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CONTACT: Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON WORKERS'
RIGHTS**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Thank you President Sweeney. It's an honor to welcome so many distinguished international leaders to Washington for this historic meeting. We may speak different languages, but our goal is the same – dignity and respect for workers and their families.

This era of globalization must be judged not just by growing profit margins and rising GDP, but by how we treat the workers who make that progress possible. In fact, we know that true progress and prosperity for our nations come only when our workers share in economic growth.

But in far too many instances across our planet today, workers rights and economic security are under attack.

In the United States we see this first hand.

I'm proud of my country's history as a land of opportunity – a place where, with hard work and a will to succeed, workers can provide a good home and a hopeful future for their families. In the words of President Kennedy, we saw that a rising tide lifted all boats.

That's because strong unions make strong economies. As union membership reached its peak in America, wages and productivity rose together. Workers shared in corporate gains, and our entire society benefited as a result.

But that picture has changed dramatically.

Over the last 30 years, union membership has declined in America and working families are paying the price. Today, for the first time, young men are earning less than their fathers. Forty-seven million Americans lack health insurance. Only 1 in 5 workers earns a guaranteed pension. The costs of daily needs like housing and gasoline are skyrocketing, but workers' paychecks aren't close to keeping up.

With a crisis like this, it's no surprise that 60 million workers across America want a stronger voice at work. They join with hundreds of millions of their fellow workers across the globe in demanding their fair share of the world's economic progress.

It's time to stop this global assault on labor rights. It's time to put the brakes on a global economy that creates a boom for business and a bust for labor. It's time to put an end to the harassment and violence that trade unionists face around the world.

With the leadership of President John Sweeney and other leaders here, workers are uniting as never before. But they can't do it all alone. They need legal systems that uphold workplace rights, instead of trampling them down. They need laws that permit workers to organize without fear or coercion, and receive a fair share of the wealth they create.

I am honored to stand united with you in our common cause – for justice, for democracy, and for a better life for working men and women everywhere.

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