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## ITUC-AFRICA STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2021 AFRICAN LIBERATION DAY May 25

### Pushing back against racism and opening shrinking spaces for the advancement of rights in the time of COVID-19

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa [www.ituc-africa.org](http://www.ituc-africa.org)) joins all Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora, to commemorate this year's Africa Liberation Day. The Day marks the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the 25th of May 1963 and aims to promote unity and solidarity among African people and states.

There is renewed sense of urgency for Africa's renaissance and the advancement of Pan-Africanism that would contribute to the transformation of the continent and the betterment of the lives of Africans. This contributes to the growing significance and symbolism of this commemoration after over six decades of independence from colonial rule.

ITUC-Africa salutes Africa's founding heroes and heroines who contributed selflessly to ensure our nationhood, independence and freedom. We shall continue to strive to uphold and advance the ideals for which they fought.

In furtherance of the struggle, we commemorate this year's Africa Liberation Day with a focus on racism and racist attacks against Africans and Blacks everywhere. We hold it as true that #BlackLivesMatter still. We have seen and continue to see how racism impacts gender, demographics, creed, communities and nations.

For simply being black, many of our mothers, sisters and wives have been stereotyped into limited growth and advancement. Young black persons, especially in the United States of America, are still being killed by state agents and security forces simply because of their colour. For practising a faith not seen as a national or community religion, many persons are discriminated against, sometimes extremely and violently.

These injustices have been systematically engineered and advanced over the years. Likewise, systematic and institutionalized means must be consciously applied for the reconstruction of fair and acceptable global race relations.

On this note, we reiterate our call on the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the establishment of a UN-Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (UN-PFPAD). We also re-emphasize that racism and racist attacks anywhere against any people will not be ignored, including during sporting events. We, thus, call on the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) to give vigor to her 'No Racism' message and slogan as the 2022 Qatar World Cup counts down.

To effectively defeat COVID-19 and build forward better, we recognize that this is a moment to organize and connect with African peoples, communities, non-state actors' organisations and governments to build healthy communities. Indeed, this will include the promotion of the physical well-being of all Africans as well as a healthy respect for issues of freedom, democracy and social justice.

Although the African continent has suffered relatively less fatalities from the COVID-19 pandemic (officially amounting to some 130,000 deaths) the negative impacts on physical and mental health, social well-being; negative impacts on the economy; and the consequent exacerbation of inequalities within and between communities, households and countries, have all been keenly felt.

COVID-19 has exacted a heavy toll on economies in Africa partly because of their over dependence and the slowdown in global trade and finance. The growing debt profile of the continent coupled with other "pre-existing conditions" such as the lack of policy space for state interventions; lean and grossly inadequate social protection provisions; private and public sector corruption, and jobless growth will pose real challenges to socio-economic recovery.

Adding to this is the growing rush for further control over Africa and its resources. This is manifest in the increasing Africa-And Others (mostly advanced and emerging economies) Summits. So far, these Summits have tended to deepen the dependence of Africa on foreign trade and aid – the so-called "beggar-thy-neighbour syndrome".

We also remind ourselves of a number of abuses and violation of human rights in some African countries as a result of socio-political instability and growing suppression of freedom. On this occasion, we single out the recent coup d'état in Chad following the sudden death of the country's President, Iddris Derby, and the installation of his son, a military chieftain, as de facto President. We express our solidarity with the workers and people of Chad who are struggling for constitutionalism and democracy and call on the AU to act to support the just struggle of the people of Chad against continuing authoritarian rule.

As we celebrate Africa Day, we call on all African governments to commit to better governance and administration. Recalling that Africa has a predominantly young and energetic population and vast reserves of natural resources, Africa can be moved forward on the path of progress and prosperity if we apply the necessary determination.

ITUC-Africa calls on African governments to commit to better investment in education, research and development; to expand Africa's ability to add value to its raw materials; and above all, to enable producing essential health technologies and to manufacture safe, efficacious and affordable medicines and vaccines to guarantee the health security of the people.

We call on Africans to rededicate to African unity and integration at all levels to guarantee a sustainable future based on respect for human rights and dignity.

**Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa.**