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2012 ITUC-AFRICA MESSAGE: A CALL FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

ITUC-Africa on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day reflects on the current state of the African continent and notes that economic, social, cultural and democratic rights have suffered avoidable attacks.

There is a growing humanitarian crisis in parts of the continent as a result of armed conflicts and rising terrorist attacks. Issues such as the violent crisis in Eastern DR Congo, particularly Goma, where women, children and the elderly suffer abuses like rape, torture, forceful conscription as child soldiers, hunger, homelessness and death, is a matter of big concern. Though there are signs of hope from Somalia, the security situation is not totally under control. Sudan, Guinea-Bissau and Mali are sites that provoke real fear of violent crises.

On the economic front, unemployment continues to grow with more hardship, poverty and inequality amongst people. Incomes have remained stagnant while governments are not implementing minimum wage agreements reached with trade union organisations. The situation gets worse as more African governments continue to cut social spending and roll back social service delivery. Fiscal austerity measures are hurting our people, workplaces and communities.

Democratic rights have taken a backstage in governance processes and policies. Citizens' participation is considered taboo in some quarters. In Swaziland, an absolute monarch reigns with little room for democratic expression and popular organization. Pro-democracy groups such as the trade unions, political parties, churches and students groups are serially repressed. Political parties and the national trade union organization (TUCOSWA) that have been vocal in their calls for multiparty democracy remain banned. Democracy remains fragile in many African countries.

We call on governments and politicians in Africa to recommit themselves to good governance and genuine democracy for the benefit of the people. We hold it as self-evident that responsive and responsible governance will contribute in no small measure to eradicating rights abuses that our people suffer on a daily basis. Responsive governance will mean the genuine show of political will to defend and promote the economic, social and democratic rights of the people. The growing culture of impunity is worrying and counter progressive.

ITUC-Africa reiterates an earlier call for the acceleration of justice where and when citizens' rights have suffered attacks. Governments must invest real and practical efforts to investigate, prosecute and sanction offenders. The investigation and prosecution of persons involved in the killings and attacks on journalists will be one sure show of commitment to end impunity.

We also demand that African governments make adequate fiscal provisions for the implementation of social protection. This is one sure way to combat the deepening poverty that is haunting our people.

Peace, stability and social cohesion are essential for nation-building and growth. African governments must demonstrate true responsibility for providing their people with effective security arrangements that protect lives and property. Law and order under an effective rule of law processes and practices will contribute to providing such guarantees.

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