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ITUC-Africa MESSAGE FOLLOWING XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Africa Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (www.ituc-africa.org) has received with concern the reports of violence that broke out in some suburbs of Johannesburg city center on Sunday and spread to the central business district the days after. We have also learnt with dismay and disappointment about the destruction of more than 50 shops and business premises mainly owned by African migrants.

We extend our condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones in these xenophobic attacks and express our sympathies to those who have been injured or lost their properties.

ITUC-Africa strongly condemns these attacks against brothers and sisters of the same continent that feeds division among Africans and undermines progress towards African integration. Diversity, fraternity and hospitality have always been part of what defines us as Africans and migration has also always been part of our history that has positively shaped our societies and impacted on our shared aspirations. We must strive to strengthen and deepen the bonds that unite us as Africans as well as continue to work together to show the relevance of our communal co-existence and culture of hospitality.

We welcome the condemnation of the attacks by the South African government and commend the measured reactions of African governments whose nationals have been affected by these xenophobic attacks. We call on progressive sections of South African society to weigh in and condemn these attacks, full in the knowledge that the persistence of xenophobia undermines the agenda of African unity and the solidarity of workers.

At the same time we draw attention to the issues of economic and social malaise in Africa such as endemic poverty, huge unemployment, corruption, inadequate public services and widening inequality that lead to large scale forced migration of large numbers in Africa on the one hand, and on the other hand, how such factors become major sources of the anger and frustration that fuel xenophobic attacks in South Africa such as we have seen in the past week. These conditions demand that African governments take decisive actions to promote development and create decent employment for the sustainability and cohesion of each of our countries in Africa. We must push our governments harder to live up to their responsibilities for managing our affairs better to ensure the wellbeing of the people.

Say no to xenophobia and yes to solidarity among workers in Africa.

Kwasi ADU-AMANKWAH

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