and regional disasters and conflict.
- 8.** Global Unions will campaign for adequate public resources and a commitment to invest in the future of people and their communities. The time has come to redefine the debate over the generation of necessary public resources. The introduction of user fees is a prescription for inequity. Public-private partnerships generally serve private interests rather than the public good. The debate over resources must focus on the need to serve common interests rather than special interests. Discussion of fair taxation, a core function of democracy, must engage all stakeholders through representative organisations of civil society. Revenue collection must not be limited to individuals but must also include corporate taxation. Philanthropy is not a substitute for fair and reasonable taxation to finance quality public services in all communities.
- 9.** Low income countries may be unable to meet the needs of their people from national resources alone. Working with the international community they must be supported on the path to sustainable development through innovative sources of funding for development, including a tax on international financial transactions.
- 10.** Global Unions assert that the highest quality services can only be delivered by workers whose rights are fully respected. We renew the call to ensure that all workers, whether in the public or private sector, are granted freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively.
- 11.** Global Unions pledge to work with key actors – governments and international agencies, civil society, and business and enterprises – to pursue a new vision of quality public services in the 21st century. The private sector can be complementary to the public sector, but limiting the excesses of the market is central to maintaining democratic balance and ensuring equal rights and sustainability.
- 12.** Today, more than ever before, the world needs to work together for the viability of our planet in a new context of decency, change and hope. That work will succeed when we take our inspiration from the knowledge that quality public services provide quality of life.