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STATEMENT BY ITUC AFRICA TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL AIDS DAY DECEMBER 1st 2012

Today on World AIDS Day (WAD) 2012, the ITUC Africa which represents 16,000,000 workers in the continent commemorates the many millions of people who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, and pays tribute to those living with HIV and those who have fought to bring attention to the epidemic and advocate for action.

Although the global growth of new HIV infections has receded, an estimated 2.5 million people were newly infected in 2011, 1.7 million more died of HIV-related illnesses and 34 million people continue to live with HIV. In addition only 54% of people in need have access to ARV treatment, while Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most affected, with 23.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS on a world total of 34.2 million.

This is therefore not the time for the international community and national governments to relax or at worst reduce resources needed to fight the pandemic. ITUC Africa and its affiliated national trade union centres in 48 African countries urge the international community to make all efforts to ensure that targets set out in the current millennium development goals (MDGs) on HIV are realized come 2015 and that the post 2015 Development Framework include concrete actions necessary for sustaining gains and fast track the desire to achieve an AIDS – free generation without further delay. ITUC Africa and affiliates believe that prioritizing Social Protection and Decent work in the post 2015 Development Agenda will assist in the mitigation of social – economic impacts caused by the pandemic. Social Protection and Job Creation are critical in the fight against HIV and AIDS since this fight is not about the virus alone. The fact of the matter is - Africa will continue to experience the impact of HIV many years after discovery of the cure this is mainly so due to various reasons including the loss of skilled personnel, a growing number of orphans who have lost one or both parents through HIV, the rapid creation of single parent (particularly single mother families) and the long lasting pressure on health services. We call upon the international community to ensure that measures aimed at promoting Social Protection and Decent Job creation are enshrined in the new development agenda as per the spirit of the Rio+20 Outcome Document.

We also call upon national governments in the Africa to recognize the important role that actors in the world of work can play in realizing an AIDS free generation and therefore urge them to ensure participation of trade unions in national initiatives and processes, inclusion of comprehensive workplace components in national HIV and AIDS strategic plans, a speedy domestication of ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS in the World of Work and allocating 15 % of national budgets as stipulated in the AU Abuja Declaration of 2001.

As we move forward towards a new development agenda, ITUC Africa would like to reaffirm its commitment of working together with all stakeholders including Global Union Federations (GUFs), UN Agencies, Programs and other institutions, Pro Labour NGOs, Associations of People Living with the Virus, Employers and Governments to ensure that an AIDS Free Generation is realized sooner rather than later.

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