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World Day Against Child Labour 2024: African workers call on ALL Stakeholders to take tangible actions in demonstration of their commitment to end child labour

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-africa.org) joins the rest of the world in pledging to protect the rights and dignity of every child. This year's commemoration theme, "**Let's act on our commitments: End Child Labour!**" is an urgent and clarion call for action to defeat child labour everywhere.

Africa has the world's highest incidence rates of child labour. This worrisome situation is reflected negatively and regularly in the annual report of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). In the past ten years, the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS), a standing committee of the International Labour Conference (ILC), has discussed at least one African country on the issue of endemic child labour.

The African region has also been among those most affected by situations of state fragility and crisis, which in turn heightens the risk of child labour. Worldwide, the agriculture sector accounts for the largest share of child labour. In Africa, agriculture accounts for 85 per cent of all child labour and 61.4 million children in absolute terms. Many African children toil in private homes as servants, in farming, construction sites, mines, garages, shops and other enterprises in the informal sector. Some work and live in slave-like conditions, while others are forced into prostitution or end up in the streets of cities far away from their houses. Children are faced with severe threats to their health and safety, as they are exposed to biological, chemical and environmental hazards that often result in physical injury and illness.

According to the UN children's agency UNICEF, population growth, recurring crises, extreme poverty, COVID-19, and inadequate social protection measures have led to an additional 17 million girls and boys engaging in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa over the past four years.

These children are deprived of their fundamental rights to education, health, and a childhood free from exploitation. As we commemorate this day, we call on all remaining member states to ratify ILO Convention No. 138, which sets the minimum age for admission to employment or work. It is imperative that all stakeholders, including governments, employers, trade unions, and civil society, effectively redouble their efforts to implement, apply and enforce the provisions of both ILO Conventions No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) and No. 138 (Minimum Age).

ITUC-Africa reaffirms its unwavering commitment to combating child labour in all its forms. We recognise that ending child labour requires a multi-faceted approach, encompassing legislative action, robust enforcement, social protection, quality education, and the promotion of decent work for adults. It is only by addressing the root causes of child labour, such as poverty and

lack of access to education, that we can create a sustainable future free from child exploitation and abuse.

We pledge to continue working with all relevant stakeholders, including our governments, employers, families, religious and traditional institutions, and community leaders, to engineer and deploy practical and responsive measures to tackle and defeat child labour. We will demand that the African Union Commission Specialised Technical Committee (STC) of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission convenes a special continental session to discuss ways and means to tame and halt the child labour menace contributing to the arrested development of our children, future and destiny.

Furthermore, we call on all African nations to strengthen their legislative frameworks, improve enforcement mechanisms, and invest in education and social services. We call on them to lead in the efforts to ensure the right of children to live a free, safe, and secure childhood. We reiterate our time-tested position that children should be in schools, classrooms, and playgrounds and not in factories, farms, sweatshops, or on the streets.

Signed, Akhator Joel ODIGIE, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa. Issued from Lome, Togo