



## **Press statement in support of Swaziland's eligibility status for AGOA**

The Amalgamated Trade Union of Swaziland (ATUSWA) representing 9 000 workers in the textile and apparel industry, the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) representing 40 000 workers and 16 affiliated unions, and the IndustriALL Global Union representing 50 million workers in 140 countries met in Manzini, Swaziland on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 to discuss the status of the United States Trade Act – the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) – eligibility for Swaziland.

With ATUSWA and TUCOSWA having been registered, and some sections of the Industrial Relations Act, the Suppression of Terrorism Act, and the Public Order Act amended, there is still a lot to be done to improve rights issues. Some progress has been made towards addressing the concerns on workers' rights including freedoms of assembly, expression, and association, that led to its suspension in January 2015.

We call upon the Government of Swaziland to adhere to international labour standards, respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Social dialogue should include engagement and active participation involving all social partners and key stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of AGOA utilization strategies in permanent and structured national and regional multi-stakeholder platforms. We also call upon AGOA beneficiaries to be small scale indigenous Swazi companies rather than multi-national companies.

The decision to call for readmission has not been taken lightly, but after extensive consultations and assessment by TUCOSWA and participation in the ILO process to review whether Swaziland had met the standards for internationally recognised workers' rights including the rights to organise. Concern was also raised over the use of security forces stifling of peaceful demonstrations and arbitrary arrests.

As trade unions, we support Swaziland's readmission to AGOA eligibility status because this will not only save jobs but create thousands more in the textile and apparel industry, and across the value chain. In our fight for decent work, these jobs are an important lifeline for young women who constitute over 90% of the workers in this industry. By calling for the reinstatement, we are helping the Government of Swaziland to protect and create jobs and it is imperative that the government adopt investor friendly and sustainable industrial policies which contribute to job creation. The

manufacturing sector is strategically placed to play a role in job creation and government policies must encourage foreign direct investment.

The Swazi position for readmission was emphasized in a trade union meeting in the AGOA forum in Lome, Togo from the 08<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, that discussed AGOA issues.

Amandla!

For further information, you can contact:

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