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ACTRAV/ITUC-Africa SUB-REGIONAL SEMINAR

on Freedom of Association and the Challenges of Trade Union Unity in Africa

The Lome Appeal

Under the aegis of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) represented by its General Secretary, Mr Kwasi ADU-AMANKWAH, and the Bureau for Workers' Activities of the ILO (ILO/ACTRAV) represented by its Director, Mr Dan CUNNIAH, and in the presence of ITUC represented by its Deputy General Secretary, Mr Jaap WIENNEN, a sub-regional seminar on *Freedom of association and the challenges of trade union unity in Africa* was held at the headquarters of ITUC-Africa in Lome (Togo) from 19th to 21st October 2009.

The General Secretaries and the Presidents of trade union confederations affiliated to ITUC-Africa in the following francophone countries took part in the proceedings: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Togo. Two trade union organisations of the host country, namely UGSL and CGCT which are not affiliated to ITUC-Africa, also attended the seminar.

During the proceedings, the participants reviewed the following:

- ILO Convention N° 87 on freedom of association and Convention N° 98 on collective bargaining;
- A study carried out by a consultant on trade-union pluralism and the proliferation of trade unions in French-speaking Africa and,
- The trade-union situation in each country.

At the conclusion of the debates which were very fruitful, the participants made the following remarks, among others:

- The abusive interpretation of ILO Conventions N° 87 and N° 98 has adverse effects on the African trade union movement and is used as justification for the fragmentation of trade-union organisations;
- the problems such as representativeness, the lack of respect for trade union statutes, the limited role of women hinder the democratic management and organisation of trade unions and facilitate internal divisions;
- The proliferation of trade unions in French-speaking Africa and - as a result - their weakening makes workers' organisations much more vulnerable.
- In the face of the scope of the financial, economic and employment crisis which is disorganising the economic and social development of the African continent;
- Aware of the historical role that they have always played and that they intend to play at each stage of the economic and social development of Africa;
- Aware of the mixed results obtained in favour of men and women workers in a divided trade-union landscape;

The participating General Secretaries and Presidents of trade-union confederations:

- **Commend** the actions undertaken in each country by trade union leaders in order to improve the relations between trade-union confederations by creating inter-unions or other trade-union mergers;
- **Commit themselves** to make every effort to effectively implement the plans of action adopted;
- **Launch a pressing appeal** to all trade-union organisations that are affiliated or not to ITUC-Africa in the French-speaking African countries so that they may continue and/or commit themselves resolutely to the process of promoting trade-union unity in order to make trade union action more operational and more effective;
- **Congratulate** the leadership of ACTRAV and the Secretariat of ITUC-Africa for their determination to support the trade-union organisations of the francophone African countries in continuing the initiatives undertaken towards the unification of the African trade union movement.

Lome, 21 October 2009

The participants