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ITUC-Africa May Day Message- May 1st 2015

ITUC-Africa congratulates workingwomen and men in Africa and the world over on the occasion of International Labour Day, May 1, 2015. We salute working people for their work and contribution to wealth creation and nation building as well as for their sacrifices and continuing struggle for social justice.

While celebrating Labour Day we recall the many challenges facing Africa's working people, their families, households and communities. These include the pervasive scourge of unemployment and underemployment, the large absence of social protection for the majority, the decline in public services especially in regard to health and education, prevailing energy crisis across the continent, all of which combine with other factors to worsen poverty and inequality. There is also the insecurity in significant parts of Africa arising out of terrorism and sectarian violence. In some parts these are accompanied with state interference with the working people's rights to organise and to freely and democratically pursue their interests. The continuing suppression of trade union rights to organize and to assemble in Swaziland and the continuing banning of the Trades Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) represents the worst example of this in Africa.

The difficult conditions facing the majority of our people also leads to the frustration and despair of significant numbers of young people who opt for migration to other parts of Africa and the rest of the world as the means to survive and fulfil their hopes for a better life. The growing incidence of young Africans involved in fatal accidents in their precarious efforts to cross the Mediterranean into Europe is ample evidence of the desperation facing many.

On the other hand, the recent outbreak of xenophobia in South Africa against other Africans is again, in some respects, evidence of the misdirected anger and frustration of some deprived and excluded Africans against their dire conditions.

As we celebrate Labour Day, ITUC-Africa calls on African trade unions to rededicate themselves to the struggle for a better life for all Africa's working people. Our trade unions must re-commit to our goal of organising workers in order to become strong and capable to pursue our concerns for decent work, for employment, rights at work,

social dialogue and social protection for all. Our unions must intensify work of organising workers in both the formal and informal sectors, including domestic workers as well as migrant workers.

In focusing on organising our unions must also aspire and make the effort to achieve the unity of workers. This is essential for ensuring that unions can truly press for the appropriate policies at national, regional and global levels to assure the well being of the people.

Trade union organization and unity is needed to ensure that African governments act with urgency at all levels to address the multiform challenges facing our people. At national level, our governments must be pushed to implement policies that promote industrialization and regional integration as the means to address the major challenges of unemployment and underemployment that face especially our youth in Africa. We must act to get African governments to take concrete steps in pursuing the African Mining Vision that promotes adding value to our precious and industrial minerals and other natural resources that abound in Africa before sending them out onto the world market.

ITUC-Africa calls on all African governments to work with urgency in implementing the Mbeki Panel Report on Illicit Financial Flows and to take the necessary steps to prevent the loss of tens of billions of US dollars to Africa annually through various practices of tax avoidance and dodging by multinationals and other economic and financial operators. This is a sure way to secure the much-needed funds to support development and the provision of social protection for all in Africa.

We also call on the AU and African governments to pay the needed attention to developing an effective continental security architecture to secure peace and stability. We again demand more transparent and accountable governance and urge African governments to pursue policies and practices that protect human and trade union rights as well as promote and guarantee participatory democracy and empower the people for true effort at nation building.

On the occasion of International Labour Day, ITUC-Africa calls on African workers to fully recommit to build strong trade unions for a better Africa and more just world.

Viva Africa's working people!

Viva workers of the world!

Happy Labour Day celebrations!

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary