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ITUC-AFRICA STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CARE AND SUPPORT

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-africa.org) joins the ITUC, workers and their unions worldwide in marking the International Day for Care and Support on 29 October 2026, under the theme **"Building sustainable care and support systems through decent work."**

Care sustains every economy and society. Yet paid and unpaid care work remains undervalued, underpaid and largely overlooked in public policy and national budgets, despite its vital social and economic contribution.

Across Africa, women and girls bear a disproportionate share of this responsibility. Women on the continent spend more than three times as many hours as men on unpaid care work. More than one-third of African women outside the labour force are excluded from employment because of care responsibilities, compared with fewer than one in twenty men. Young women are particularly affected. In rural West Africa, they spend four times as many hours on unpaid care work as young men, limiting their opportunities to pursue education, access vocational training, secure decent jobs, and participate in trade unions.

Domestic workers, community health workers, early childhood educators, nurses and home-based carers, most of them women and many of them migrants, too often work informally, for poverty wages, without social protection, and exposed to violence and harassment. Poor working conditions for care workers mean poor quality care for everyone.

Africa has the weakest care coverage in the world, and demand is rising with population growth, urbanisation, the climate crisis and, increasingly, ageing.

On this year's commemoration of the International Day for Care and Support, we call on African governments, the African Union and Regional Economic Communities to:

1. Invest in public, quality, accessible care systems, including childcare, long-term care, health services, and basic infrastructure such as water, energy and clean cooking that reduce unpaid work.
2. Implement the 5R framework and the 2024 ILO Resolution on Decent Work and the Care Economy through national care policies.
3. Ratify and apply ILO Conventions No. 189 (Domestic Workers), No. 156 (Workers with Family Responsibilities), No. 183 (Maternity Protection), No. 190 (Violence and Harassment) and No. 102 (Social Security).
4. Guarantee decent work for all care workers: living wages, equal pay for work of equal value, formal contracts, safe workplaces, social protection, and the rights to organise and bargain collectively.
5. Extend social protection to informal economy workers and unpaid carers, and fund paid parental leave for women and men.

ITUC-Africa commits to organising care workers, especially young women and workers in the informal economy, to give them a stronger collective voice, and to keep care at the heart of our struggle for social justice on the continent.

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