



Press statement

Niger coup and ECOWAS threat of military intervention: African workers call for restraint

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) (www.ituc-africa.org) condemned earlier the unconstitutional and undemocratic change of power in Niger which occurred on the 26 of July when the Presidential Guard of that country declared martial law after deposing the president. We reiterate our commitment to constitutionality and democracy.

However, we are worried by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ultimatum and threat to intervene militarily to restore the deposed president to power. We wish to state categorically and unambiguously that African workers reject a military option in solving this political impasse in Niger. We call on ECOWAS, rather than mobilizing for military deployment, to engineer and engage in a robust and swift diplomatic and political move to resolve the crisis.

We have been observing the security situation in the Sahel region in the past years, and our observations suggest that the security situation remains dire, fluid and problematic. A cocktail of extremists, terrorists and insurgents has continued to pose real threats to lives and livelihoods. Thousands of people and workers have been killed, children kidnapped, schools destroyed, and farmers have been forced to quit their farms. These attacks partly account for why the countries in the Sahel region account for high rates of poverty, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), out-of-school children and violent civilian deaths.

In the light of the foregoing, ITUC-Africa considers an ECOWAS' recourse to naked force in resolving the current political impasse in Niger as most undesirable and

unacceptable. ITUC-Africa strongly rejects this option. We are concerned that a military option will most likely destabilise and worsen the already precarious situation in Niger with real contagion effects for the entire West Africa sub-region and the African continent as a whole. Already, we are witnessing the interplay of external geopolitical interests and the issuance of counter-threats from some members of ECOWAS against the military invasion of Niger. These threats and counter-threats are heating up the sub-region's political spaces and pose real threats to peace, stability and cohesion.

ECOWAS must reverse course and tactically embrace diplomatic and political dialogue to resolve this impasse. Until now, no single bullet has been shot, and no death has been recorded in Niger because of the coup. This situation should not be allowed to degenerate into violent military hostilities. We are convinced that peaceful options exist and must be genuinely pursued. We say NO to military intervention and YES to inclusive and genuine dialogue.

Finally, we wish to reiterate the call in our earlier statement on the Niger political impasse that ECOWAS and the African Union should take measured steps to convene a solemn assembly to discuss the security and related issues threatening the socio-economic and political stability of the Sahel region and the African continent.

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