



**REMARKS**

**By**

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**and**

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**On the Occasion of the 4th Ordinary Congress of ITUC Africa  
held in Abuja, Nigeria**

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## **Protocol**

Representative of the President, Dr Olusegun Adeniyi,  
The President, ITUC and NLC Comrade Ayuba Wabba  
The President, ITUC Africa Mr. Mody Guiro  
General Secretary, ITUC Africa Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah  
The President, TUC Nigeria Comrade Quadri Olaleye  
General Secretary, NLC Comrade Emmanuel Ogboaja,  
Secretary General, TUC Nigeria Comrade Musa Lawal  
Representative of Employers Federation  
Members of General Council of ITUC-Africa  
Delegates and Observers  
Distinguished Invited Guests.  
Members of the Press.  
Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, I would like to thank the General Secretary of the Africa Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) Brother Kwasi Adu-Amankwah and the entire leadership for the invitation extended to me to join you during your 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Delegates Congress.

I bring you greetings from the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Mr Guy Ryder. There can never be a better time for holding a meeting of such significance as this one, than now, when the International Labour Organization marks its Centenary, 1919-2019. Buoyed by the quest to promote social justice, the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, articulates that vision, and states that:

- (a) labour is not a commodity;
- (b) freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress;
- c) poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; and

(d) the war against want requires to be carried on with unremitting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.

Inspired by the report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, which was co-chaired by President Ramaphosa, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 108th session in Geneva in June 2019, firmly upholds the values of the Philadelphia Declaration. The Centenary Declaration calls on the ILO to carry forward “with unremitting vigour, its constitutional mandate for social justice by further developing its human-centred approach to the future of work which puts workers’ rights and the needs, aspirations and the rights of all people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies”.

In Part III of the Declaration, the Conference calls upon all ILO Members to further develop a human-centred approach to the future of work through action on three key pillars:

(i) Strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work.

(ii) Strengthening the institutions of work to ensure adequate protection of all workers, and reaffirming the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means of providing certainty and legal protection to workers, while recognizing the extent of informality and the need to ensure effective action to achieve transition to formality.

(iii) Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The Centenary Declaration highlights the importance of strong and representative social partner organizations, capable of engaging in all relevant processes and advancing the

fundamental values of the ILO through strong, influential and inclusive mechanisms of social dialogue. Such representation and dialogue contribute to the overall cohesion of societies and are crucial for a well-functioning and productive economy. It is both a matter of public interest and a public good. Addressing the challenges that lie ahead requires the fullest engagement of the ILO's constituents.

As the primary actors in the world of work, they will need to champion a human-centred approach to the future of work “with unrelenting vigour” at the local, national, regional and global levels.

### **Distinguished Guests, Brothers and Sisters**

This meeting is also taking place at a very auspicious moment when we celebrate 60 years of ILO presence in Africa. As you may know, the first ILO office was established in 1959 in Lagos, Nigeria. It is also at the time we are preparing for the 14<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Meeting, scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019 in Abidjan, where the tripartite constituents will adopt the 2020-2030 decent work agenda for the transformation of Africa.

Over these years, I must say, the ILO has supported the achievement of social justice and decent work in Africa. Hence, we have reason to celebrate. The ILO, through the organisations that you represent, has been pivotal in the promotion of employment, supporting the adoption of labour standards and promoting social protection floors and improving rights at work. You can continue to count on the ILO in delivering her mandate to the people of Africa.

With its 1.3 billion inhabitants – a largely young and energetic population – the continent's steady economic growth has been, and is, driven by the dynamism and vigour of its people, displaying immense diversity, creativity and innovation. The continent is also endowed with a plethora of natural resources. The African region today is home to a labour force that is almost

500 million strong. By 2030, the size of the labour force will have grown to 676 million, a staggering 40 per cent increase, driven by the rapidly growing number of youth labour market entrants. Africa is currently the world's youngest region; and young people under 25 years old constitute 60 per cent of the population. By 2030, almost one fifth of the global labour force – and nearly one third of the global youth labour force – will be from this region. **Given these numbers, any discussion on the future of work must necessarily be closely tied to the future of work in Africa.**

Average levels of education have steadily risen. Economic growth has been good overall, and macroeconomic conditions have been stable. While conflicts continue in parts of the continent, they have generally diminished in the past few years. The region continues to be rich in natural resources and is a major destination for foreign investment. As the region grows, there are also calls for deepening economic integration among African countries to ensure the continent builds on its strengths and countries support each other to create jobs, stimulating a virtuous spiral of growth in output, income and employment. The AfCFTA Agreement that entered into force on 30 May of this year is one such example of deepening African economic integration that is likely to have an impact on decent work in the continent.

The challenges for realizing decent work for all, today as well as in the future, are daunting nevertheless. Some 252 million people are working but poor. Approximately 54.5 million young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and in North Africa the youth unemployment rate is more than 30 per cent; over 40 per cent for young women, which is higher than anywhere else in the world. Informality is pervasive involving 85 per cent of all workers and 95 per cent of young workers; 72 million African children are working, accounting for almost half of child labour globally; and the gender pay gap in many African countries is as much as one third or more of male hourly earnings. Low productivity agriculture remains the main sector of

employment for most workers. However, the decline in agriculture's share coupled with growth in industry and high value-added services being less than desired implies a rather slow pace of structural transformation.

This situation is further compounded by generally high levels of inequality and extreme weather events due to climate change. On the other hand, we are faced with a changing world of work due to advances in technology (artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of things). These issues mean that our efforts towards addressing these multifaceted challenges should be systematic and strategic. Things cannot be **Business as usual!**

### **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The theme for the 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Delegates Congress which is "Unite and Make a Difference" is very apt and relevant. Indeed, it is well aligned with the mission of the ILO in the region, which is to ***'deliver excellent decent work results in Africa as one ILO'***.

I have seen from the programme of the congress that you are going to discuss issues around the following topics: a) Deepening democracy and advancing workers' rights and interests; b) Organising c) Economic and social development for the people; d) Promoting internal democracy in our unions; and e) Social protection for all in Africa: The role of trade unions.

While I am tempted to share my reflections on all these very pertinent issues, based on my very close engagement with the trade union movement in my country and the wider continent, permit me to make a few comments on : 'economic and social development for the people' These are key issues which all ILO constituents will be discussing during the 14<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Meeting as you shape the continental decent work agenda for the next decade.

### **Distinguished Guests, Brothers and Sisters**

Achieving economic and social development for all in Africa requires the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work for all. According to recent ILO estimates, the number of productive jobs in the continent would have to increase by over 300 million – or some 26 million per year – until 2030, more than doubling the number of existing level that we desire in Africa, productive jobs to reach 579 million by 2030. Around half of these – 13 million per year – would need to be in the form of new jobs to provide productive employment for the large number of net entrants into the labour market each year. An additional 2.2 million new productive jobs would need to be created annually to eliminate unemployment. Lastly, approximately 10.6 million productive jobs annually would be needed to eliminate working poverty, either by increasing the productivity and incomes of the working poor in their current jobs or by enabling them to move to more productive jobs.

This would mean, in practice, almost trebling the current annual growth of productive jobs of 9.5 million per year (between 2010 and 2017) to over 26 million per year until 2030.

These high rates of job creation accompanied by productivity improvement will require sustained and substantial balanced economic growth based on country-specific strategies for structural transformation. What this implies is the gradual transfer of labour from low-paying, unproductive occupations into gradually more productive and formal wage employment.

It is noteworthy that Africa is the least industrialized region of the world with the lowest value addition in manufacturing.

Most African economies are still to a large extent primary sector economies, where extraction of natural resources and farming are the key drivers of GDP creation and employment.

Therefore, the full potential of sectoral approaches to identify and support the most employment-intensive industries will need to be explored. The precise mix of sectoral strategies will vary across

countries but will typically include the transformation of agriculture. For example, a reduction of working poverty primarily in rural areas might be achieved by a change in prevalent models of subsistence farming to more productive and environmentally sustainable strategies. Moreover, a value-chain approach may serve to enhance the upstream and downstream employment effects.

Low returns to labour and land in agriculture is a major cause of working poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. A determined and systematic approach will be required to set in motion a range of measures to put agriculture on a path of dynamic growth, including not least of all improved infrastructure, which in itself is a generator of jobs. Development of natural resources, the service sector as well as the green economy will also be called into play. At the same time, there must be a clear strategy towards creating productive employment opportunities outside of agriculture, taking advantage of the opportunities in Africa for expansion in the digital, creative, and care work areas, as well as other areas.

### **Comrades, Brothers and Sisters**

It is clear that such a transformation will demand a new or renewed commitment to *policy coherence around development goals*. Poverty reduction/eradication through full employment and decent work for all including young people, women and persons with disabilities should guide the formulation of *all* macro policies in areas such as finance, trade, investment and business; consequently, the pursuit of this goal needs to involve all line ministries, not just the ministry of labour. This means that national economic policies will need to enhance the employment intensity of economic growth. Moreover, in addition to effective coordination and harmonization of employment promotion policies and programmes, employment policies will

also need to be synchronized with other relevant policies, such as social protection and migration.

Low productivity is one of the key root causes of working poverty. One obvious – and significant – means of promoting productive (i.e. higher productivity) employment is through actions to combat informality.

Social and economic development for Africa requires building a platform of sustained action to assure freedom from child labour and forced labour, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. These universal, inalienable and indivisible human rights are at the same time enabling conditions for decent work and sustainable economic growth. Together, they are the foundation for empowerment, representation and effective social dialogue permitting better outcomes for workers, enterprises, economies and societies.

The fundamental Conventions are close to universal ratification in Africa but member States face challenges in their effective application. Building and reinforcing national legal and policy frameworks and robust and accountable public institutions for enforcement will demand attention. Strategies to respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work in Africa need to target in particular the most vulnerable who live and work in the rural and informal economies as well as women, migrant workers, refugees and displaced people, indigenous and tribal peoples, and children.

### **Distinguished Comrades, Brothers and Sisters**

The high level of youth unemployment is a key driver of migration within the continent as well as to countries outside the region and the migration of low-skilled female domestic workers within the continent reflects the extensive poverty and lack of opportunities there. Many countries are now simultaneously

origin, transit and destination countries for migrant workers. While migrant workers contribute to growth and development in their countries of destination and origin, the migration process implies complex challenges in terms of governance, migrant workers' protection, migration and development linkages, and international cooperation.

The expansion of productive employment and the reduction of poverty call for the removal of obstacles for women to enter the labour market and creating equal opportunities for women and men to participate. This would typically require a reduction of the (unequal) burden on women of care and household responsibilities as well as addressing occupational segregation and other forms of gender discrimination in the labour market. It also requires the ratification and implementation of the C190 on violence and harassment.

There is no doubt that skills gaps and mismatch and, more generally, issues concerned with the quality of education and training systems in the continent are of central importance to the future of work in Africa. This concerns both the overall level of preparation but also the appropriateness of the competencies imparted through education and training. The profound transformations taking place in the world of work require strategies for supporting processes of lifelong learning.

Education and training in Africa have seen major improvements in recent decades, however, it is also evident that much can still be improved, inter alia, purposive skills development with a keen focus on new sectors and occupations, accompanied by the creation of social protection systems for vulnerable groups.

Many of the continent's skills systems suffer from low involvement by the social partners, leading to supply-driven skills development, misaligned with development aspirations of the country, and creating barriers to sustainable funding mechanisms.

Developing better performing skills systems through active social dialogue at national, sectoral and local levels, and improving their alignment with economic development and employment creation, is key.

There is a need *to extend social protection to all*, including those in the informal economy, while protecting existing labour rights, ensuring occupational safety and health as well as finding ways to effectively implement labour laws and strengthen labour inspection.

Most African countries have in recent years made efforts to extend social security coverage to informal economy workers and the rural population through a variety of initiatives. These efforts need to be extended and multiplied, including effective measures to support people through the transitions they will face throughout their working lives.

### **Distinguished Guests, Brothers and Sisters,**

As you deliberate concerning all these issues, it is important to reiterate the very important role that the trade unions in Africa play in shaping the next decent work decade in the continent. As we move forward to ensure a brighter future of work for Africa, it is crucial for African trade unions to clearly articulate how they will facilitate the required structural transformation of Africa anchored on decent work. Indeed, it is important to unite and make a difference.

I use this platform to once more thank the African trade unions for the inputs provided to shape the agenda of the 14<sup>th</sup> ARM. Your effective engagement in the discussions of the DG's Report to the Meeting, which has been widely referenced in my speech is very crucial. Furthermore, your participation in the Presidential and Thematic panels of the Regional Meeting as well as the session on the MNE Declaration is very important.

The Office has resolved to ensure that the agenda adopted by its constituents at the 14<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Meeting are implemented and effectively monitored. Furthermore, the opportunities availed

by the UN reform will be fully pursued, while building on the engagement with the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities as well strategic partnerships with global and continental organizations.

As I close, let me reiterate that working with its constituents as ‘one ILO’ remains a rallying call for the Office. It is expected that the unity of the trade unions in Africa to be achieved in Abuja will significantly enhance the protection of the rights of workers in Africa as well as continue to promote the economic and social development of all Africans through decent work.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you once again and wish you good deliberations. Let me leave you with a reflective quote by one of the Peace Prize Winners and great man of Africa, Nelson Mandela who said and I quote:

**“When people are determined they can overcome anything.”**

Nagode! Asante Sana! Sukran! Merci ! Thank you!