

Mrs Angela Merkel  
Chancellor of  
Germany

ARIACM/740/MH/ Lisbon, 25th May 2011

Madam,

The CGTP-IN read in the German media the position you took on May 17<sup>th</sup>, regarding the complex situation currently occurring in countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal, in which you were namely calling for the imposition of cutbacks in labour and social rights as a requisite for German "aid" to those countries.

It is a fact that your position was adopted in the context of an initiative of the political party which you lead – the CDU – but it cannot be separated from your position as German Chancellor and from the several opinions which, in the government's position you occupy, you have been adopting in the name of the "defence" of the Euro and of the alleged strengthening of the so-called European Economic Governance.

Those opinions have been having a crucial impact on the choice of European political options, namely on those reflected on the Euro Plus Pact, which, considering its implications and consequences, has raised the indignation and the protest of European workers and peoples, the protest of the trade union organisations from the Member states and from the European Confederation of Trade Unions (ETUC), which has just called for a new European Demonstration on 21 June, in Luxembourg, against that regression and interference instrument.

Therefore, the CGTP-IN – as the most representative Portuguese Trade Union Confederation, with project, with proposals, responsible action and a long history of determined and coherent struggle – is obliged to convey to you its protest regarding the reach and significance of your words.

The problems facing the weakest European Union economies will not be solved with policies and measures that cause economic recession, more unemployment and social regression, while simultaneously protecting and taking care of the interests of the strongest and more powerful and of the big economic and financial groups.

Regarding Portugal, it must be mentioned that our workers earn, on average, some of the lowest salaries and pensions among the Member states of the European Union Eurozone (the monthly minimum salary stands at 485,00 €; the minimum pension is below 300,00 €), they are among those working longer hours (according to the OECD, in 2009, the Portuguese worked, on average, 1719 hours, meaning that we only work less than Greece, Hungary, Poland, The Czech Republic and Italy) and retire later (on average, after 65 years of age). The problems facing Portugal and the Portuguese will only be solved with an alternative path that obtains financial resources, with growth increase, investment in the productive fabric, more quality jobs, better salaries and pensions, more social justice and protection.

In the current crisis context, at the moment concerning the deficit and the sovereign debt, the national governments and the European Institutions have basically chosen to rescue the system and those truly responsible for the crisis, widening the gap that is increasingly bringing apart the course of European construction and the spirit and letter of the Founder Treaty and, to that extent, of the European workers and peoples' real interests and expectations.

The European workers need another course for Europe, a more democratic Europe, with more justice, more inclusion, more solidarity, a Europe of cooperation among peoples and countries that are sovereign and equal in rights.

And this is a goal and ideal of progress, solidarity and social justice, for the workers of Portugal and of Europe as a whole, for which we will continue to fight, in all instances and at all levels.

With our regards,

Manuel Carvalho da Silva  
General Secretary