



STATEMENT BY ITUC-AFRICA ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2025 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

Forests, Food, and Climate Justice: Advancing a Just Transition and Sustainable Livelihoods Ahead of COP30

On this International Day of Forests, the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) reaffirms its unwavering commitment to protecting Africa's forests, securing food sovereignty, ensuring fairness in carbon financing, and demanding a Just Transition for workers and communities. This year's theme, "**Forests and Food**," underlines the critical link between healthy forests, food security, and the livelihoods of millions of Africans. However, deforestation, illegal logging, and the lack of access to clean and affordable cooking energy threaten both our forests and our food systems.

Forests and Food: Protecting Livelihoods and the Environment

Forests sustain life, providing food, medicine, and economic security for millions of African workers and indigenous communities. Yet, rampant deforestation—driven by corporate greed, corruption, and unsustainable agricultural expansion—endangers these ecosystems.

Currently, Africa is losing forests at an alarming rate of 3.9 million hectares per year, contributing to soil degradation and threatening agricultural productivity. As forests disappear, food insecurity worsens, placing millions of lives at risk. Moreover, these crises are fueling violent conflicts over dwindling natural resources, threatening the future of Africa. Trade unions stand firm in their demand for policies that protect both forests and food security by:

1. *Ending illegal logging and land grabs that displace farming and indigenous communities.*
2. *Ensuring fair trade and sustainable agroforestry to provide stable incomes for workers.*
3. *Promoting community-led forest management to safeguard biodiversity and food sources.*

Just Energy Transition: Cleaner Cooking to Save Forests and Lives

Traditional cooking methods reliant on firewood and charcoal contribute to **over 90% of household energy use in some African countries**, leading to severe deforestation and indoor air pollution that causes **3.2 million premature deaths globally each year**. A transition to cleaner

cooking energy—such as electricity, biogas, and improved cookstoves—can significantly reduce pressure on Africa’s forests and save millions of African mothers from the scourge of respiratory diseases. However, the high costs of these alternatives remain a barrier for the majority of African households. ITUC-Africa demands:

- *Increased public investment in affordable clean cooking solutions to reduce dependency on wood fuels.*
- *Subsidies and financial support for workers and vulnerable communities to access cleaner energy technologies.*
- *Stronger policies that integrate just transition principles to ensure energy shifts do not burden low-income households.*

Fair and Equitable Carbon Financing for Workers and Communities

As global carbon markets expand, African workers and communities must not be sidelined. African forests absorb **about 600 million tonnes of CO₂ annually**, yet carbon offset schemes disproportionately benefit foreign corporations while local communities continue to suffocate in abject poverty. ITUC-Africa demands:

- *A fair share of carbon credit revenues to be allocated to local forest workers, indigenous groups, and affected communities.*
- *Stronger worker protections in forestry and wood-based industries, ensuring fair wages, occupational safety, and union rights.*
- *Inclusion of trade unions in carbon market governance to guarantee that climate finance agreements uphold labour rights.*

A Just Transition for Forest-Dependent Workers and Communities Now

In line with the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition and advancing the COP30 Just Transition Work Program, ITUC-Africa calls for:

- *Sustainable and green and decent jobs in reforestation, sustainable agroforestry, and eco-tourism, ensuring job security and fair wages.*
- *Worker-centred sustainable forestry policies that balance economic development, environmental conservation, and labour rights.*
- *Social dialogue frameworks where trade unions, policymakers, and affected workers collaboratively design transition strategies.*

Call to Action: Unions Must Mobilise for Climate and Energy Justice at COP30

Ahead of COP30, ITUC-Africa urges:

- *Trade unions champion a Just Transition that protects both workers and forests, ensuring fair wages and job security in carbon-financed projects.*
- *African governments to prioritise energy justice, making clean cooking energy accessible and affordable for all.*
- *COP30 negotiators commit to fair carbon financing and labour rights, ensuring climate policies work for people, not just profits.*

Forests Must Sustain Both the Planet and the People

Africa's forests are not commodities for exploitation by corrupt investors and foreign corporations. As we approach COP30, ITUC-Africa stands firm in its call for **climate justice, an end to illicit forest destruction, fair carbon financing, energy justice, and a Just Transition that leaves no worker behind.**



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