

On the occasion of UN Public Service Day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says: "On this Public Service Day, I thank all public servants for their daily efforts to make a difference. I also call upon young people everywhere to consider dedicating themselves to the noble cause of public service as we strive to build a future of dignity of all."

Public Services International, the global trade union organisation that represents public service workers, welcomes this positive message, especially in times when public services are under attack all over the world. Rosa Pavanelli, PSI General Secretary, says, "I hope this means that the UN is going to shift its emphasis from private capital to public investment to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Austerity budgeting and reliance on private capital are failed policies. Multinational corporations are accumulating capital in offshore tax havens rather than reinvesting. We need to ensure multinationals pay their fair share of tax and that governments use this revenue to drive public sector growth through investment in universal, quality public services. Universal access to these public services is a pre-condition for healthy economies and just and equitable societies."

In the coming months, two global meetings will take place where PSI will defend public service workers and work in close coalition with civil society to ensure that the 2030 Agenda will deliver on its promises. Habitat III, the third United Nations [Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development taking place every 20 years](#), will be held in Quito, Ecuador, on 17-20 October 2016. The United Nations has called the conference to take stock of the fast-changing urban trends and to "[reinvigorate](#)" the global political commitment to the sustainable development of towns, cities and other human settlements, both rural and urban.

If city governments and urban economic development programmes are to deliver inclusion, socio-economic integration and sustainable livelihoods, these programmes must be rooted in the universal access to quality public services. They must have a special focus on integrating potentially vulnerable people, including women, young, elderly, migrants and refugees, indigenous communities and LGBT groups. And they must place Decent Work and workers' rights at their very heart, addressing the problems of informal, precarious and low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, the working poor, migrant workers and refugees.

Universal access to essential public services promotes equality, particularly among urban populations, and is inextricably linked to the respect of human rights. The role of universally accessible, affordable quality public services is paramount for building inclusive, sustainable cities. These essential public services must be publicly owned and managed. When market dynamics and profit maximisation govern the provision of public services, broader social and environmental sustainability objectives are no longer achievable. Public resources and commons become endangered, transparency and democratic civic scrutiny are weakened and the overall economic and social costs to the community rise. There is no evidence that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector. On the contrary, there is growing evidence of the failure of privatisation, be it through sale of assets, outsourcing, concession or public-private partnerships (PPPs). Effective alternatives to PPPs include remunicipalisation, public-public partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation.

Preparations for the July UNCTAD conference in Nairobi also show an unduly optimistic emphasis on private-sector favoured mechanisms such as [Public-Private Partnerships](#) which are described as "an effective way to fund infrastructure." Tax Justice Network, EURODAD, Alliance Sud and the Third World Network all join PSI in calling for a [stronger commitment regarding illicit financial flows, tax evasion and avoidance](#) and a more equitable international trade regime, better attuned to the interests of developing countries.

Increased investor rights have prohibited developing countries from pursuing environmentally, future focused policies, such as in India where increased IP restrictions and time-frames made the phase out of ozone-damaging CFC chemicals unaffordable, and recently blocked solar energy policies. PSI and civil society allies will work to ensure that the role of the public sector in driving meaningful investment, growth and development is not undermined at UNCTAD14. Although other international bodies such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF have long been private-sector cheerleaders, UNCTAD has thus far maintained a unique position in bringing a more nuanced, development-focused approach to trade and PSI aims to affirm UNCTAD's mandate in this regard.

**Together, we defend quality public services for all!**

**Also see:**

- Public Service Day 2016 marks the first in a series of [online actions by EPSU](#) against the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) – the controversial free trade deal that has been negotiated between the European Union and Canada. If passed, CETA will have far-reaching consequences for workers' rights, public services and democracy as a whole, and will moreover set a worrying precedent for future trade deals – including TTIP. EPSU calls for its outright rejection by European politicians. EPSU will lead a week of coordinated online action, 27 June – 1 July, before the European Council is due to authorise the signature of CETA on 5 July. They have put together a [package of campaign materials](#) to coordinate actions, to be shared with members, colleagues and wider networks.
- Download [PSI's statement](#)
- More on the [United Nations Public Service Day](#)