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PRESS STATEMENT:

Again a painful and unacceptable Brutal Murder of Media Director in Somalia: let the wheel of justice roll

The Africa Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union confederation (ITUC-Africa) condemns in the strongest terms the brutal murder of Abukar Hassan Mahamoud, Director of Somaliweyn Radio Station. Information from the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) stated that Mahamoud, who was also known as Kadaf, was shot several times by two gun men at his home in Hawa-Tako neighbourhood of Wadajir district in Mogadishu at around 18:00 hours local time on Tuesday, 28 February 2012.

According to NUSOJ, family members and colleagues believe that Abukar Hassan was murdered because of his efforts to re-start Somaliweyn broadcasts after Al-Shabab militias raided the station offices located in Shibis district in the north of Mogadishu. This attack in May 2010 by the Islamic militants led to the closure of the media outfit as most of the Somaliweyn Media Centre (SMC) equipment and gadgets were looted and destroyed.

Clearly the practice and spread of terror and deaths are tactics intended to scare journalists into self censorship, abdication of duties or forced exile. The death of journalists undermines the right of people to be kept informed and the absence of information greatly weakens the prospects of citizens' mobilisation for change. Somalia's reconciliation and reconstruction will continue to be faint and precarious in the absence of genuine guarantees for securing respect for rights to freedom of expression and life.

It is in this light, though sad that the murder of Abukar Hassan represent another reverberating wake- up call to the International community, especially the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Somali Transitional Government to redouble their

efforts in providing and improving the safety and protection of journalists in Somalia. Less than a month ago, a dutiful and industrious journalist, Hassan Osman Abdi was hacked to death by the bullets of mindless assailants who are still on the prowl.

This culture of impunity must be arrested decisively. And to achieve this will mean that genuine and thorough investigation and prosecution of acts of rights infractions must be effectively stepped up and urgently too. ITUC-Africa therefore strongly supports the demand by NUSOJ for an independent inquiry into the recent murders of journalists in Somalia.

Finally, ITUC-Africa wishes to continue to salute the courage and the high sense of duty of journalists and workers in Somalia who have continued to brave the odds to contribute efforts to the restoration of peace and reconstruction in Somalia. We also want to salute the efforts of NUSOJ and the Federation of Somalia Trade Unions (FESTU) for their dogged and indefatigable struggle for a progressive society just as we pledge our continued support and solidarity to strengthen their efforts.

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