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ITUC-Africa Statement on the 2025 World Day for Decent Work
“Decent Work, Democracy, and Justice: Reclaiming Africa’s Future”
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Across Africa today, millions of working people rise before dawn — not to pursue a dream, but to survive another day in a system that has betrayed their labour. As we commemorate this year’s World Day for Decent Work, the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) sounds a clarion call: Africa’s workers deserve dignity, democracy, and justice — not exploitation disguised as reform.

For far too long, governments and employers across our continent have allowed the erosion of workers’ rights in the name of “competitiveness,” “austerity,” and “investment promotion.” What we witness instead is a continent where the promise of work has been reduced to a cycle of precarity, dispossession, and despair. The deliberate dismantling of labour protections, coupled with the suppression of unions, represents one of the gravest betrayals of Africa’s working people since independence.

ITUC-Africa observes with alarm the rising number of infractions against workers’ rights — including the criminalisation of trade union activity, mass dismissals of organisers, illegal outsourcing, wage theft, and denial of the right to collective bargaining.

Governments and employers have looked away, or worse, become complicit. They have allowed sweatshop conditions in export zones, tolerated unpaid labour in public works, and ignored occupational deaths and injuries that could have been prevented. This moral failure has unfolded under their watch, and we hold them accountable.

We reprimand those who have turned workplaces into spaces of fear instead of dignity. We condemn employers who exploit workers without remorse, and governments who deploy police to break strikes instead of enforcing labour laws.

We denounce those who continue to invoke “economic reform” as justification for poverty wages, mass retrenchments, and suppression of unions. We remind them all: labour rights are human rights, and their violation is a violation of democracy itself.

Africa’s workers are not powerless — they are the backbone of every economy. From the copper mines of Zambia to the construction sites of Senegal, from garment factories in Madagascar to public hospitals in Kenya, working people continue to organise, to resist, and to insist that democracy must not end at the workplace gate. Their resilience is the truest form of patriotism — the daily assertion that justice, not charity, is what Africa needs.

Our continent stands today at a crossroads.

We face a crushing debt burden that drains national budgets away from jobs, wages, and public services, toward illegitimate creditors and external consultants. We face an economic model that privileges extractive industries and foreign investors over local value addition, decent jobs, and shared prosperity.

We face governance systems hollowed out by corruption and state capture, where political elites use public office as private enterprise, while the youth — the majority of our population — languish in unemployment and despair.

And we face a climate emergency that is deepening inequality, displacing communities, and pushing more workers into unsafe and informal livelihoods.

These are not natural disasters. They are political choices — choices that reflect misplaced loyalties and failed leadership.

But Africa can choose differently. It can choose a path built on public pathways, not privatisation; on production and solidarity, not speculation and extraction; on democracy and social dialogue, not repression and exclusion.

ITUC-Africa calls for a new social contract that restores the primacy of people over profit and of work over wealth accumulation.

We demand that African governments:

1. End the persecution of trade unions and restore the right to organise and bargain collectively.
2. Reverse austerity and anti-worker policies that have widened inequality and eroded social protection.
3. Halt the reckless privatisation of essential services — water, energy, transport, health, and education — that has condemned millions to poverty while enriching a few.
4. Redirect public spending toward job creation, industrialisation, and the care economy.
5. Tax wealth fairly and curb illicit financial flows that rob Africa of over \$88 billion every year — money that should build schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, not offshore accounts.

We equally demand that employers and multinational corporations respect African labour laws, pay living wages, and end union-busting practices. The global energy transition, digital transformation, and industrial growth cannot be built on the backs of exploited African workers. To every corporate actor hiding behind complex supply chains, ITUC-Africa reminds you: your hands are never clean when your profits are stained with workers' suffering.

This World Day for Decent Work is not a ceremonial date. It is a day of truth-telling and of renewed resistance. Africa's working class will not remain spectators to their own marginalisation. We will mobilise, organise, and internationalise our struggles — for decent work, for peace, and for democracy.

We affirm that there can be no peace without justice, no democracy without workers' rights, and no development without decent work.

To those who have forgotten, we remind them: Africa's future will not be built by the markets — it will be built by its workers.

Workers of Africa will not beg for dignity. We will organise for it.

In Solidarity,



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General Secretary

African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa)

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