

Sister public service trade unions in southern Africa

1 December 2010

Dear Comrades

World AIDS Day 2010

On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2010, I would like to send you, the sister public service trade unions engaged in the *Strengthening the public service response to HIV/AIDS in southern Africa* project, our warmest fraternal greetings.

2010 has witnessed some key developments on the international HIV/AIDS stage.

The international community has spectacularly failed to find the funds necessary to meet even the existing commitments of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, let alone meet the needs of what should be done. However, we must also recognise the positive efforts of the International Labour Office (ILO) to draw attention to the role of the workplace in tackling HIV/AIDS through their *Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work*.

Through your union's work on HIV/AIDS, I know you are acutely aware of how difficult it is to turn our aspirations about tackling HIV/AIDS into concrete effective action in our workplaces, and the lives of working people more widely. I am proud that UNISON's HIV/AIDS project is committed to supporting this and is having an impact.

Through the collective efforts of all those engaged with the project we have built a strong network of public service unions sharing their expertise and experiences of tackling HIV/AIDS in the workplace across southern Africa. Over half of all the public service unions in southern Africa have turned their involvement with our project into action to lobby their governments on HIV/AIDS issues. Many unions report that as a result of the project the support they give to members infected by and affected by HIV/AIDS has improved considerably.

The project also gives us an opportunity to recognise together the extraordinary challenges that prevail, not least the stigma and discrimination that pervades all



HIV/AIDS activity. Until the trade union movement, at every level, can acknowledge HIV/AIDS for what it is, we will not be able to comprehensively respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS on people's lives. As trade unionists we must also increase our efforts to incorporate strong protection for public service workers affected and infected by HIV/AIDS into our collective bargaining agreements.

One immediate challenge to those of us engaged in this HIV/AIDS project is how we develop our work together when the project comes to a close at the end of March 2011. UNISON is committed to standing in solidarity with our sister unions in southern Africa to fight HIV/AIDS and strengthen public services, and finding some resources to support this. We will also continue to lobby the UK Government and other international bodies to improve their work on HIV/AIDS. But UNISON must take the lead from southern African unions on the work in your region.

Your struggles against HIV/AIDS, both personal and as trade unionists, are in our thoughts on this World AIDS Day. We wish you renewed strength and every success.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Prentis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

Dave Prentis
General Secretary