

CONCLUSIONS FROM ITUC-AFRICA GENERAL COUNCIL, 2012

PROMOTING TRADE UNION UNITY

The General Council reaffirmed the commitment of ITUC-Africa to unity of the African trade union movement as a condition for

Ensuring that union can positively affect the fortunes of their members of Africans as a whole at national and regional level

- At regional level, the General Council reiterated the congress resolution for unification of ITUC-Africa and OATUU and called on affiliates to work for a resolution at the forthcoming OATUU Congress to strengthen the development towards unification.

- At national level, the General Council acknowledge the efforts of developing intersyndicales among affiliates in some countries and noted recent achievements in a number of French speaking countries, including Niger, Senegal, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. The General Council took note of a new programme to strengthen intersyndicales in French speaking countries in West Africa

PROMOTING YOUTH WORK

On issues regarding the promotion of youth work, the 9th session of ITUC-Africa's General Council reiterated the fact that the crisis of youth unemployment is a manifestation of the overall global crises and but also attributable to the structure of Africa's post-colonial economies, and that the problem must be located in proper context.

To move towards addressing issues relating to youth, the General Council called for:

- Trade unions to be involved in the design and implementation process of existing National programs and policies on youth in their respective countries and also work for the involvement of young persons in these processes.
- Embark on the development of youth policies at the national level which would ensure the establishment of youth desks and structures in our unions and help address some of the pertinent issues of youth in the trade union movement.
- Enforce the commitment of the youth to take up peer to peer organizing to recruit more young people into the union as part of the effort at trade union renewal.
- Maximize the use of technology and mass media while encouraging the creativity of young persons to make the unions more attractive to today's generation.

The General Council concluded that there is the urgent need to tackle the youth crises in Africa as the population of the continent is predominantly youth and called on trade unions in Africa to rise up to their responsibilities

ORGANIZING

ITUC-Africa reaffirmed that the interests of African workers are more important than any other considerations for African trade union movement. Currently, the movement faces the challenge to build a strong, united, democratic and independent trade union organisation which has the full confidence of workers thanks to its organising strength, its ability to recruit new members to increase its autonomy, its effectiveness in negotiations and its political assertiveness in defending and representing workers' aspirations. ITUC-Africa's

affiliates should therefore strengthen and expand the trade union base by recruiting workers in the formal economy as well as in the export processing zones and the informal economy and among young people and women. They need to guarantee freedom of association, social protection, a minimum wage and collective bargaining rights.

The General Council has approved the idea of holding in 2013, a regional workshop for the purpose of sharing good experiences and practices on organising. This workshop will bring together pilot organizations which will be selected on condition that they are capable of achieving concrete and measurable results. The General Council has recommended that the participants in this regional workshop are selected on the basis of clear criteria and strong commitment of their organizations to achieve results. This workshop should lead to the development of national strategies and concrete action plans which will effectively strengthen ITUC-Africa's affiliates.

The General Council of the ITUC-Africa has adopted the 2012–2013 Action Plan of the ORGANIZING project, which aims at putting workers' empowerment at the heart of all trade union efforts.

COMMUNICATION

The General Council took note of the report presented by the Communication team, which focused on a joint Radio Project with the Africa Labour Media Project (ALMP), Information Technology and Media work.

The Council approved ITUC-Africa's support for the Radio Project with the view of making it an ITUC-Africa project eventually. It indicated that this project has the capacity to focus on workers issues and to provide information from a labour perspective. ITUC-Africa's affiliates were therefore invited to commit themselves individually to this project which is already under way in 10 African countries.

As far as ICT is concerned, the General Council noted the importance of building the technological and organizational capabilities of the affiliates so that they are better equipped to communicate effectively, mobilize, negotiate, manage conflicts and build coalitions. ITUC-Africa is ready to support its affiliate through this process. However, the affiliates must clearly declare their interest in the pursuit of these goals.

The Council also noted that there was a lack of information and feedback from the affiliates and invited them to renew contacts with ITUC-Africa by sending timely information on their activities to the Secretariat and by reacting to our publications so that ITUC-Africa can be abreast with their realities on the ground.

HUMAN AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS (HTUR)

The General Council noted the renewed attacks on workers and trade union rights by big businesses, in most cases, with tacit support from government. Particularly, the General Council observed that the rights to organise, collectively bargain and to use strike as tool for enforcement of collective agreements are being systematically and systemically undermined. Administrative, legislative and judicial manipulations and sometimes, outright harassments have been used to erode these rights.

The General Council also noted that labour migration has been left solely to government agencies, which have led to more workers' exposure to the vagaries of migration. Migrant

workers are exploited by employers and suffer xenophobic attacks from fellow workers who act on the notion that foreign workers contribute to depress local wages.

Similarly, the insecurity of journalists and media workers, which has led to high and rising deaths, was also debated. The General Council noted that the political economy of the media and their strategic agenda setting role in society suggest that trade unions will need to devise more imaginative approaches in dealing with the media and securing protection for journalists and media workers.

From the foregoing, the General Council, amongst others, resolved that the ITUC-Africa should support affiliates to undertake

- Systematic engagement with other social partners at the national level with a view to review and achieve progressive national labour laws
- Pay more attention to collective bargaining processes, outcomes and implementation. It is hoped that an African-wide collective bargaining monitor for data collection and analysis will be developed.
- Commit to aggressive organising of migrant workers and undertake anti-xenophobic campaigns at national level.
- Work with Federation of African Journalists on the campaign to achieve safety and protection for journalists and media workers; achieve accountability and rein in impunity.

ITUC-AFRICA ENGAGEMENT WITH THE AFRICAN UNION

As part of the African trade union movement engagement with the African Union (AU) towards the promotion of the wellbeing of its peoples, the General Council observed that trade unions are not active and fully engaging the AU and have thereby abdicated the spaces for Non- Governmental Organisations. It was noted that the very limited knowledge and understanding of the workings, structures, rules, instruments, protocols and mandates of the AU by trade unions is partly responsible for the low level of engagement.

The General Council therefore decided to:

- Strongly advise affiliates to familiarise themselves with the various structures and agencies of the AU and its statutes, protocols and charters.
- Urged affiliates to participate in and take advantage of the spaces accorded Non-State Actors by the following institutions of the AU:
 1. Pan- African Parliament (PAP) - located in Johannesburg, South Africa. It has opportunities for mass-based organisations to access and participate in its processes
 2. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) - located in Banjul, the Gambia. It is a grievance handling mechanism on rights violations.
 3. African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR) - it is located in Arusha, Tanzania.
 4. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) - it is an advisory body of the AU constituted by election of mass-based organisations.
 5. The African Labour and Social Affairs Commission- A tripartite structure for labour relations management.

6. The General Council will engage the African Union with a view to genuinely make the African Labour and Social Affairs Commission function as an effective and real tripartite platform in terms of its procedures and practices. Efforts will be made to revert the Commission's meeting to its former format of annual session as against the current bi-annual, which denies the space and time for addressing urgent industrial relations matters.

Attention and action will be committed to building and improving the capacities and understanding of affiliates of the AU with a view to enhance engagement and participation.

INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AND WORKERS EMPOWERMENT

For the trade union movement to live up to its responsibility to protect and promote the interests of workers, unions must be strong and united. The General Council noted that trade union management practices are still characterized, in many cases, by the lack of genuine participation of members and in some cases even by the over-centralisation of power in the hands of a few or even one person. Such practices tend to undermine the organised strengths foreseen.

Evolution of the trade union movement in the requisite direction in the coming years will not result from the will of only one man, but from the interaction of a large number of actors. Internal democracy, effectiveness and competence will be paramount at all levels.

ITUC-AFRICA General Council called for:

- Improving communication between the regional secretariat and affiliates
- Building networks of solidarity and action among affiliates around a range of issues;
- Research on union structures and management in order to share experiences of positive results;
- Enhancing support to pre-congress activities and capacity building activities through the ISF;
- Promoting leadership training for union leaders and potential leaders in democratic union management;
- Building a pool of trainers to support affiliates in implementation of national plans of action;
- Increasing training opportunities towards political and economic change
- Implementing adequate training to create new motivations and behaviour
- Affiliates setting congress dates on clear expectations in order to avoid panic system and improvisations
- Improving communication and information sharing between national affiliates and their members
- Systematic reporting to ITUC-Africa on activities undertaken by affiliates;
- Renewing African trade union by making provision for new leaders to replace old retires leaders.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The General Council invited national organizations and ITUC Africa to:

- implement a regional campaign on the social protection floor;

- organize and recruit new members including men and women by using social protection and the services to members as an organizing tool;
- build trade union expertise in the field of social protection;
- organize sub-regional activities to identify joint trade union actions to be carried out to mobilize for the social protection floor;
- encourage research and documentation on social protection systems at national level;
- Organize and recruit women and youth by using social protection as an organizing tool;
- Conduct training on the creation of social and solidarity-based economy in order to provide services to the informal economy activists;

GENDER EQUALITY

- Continue doing the participatory gender audits;
- Encourage national organizations to implement the recommendations of gender audits in order to change the current situation and to ensure that the trade union movement becomes more inclusive;
- Make budgetary provisions for gender activities and to empower women;
- Provide gender disaggregated statistics on the composition of the various structures of national organizations including the General Council;
- Encourage the participation of women in regional and international bodies, ILC, etc.;
- Establish a Gender network to ensure the flow of information;
- Put in place a regional monitoring system to identify the gender role models;
- Strengthen the women's committees and structures and empower them;
- Organize awareness-raising campaigns on the various conventions protecting women and young people.

STRENGTHENING INTERVENTION IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY

The General Council reaffirmed priorities for ITUC-Africa's work towards "Strengthening the affiliates' interventions in the field of economic and social policy". These relate to improving affiliates' contribution to the designing and implementation of development policies on the one hand and vigorous interventions by the regional organization at regional and global levels towards changing globalization on the other hand.

The General council underlined strengthening trade union research capacity in Africa as well as developing a new paradigm of sustainable development for Africa.

The General Council requested the Secretariat to ensure that the project on designing a new paradigm of sustainable development for Africa is finalized and that the affiliates are effectively involved in it. The Council proposed that this project should lead to a reference document of the African trade union movement that guides affiliates' interventions in economic and social policies at national and regional levels.

The General Council also requested the Secretariat to continue the efforts to promote trade union research by continuously undertaking actions to build the capacity of the affiliates and to develop policies and actions to boost research. In this respect, the Council approved ITUC-

Africa's project to establish a Research Institute and mandated the Secretariat to undertake initiatives to ensuring that the Research becomes operational by January 2014.

HIV & AIDS, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

1. In the area of HIV and AIDS the General Council noted with concern the low number of affiliates who have secured seats in the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCMs) of the Global Fund for HIV, TB and Malaria. Out of the 88 affiliates in 48 countries only 11 have secured CCM seats by the end of 2012. ITUC Africa is to develop a model application letter and encourage affiliates to make use of it in applying for CCM membership.
2. The General Council also received with concern the information about the failure by African Union member states to comply with the Abuja Declaration of 2001 that obliges member states to allocate 15% of national budgets to the health sector. While on one hand, none of the member states has managed to comply with this declaration, on the other hand, national affiliates have not made serious efforts to monitor performance at the country level. ITUC Africa should assist affiliates in monitoring compliancy with the Abuja Declaration on Health and engage appropriate AU organs on this matter.
3. In the area of Occupational Safety and Health, the General Council was informed of the persistent low level in ratifying relevant ILO OSH Convention specifically [Conventions 155, Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981](#) ; [Convention 161, Health Services Convention, 1985](#) ; and [Convention 187, Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006](#). Only a handful of countries have ratified these conventions i.e. Convention 155 (9 countries), Convention 161 (5 countries) and Convention 187 (2 countries). The General Council decided that ITUC Africa should coordinate a regional campaign aimed at increasing the number of ratifications targeting Conventions 155, 161 and 187.
4. On the issue of Environment the General Council was informed of the low level of participation of trade unions in climate change programs at the national level particularly those implemented under the National Adaptation Plans (NAPAs). NAPA is a special facility established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to assist developing countries to adapt to changes in climate. The General Council was also updated on the lack of trade union policies on climate change whereby it was noted that only one national affiliate (COSATU) had developed such a policy by the end of 2012. It was decided that ITUC Africa should assist affiliates in the development of Climate Change policies and in engaging relevant national institutions responsible for implementation of NAPAs.
5. The issue of land grabbing in Africa was also hotly debated. Members of the General Council expressed concern at the alarming rate at which large tracts of land are taken by not only external players (outside Africa) but internal (inside Africa) players as well for various reasons including food security for countries outside Africa, biofuel production, acquisition of natural resources and water sources, etc. The General Council was more concerned on the implications of land grabs for workers and their families. It was noted that the land grabbing has gone hand in hand with job losses, poorer working conditions, displacements without compensation, deepening marginalisation of women, extraction of mineral resources without appropriate taxation and other abuses of human and labour rights. The General Council decided that ITUC Africa should coordinate data collection reflecting identity of all

land grabbers regardless of countries of origin, the country owning the land and the size of land in question.

6. On its part, ITUC Africa has taken some actions aiming at facilitating implementation of some of the General Council decisions. As of January 2013, a list of land grabs in various countries has been established, a matrix for assessing compliancy with Abuja Declaration is in place and a copy of a climate change policy is photocopied for circulation among affiliates. In addition, ITUC Africa in collaboration with FES commissioned a study to assess participation of trade unions in national climate change programs; this study is carried out by the Africa Labour Research Network and the first draft report is expected in mid – February 2013.