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## ITUC-Africa's message in commemoration of International Youth Day 2014: Decent Wages for Young Workers

Yet again, August 12<sup>th</sup> is here and it is time to commemorate International Youth Day 2014 – a day marked by the United Nations to raise awareness on issues affecting young people and to celebrate and recognize young people around the world. The theme for this year's celebration as adopted by the United Nations is '*Youth and Mental Health*'.

According to the United Nations, Youth with mental health conditions often experience stigma and discrimination, which in turn lead to exclusion and/or discourage people from seeking help for fear of being negatively 'labeled'. Efforts are therefore needed to overcome this stigma to ensure that young people with mental health conditions can lead full and healthy lives free of isolation and unnecessary shame, and that they can openly seek the services and support they need.

On the labour front, this year's International Youth Day is marked by the slogan '*Decent Wages for Young Workers*', the choice for this theme arose from the fact that all around the world, young workers fall victim to low wages. The changing employment patterns which include: employers becoming choosier in recruitment, preferring more experienced workers to younger and less skilled workers; increases in unpaid internships and most commonly casualization of formal jobs have contributed immensely to the phenomenon of many young people settling for jobs that pay less than the required National Minimum Wages in most countries.

In Africa, about 60% of young people aged between 18 – 35 years, find themselves outside employment. The small fractions of employed youth most often earn wages that do not correspond to the high cost of living in the respective countries. As a result, most young people are turning to the informal sector as an avenue of making a living. Unfortunately, this form of employment is not sustainable mostly due to the unstructured nature of this sector.

As we commemorate this year's International Youth Day, the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) calls on African governments, employers and all stakeholders to put into full implementation the decent work agenda. We emphasize that job creation should take into full account decent wages that will benefit young workers and ensure a sustainable future for them.

ITUC-Africa believes that the youth bulge in Africa can be a source of growth and development if investment is placed in education, apprenticeships and human capital development.

We take this opportunity to congratulate the relentless young working men and women who continue to struggle to make ends meet under very difficult conditions. We urge all young men and women to stay steadfast as we work towards the realization of a new economic paradigm focusing on inclusive growth for all.

Happy International Youth Day celebration!

**Kwasi Adu-Amankwah**

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