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Mr. Alexander Lukashenko
President of the Republic of
Belarus
Palace of the Republic
19, Lenin Street, Minsk 220030

O/R.: 219/2025/GS/AK

Dear Mr President,

An open letter to the Government of Belarus: Trade Union Rights Are Human Rights – End the Repression in Belarus

On behalf of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org), we write to express our unwavering solidarity with Belarus's independent trade union movement and convey our deep concern about the continuing and intensifying crackdown on labour rights in your country.

Over the past several years, the world has watched with dismay as the Belarusian authorities have dissolved independent trade unions, imprisoned and exiled union leaders, and subjected countless workers and activists to unjust persecution, including arbitrary detention, harassment, and torture. Branding trade unions as "extremist" organisations and conducting politically motivated trials undermines not only fundamental freedoms but also the very social fabric upon which decent work and democracy are built.

Such actions clearly violate international labour standards, including Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which Belarus has ratified. These actions also breach the principles enshrined in the ILO Constitution and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The recent decision by the ILO to invoke Article 33 of its Constitution—an exceptionally rare and powerful mechanism—underscores the gravity of these violations.

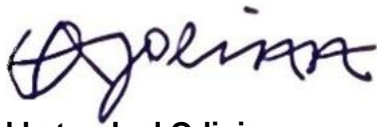
Mr President, from our position in Africa, we are deeply aware of the connection between workers' rights, democratic governance, and social progress. Across our continent, as in Belarus, trade unions have been and continue to be crucial actors in defending civic space, promoting inclusive development, and holding governments accountable. When independent trade unions are attacked, it is not just workers who suffer—entire societies are weakened. We therefore call on the Belarusian government to:

1. Immediately release all imprisoned trade unionists and expunge any politically motivated charges against them;
2. Restore the legal status of independent trade unions and cease all forms of intimidation, harassment, and surveillance;
3. Engage in genuine dialogue with workers' representatives and comply fully with your obligations under international labour law;
4. Allow international labour organisations, including the ILO and ITUC, unfettered access to observe and report on workers' rights in Belarus.

Mr President, we wish to reiterate that trade unionism is not a threat and trade unions are not enemies of the state and the people as being painted by your government. Instead, trade unionism is a vital pillar of social peace and democracy. Trade unions are partners in progress and purveyors of positive change and prosperity. Criminalising the collective worker voice will not bring stability, but respecting and enabling it will.

Mr President, as ITUC-Africa, representing millions of workers across the African continent, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Belarusian brothers and sisters. We support their right to organise freely, bargain collectively, and live without fear. We urge your government to reverse and halt all attacks against freedom of association and to embrace inclusion, dialogue and consensus-building. While we will not tire of continuously raising our voices to ensure respect for the rights of workers and trade unions in Belarus, we call on your government to ensure true democracy by removing all encumbrances to enjoy civil liberties.

Yours faithfully,



Akhator Joel Odigie
General Secretary
ITUC-Africa

Lomé, Togo, 15 April 2025