

Media release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union  
Tuesday 10 December, 2013

## **New Zealand rail workers stand in solidarity with Korean counterparts**

New Zealand rail workers are rallying in support of their Korean counterparts, who are protesting against their government's unpopular new rail restructuring and privatisation programme.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson is travelling to Korea today to form part of an international observer monitoring panel of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), and a protest takes place today outside the Korean Embassy in Wellington.

The panel will monitor the Government's actions during strike action which got underway this week, following significant violation of rights in 2009, where the government and KORAIL used tactics such as criminal charges, imprisonments, suits for damages, dismissals and other disciplinary actions in retaliation against a similar strike, actions which were condemned by the International Labour Organisation.

Wayne Butson said that rail remains an essential part of most countries transport infrastructure, and privatisation of rail has proven over and over to be a mistake.

"We have been here before in New Zealand with the privatisation in the 1990s and the running down of the national rail network, only for it to need significant catch-up investment later on to undo the neglect of 18 years of private ownership."

"We are dismayed that the Korean government has not learnt from the experience of our country and others in the failures of privatisation. We are proud to stand alongside the Korean Railway Workers' Union this week to support their efforts to protect their important public asset."

The Korean rail workers this week commenced strike action following the government and Korea Railroad Corporation's (KORAIL's) flat out rejection of social dialogue, Wayne Butson said.

A mass rally will take place in Seoul on 11 December.

In New Zealand, a protest takes place at 12.30 today (Tuesday) outside the Korean Embassy Building, which is on the 11th Floor, ASB Bank Tower, 2 Hunter Street, Wellington.

Ends.

Wayne Butson is on his way to Korea today. For further comment on this release, contact Todd Valster, Organiser, Rail and Maritime Transport Union, on 027 445 4691.