

The Trade Union Congress or National Trade Union Centre

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) or a National trade Union Centre (NTUC) is a federation or confederation of trade unions in a single country.

Local trade unions make up the membership of a local national trade union centre. In some instances as in Barbados, staff associations enjoy membership of the TUC.

Where there is a national centre, member unions retain their autonomy.

There are also regional and international Congresses and Federations.

In the case of regional and international bodies, membership is opened to national the National Trade Union Congress and /or National trade Union Centre.

The role and function of the National Centre are policy making and strategic in nature. The National Centre focuses on:

- Unification of the trade union movement, where member trade unions come together to draw up common policies
- Influencing the decision making of Government with respect to implementing policies that will benefit people at work and the civil society
- Campaigning on economic and social issues
- Representing working class people on public bodies
- Representing workers on international bodies, e.g. the International Labour Organisation
- Conducting research on employment -related issues
- Engages in developing extensive training and education programme for union representatives
- Playing a social and welfare role in helping unions develop new services for their members

- Playing a mitigating and conciliatory role in resolving issues of divide among member unions
- Building of relations with other trade union bodies worldwide.

As a policy making body, the National Centre holds an annual Congress of delegates and observers. The standard for this has been set by the International Labour Organization which holds its Annual Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. There its 185 member countries are entitled to have representatives to attend.

Some National Centres however opt to have biennial or triennial Conferences instead of an annual conference.

The conference is a forum for discussion on a particular theme (s). It is also a time for discussion on motions and resolutions and for the elections of officers to serve for the ensuing term of office. The officers who usually form the management team, are charged with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the Congress between Congresses.

National Centres are expected to maintain their independence from political parties, promote social dialouge, consultation and collaboration, identifying with preserving freedoms, solidarity, justice and human dignity through the promotion of human rights. They also promote professionalism among trade union leaders, promote unity and solidarity of trade union structures and members, reinforce the negotiating power of the trade unions at all levels, work to achieve the right balance between authenticity and conformity in trade union actions, work to building bridges and alliances with civil society, promote the trade union's role in the development of democratic values and social prosperity; and work to influence change at the national, regional and international levels.

Trade Union National Centres are recognized by the state in accordance with Article 3 of the Constitution o the International Labour Organization, which identifies with the most representative body of workers in a country.