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ITUC-Africa Statement on International Youth Day 2024: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development in Africa

On this year's International Youth Day, the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-africa.org) joins millions of young African workers to promote the recognition of young people as critical actors for social change, economic growth, and sustainable development in Africa and around the world.

This year's theme is: "**From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development**". We recognise the transformative power of digitalisation in shaping Africa's future, and this transformation is more critical within the trade union movement, where young people are leading the charge of a transformative agenda.

Youth in Africa are not only responding to a rapidly changing environment, but they are also building a new landscape of change. Digital technologies are central to young people's concerns about the present and aspirations for the future. Four out of five people aged 15 to 24 have access to at least one mobile phone in the continent. Yet the scope of action of digital technology goes beyond access to mobile telephony. Smartphones, applications, and plural devices such as tablets and personal computers are used globally by young people today, and Africa is no exception.

The digital revolution opens new avenues for engagement, advocacy, and empowerment. Youth are leveraging digital tools to amplify their voices, advance workers' rights, and promote sustainable development. From mobilising support for fair labour practices to advocating for policy changes, digital platforms are becoming the new battlegrounds for social justice. Furthermore, digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to strengthen our collective power, enhance communication, and build solidarity across borders. With over 70% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets linked to digital innovation, the role of youth in harnessing these technologies is vital. They are not just participants but critical drivers in shaping a future where technology serves the common good.

However, many young people across Africa still face significant barriers, including limited access to digital infrastructure, unequal opportunities for digital capacity and literacy, and the threat of digital exclusion. To truly realise the potential of digital pathways for sustainable development, we urge our governments to address these challenges head-on. Responding to these challenges means investing in digital education, expanding access to affordable and reliable internet, and creating policies and programmes that ensure digitalisation benefits all, especially the most vulnerable.

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) urge the African trade union movement to continue to embrace digital transformation as a means of strengthening our organisation (organising, mobilisation

and membership management), advocacy (social media and digital footprint) and ensuring that workers' rights are protected (through monitoring and reporting) in the digital age.

Youth must be at the forefront of this transformation, bringing new perspectives and innovative approaches to our challenges. By integrating digital tools into our strategies, we can enhance our ability to organise, communicate, and advocate, ensuring that the labour movement remains vital and relevant in the 21st century.

As we mark this International Youth Day, ITUC-Africa reaffirms its commitment to empowering young people and supporting their role in the digital transformation of Africa's trade union movement.

Happy International Youth Day!

Signed by Akhator Joel ODIGIE, General Secretary, Issued in Lome, Togo 12th August 2024