

**PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY ITUC-AFRICA ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE WORLD DECENT WORK DAY  
CELEBRATIONS**

**7 OCTOBER 2008**

Trade unions in Africa must unite in protesting and preventing the signing of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that threaten to worsen unemployment in Africa. The huge employment deficit in Africa will be further worsened by EPAs which the European Union is pressurizing African countries and others in the Caribbean and Pacific regions to sign before the end of 2008.

Already, excessive and hasty trade liberalization has allowed cheap and heavily subsidized imports, often from Europe, to wipe out domestic production. This has contributed to change many African countries from being self sufficient in food production to becoming dependent on food imports, thereby destroying many livelihoods, most of them women's, in the agricultural sector.

A UN report (September 2008) on Africa's performance under trade liberalization shows that Africa's export market share has dropped from 6 per cent to 3 per cent of world trade since the 1980s, the very period that trade liberalization and structural adjustment were imposed on many African countries.

Youth unemployment is particularly grave, with young people making up over 60 per cent of the jobless in Africa. High unemployment also contributes to the growing numbers of labour migrating within and outside Africa, often under difficult and precarious conditions that do not allow for the realization of decent work.

As the international trade union movement marks the World Day for Decent Work, ITUC-Africa calls for solidarity to save jobs in Africa and for putting employment creation at the centre of all trade and investment policies that affect Africa.