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ITUC- AFRICA PRESS STATEMENT

Democracy, peace and fundamental freedom must be preserved in Burkina Faso

ITUC-Africa joins the people of Burkina Faso in declaring that the attempt to amend the constitution and throw out term limits for elective offices is an unwelcome and retrogressive step. The people of Burkina Faso have resoundingly rejected this proposal and we stand strongly behind their resolve to protect and defend their Constitution.

We have followed closely the reports about popular protests in major cities in Burkina Faso against the proposed constitutional amendment to scrap term limits which is seen as a direct attempt to extend the 27-year rule of President Blaise Campaore. There is information that the situation is fast turning dangerous and uncertain as the protests escalate and the police use extreme force to attack, intimidate and disperse protesters, which include women, youth, students, workers and their union leaders, activists and members of the political opposition.

We affirm that mass protest is a legitimate tool for the expression of disapproval in a democracy. It is a human right that must be respected, preserved and guaranteed. We strongly condemn the high-handedness of the police against protesters and ask that such actions be stopped forthwith.

ITUC-Africa calls on President Blaise Campaore to listen to and act on the voices of the people by discontinuing forthwith this attempt to tinker with Article 37 of the Constitution. It is incumbent on President Campaore to abide by the African Union Charter that stipulates that leaders should not change the law to try to stay in power.

This Constitution tinkering project poses serious threats to the peace and stability of Burkina Faso and the President must defuse the tension by renouncing this proposed change which is one of the main reasons for the unrest. We urge President Campaore to rather concentrate on serving out his last term effectively.

We equally call on the Parliament of Burkina Faso to desist from the proposed term limit abrogation and to concentrate on the core mandate of legislating on policies that will improve the welfare and well-being of the people, which seriously need to be addressed as the already harsh living conditions continue to deteriorate.

ITUC-Africa affirms that tampering with the constitution and manipulating political processes undermine the effort to consolidate democracy and good governance in Africa. Terms limits for political office holders can make important contribution to overcoming the culture of self-perpetuation in office and the strong man syndrome that afflicts the African political psyche. This reckless and needless political excursion to amend a national constitution to satisfy a long serving ruler must stop forthwith in deference to the will of the people and their desire for policies and acts of governance that will deliver to them real and enduring democratic dividends.

We salute the vigilance and unity of the people and their valiant effort to preserve their constitution and democracy.

Forward to democracy, peace and progress for Burkina Faso and Africa!

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