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ITUC-AFRICA STATEMENT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Grinding poverty, insecurity and impunity: dangerous threats to Democracy and Human Rights

As the peoples of the world commemorate this year's international Human Rights Day, ITUC-Africa notes that the human rights situations in the world have continued to dip under a global economy that continues to remain under extreme austerity regimes. The situations in Africa are worse and dire. More Africans are falling into the poverty dictum. This is against the background of the so-called "Africa rising" narrative that celebrates in narrow sense, the consistent economic growth recorded within the last five years without the corresponding spill-over effects on job creation, income expansion and shared prosperity.

Sadly, unemployment continues to remain alarmingly high and ominous, especially amongst the youth and others within the able-bodied bracket. This situation contributes to worsen livelihood conditions given that availability, affordability and accessibility to basic essentials such as food, shelter, portable water, health and income continue to be unpredictable. This much has been confirmed by reports that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has failed to half poverty by 2015.

Thus, restiveness, despondency and apathy are on the rise as constituents and constituencies continue to wonder why their governments are favouring the market by adopting pro-market policies to the detriments of their welfare and wellbeing. For them, democracy is not serving them.

ITUC-Africa therefore wishes to reiterate its call for the urgent redesign of the global economy governance, particularly with the deepening of regulation of the global financial market, as well as the freeing of the state to serve and protect people and their communities.

We call on African governments to reverse the various disguised austerity measures that are hurting our people, their families and communities. We wish to restate our previous

calls to our governments to as a matter of urgency deploy effective strategies for the implementation of the social protection floors to combat poverty and inequalities.

Media estimates for 2014 suggest that over 15, 000 and 500, 000 persons have been killed and displaced respectively from different sectarian conflicts. Attacks from extremist gangs have also continued to pose real dangers to safety and security of lives, properties and territories. Particularly, the conscienceless and criminal activities of Boko Haram and Al-Shabbab in Nigeria, Kenya and Somalia represent serious concerns. As at the last count, over 3,500 workers- teachers, miners, drivers, nurses, doctors, others have been mauled down by the senseless and conscienceless gangs. Defenceless Children and women have also been targets. Gradually, fear and narrow suspicion- some of the products of terror are being instilled in the populace.

We therefore call on our governments and the African Union to continue to refine strategies to effectively rein in civil and sectarian violence, as well as crush terror attacks. In particular, we urge the Nigerian government not to relent on its efforts to end the Boko Haram insurgency, as well as succeed in bringing back the Chibok girls. Neighbouring states to Nigeria and Kenya should mobilize active military and morale support to them in their quest to stamp out terror attacks and tendencies.

Furthermore, we wish to make a renewed call to our governments to work to end impunity. Injustices anywhere continue to be real threat to peace everywhere. Thus the absence of accountability makes peace and stability difficult. Government must make the practice and application of the rule of law to work for all. Women abused and harassed at home, workplaces and community, as well as children facing social and economic deprivations must have the belief and confidence that the law will protect them and deliver justice to them. Workers, their trade unions, journalists and other media workers, as well as migrants, displaced persons and members of their families and the general citizenry must feel and see the interventions of the rule of law in the defence, protection and promotion of their economic, social, political, cultural, religious, environmental and communal rights.

West African countries and governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone continue to battle the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Health and aid workers have continued to play heroic roles even as many have succumbed to the pandemic. We salute their brave and uncommon sacrifices, sense of service and commitment to the spirit of humanity. Though reports indicate that the rate of infection of the virus is slowing down, we nevertheless urge the world to show more urgency to this situation so that together we can defeat this pandemic. Let us continue to mobilize and make available health personnel, materials, medicines and humane reactions to the infected countries and people because by and large, we are all affected.

ITUC-Africa wishes to restate our commitment to participatory democracy. We urge our governments to continue to strive to expand and deepen spaces for mass participation. The temptations to amend national constitutions in the middle of the game to suit personal ambitions must be resisted. The people of Burkina Faso have effectively

demonstrated citizens' vigilance to secure and protect their constitution and democracy. We salute their efforts and are confident that it will inspire our people elsewhere to similar actions.

We therefore call on the government of Swaziland to de-criminalise the rights to association so that political parties, trade unions, students associations and other organisations can freely conduct their activities and contribute to the consolidation of Swaziland's democracy.

Finally, ITUC-Africa wishes to call on her members, their families, communities and peoples to commit to and remain committed to the struggles to defend, protect and promote their rights. Mass organisation and mobilisation must continue to be our guide, whilst eternal vigilance must remain our watchword.

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