

## ***Building Workers' Power for Africa's Renewal: End Inequality, Secure Peace, Commit to the Industrialisation of Africa***

On this year's International Workers' Day, the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa, [www.ituc-africa.org](http://www.ituc-africa.org)) stands with millions of workers across the continent to confront a stark truth: Africa is in the throes of artificial impoverishment, amid possibilities to reverse the tides. Inequality is widening at an alarming pace, driven by kleptocracy, illicit financial flows (IFFs), and economic systems that extract from the many to enrich the few.

Every year, billions are siphoned from our economies through corruption, tax abuse, and capital flight. These stolen resources are the schools not built, the hospitals not equipped, the jobs not created. They are, quite literally, the futures of our youth and workers—looted. At the same time, democracy-hard won through struggle-has too often failed to deliver its promises. Across the continent, workers face rising prices, joblessness, and exclusion, while political elites prosper. This growing disconnect is breeding frustration, disillusionment, and instability. We reject austerity measures that target workers' wages and public services while leaving untouched the insatiable spending of political elites and endless concessions to big businesses. Fiscal consolidation cannot be built on the backs of workers. It must begin with justice: progressive taxation, the end of IFFs, and accountable public finance.

We are equally alarmed by the rise of political actors who undermine civil liberties, disregard international law, and manufacture crises that lead to artificial shortages of essential goods and services. It is workers, especially those in the informal economy, who bear the heaviest burden of these failures.

Peace and security are not optional—they are foundational to development and workers' dignity. Across the continent, conflicts are devastating lives, destroying livelihoods, and weakening labour institutions. We call for an immediate end to wars and violence in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and other affected regions. We reject the role of external influences that fuel instability to extract Africa's resources. Workers will not remain silent while our continent is plundered under the cover of conflict. Trade unions must raise their voices for peace, justice, and accountability.

Africa now stands at a historic crossroads. The global demand for critical minerals—essential for the energy transition—presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past, when Africa exported raw wealth and imported poverty, as happened during earlier resource booms, such as the gold and oil booms. This time, Africa must *beneficiate*, industrialise, and retain value.

To do so, we call for urgent investment in skills development, research, and technology to build a workforce capable of driving value addition across mineral value chains. We must leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area to deepen intra-African trade, build regional value chains, and advance a model of regional developmentalism that centres workers and communities. Our resources must power African industries, create decent jobs, and sustain long-term prosperity- not fuel external dependency.

ITUC-Africa calls for a new path: Africa's economic independence grounded in people-centred development. This begins with bold, public investments in energy infrastructure to end energy poverty and power industrial transformation. It requires stronger labour protections, universal social protection for all, including those in the informal economy. We are focused on ensuring that Africa gets out of the debt trap by engaging our governments to embrace responsible, development-targeted lending. We shall also continue to demand progressive tax regimes, including taxes on High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs).

We shall also continue to utilise safe, measured methods to expose kleptocracy, knowing that it weakens democracy by failing to ensure dividends for the people. Kleptocracy also triggers insecurity and fuels the emigration of our best minds, leading them to leave the continent and relocate to advanced economies, resulting in the loss of the skills and capacities needed to drive the continent's economic growth and development.


Further, we demand genuine action on freedom of association for all categories of workers, without distinction or discrimination; better labour migration governance: safe pathways, fair recruitment, an open and integrated Africa; and the protection of migrant workers' rights. We condemn the resurgence of xenophobia and the silence of leaders in the face of attacks on fellow Africans. Inequality is a key driver of migration, and unless addressed, Africa will continue to lose its most skilled and talented people.

To African workers, our message is clear: organise, mobilise, and act. Power is not given—it is built. The future of our continent will not be secured through lamentation, but through collective action. Trade unions must rise as the defenders of democracy, economic justice, peace, and human dignity.

On this May Day, we recommit to building working-class power for Africa's transformation. We will not stand by. We will organise. We will demand. And we will win.

Happy Workers' Day celebrations to all gallant workers of the continent!

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