



**Mody GUIRO**

President

Président

**Kwasi ADU-AMANKWAH**

General Secretary

Secrétaire Général

Route Internationale d'Atakpamé

Centre FOPADESC Agoè – Nyivé

B.P. : 4401 – Tel. : 00228 225 07 10

Fax : 00228 225 61 13

LOME - TOGO

Email : [info@ituc-africa.org](mailto:info@ituc-africa.org)

Web : [www.ituc-africa.org](http://www.ituc-africa.org)

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## ITUC-Africa statement on the commemoration of 2021 International Human Rights Day

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa [www.ituc-africa.org](http://www.ituc-africa.org)) joins all human rights advocates around the world in commemorating this year International Human Rights Day under the theme “**EQUALITY - Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights**”.

The situation of human rights in the world and more particularly in Africa today, despite the initiatives aimed at promoting institutional mechanisms and instruments for progress, projects many indications of serious setbacks, growing impunity and generalized violations.

In addition, the rise of automation through scientific and technological advances in a context characterized by weak regulation and erosion of rights is raising serious concerns among African workers and the world of work.

The COVID-19 global health crisis and its consequent economic and social crisis has made urgent and more important the need to focus on the protection and enjoyment of human rights. Millions of workers are losing jobs and income, causing biting hardship to many households and communities. Women, migrants and those operating in the informal economy are the worst hit by the socio-economic assaults of the pandemic.

The covid-19 crisis is bringing the inequalities in society into sharper focus. While the short-run implication of covid-19 for income distribution is uncertain and varies across countries, the longer-term risks to equality and social mobility are less ambiguous. These risks are significant due to the pre-existing inequalities in most countries and is likely to amplify inequality of opportunities in affected countries. Within countries, employment and income losses were felt most acutely by vulnerable workers, women, youth and the less educated.

Adding to that, inequalities in access to the Covid-19 vaccine has been at the center of debates in recent months. 70% of the vaccine's doses produced in 2021 have been pre-empted by high-income countries. This has caused severe supply problems for low- and moderate-income countries, leading to large differences in immunization coverage. On average, in high-income countries, out of 100 inhabitants, 61 have received at least one dose of the vaccine against Covid-19. In the 29 lowest-income countries, only 3 in 100

people received an injection. Across the African continent, 10 in 100 people have received at least one dose, and only 4 in 100 are fully immunized.

According to the UN, vaccine inequity will have a lasting impact on socio-economic recovery in low and lower-middle income countries and set back progress on the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

More than ever, human rights observance including economic and social rights, civil and political rights, are needed in responding to this health crisis. Governments and stakeholders need to put together their efforts to ensure that workers and citizens, especially the vulnerable peoples are benefiting better working and living conditions, civil liberties, rule of law, effective governance and accountability.

On the occasion of this year's Human Rights Day commemoration, African workers are calling our leaders to adopt concerted focus on inclusiveness policy measures that will help to build our resilience and advancing Human rights.

On our part, African workers will continue to thrive hard to hold unto the fundamental values of workers and people's rights.

In solidarity,



**Kwasi Adu-Amankwah**  
**General Secretary**