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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

## PRESS RELEASE

### 6<sup>th</sup> AU-Organization of African Trade Union Unity Partnership Forum

**Accra, Ghana, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015:** The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual African Union (AU)-Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) kicked off-today, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015, in Accra, Ghana.

In his Opening Statement on behalf of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jinmi Adisa, Director, Citizens and Diaspora Organizations Directorate (CIDO) observed that this event marks the consolidation of the AU-OATUU Partnership Forum as an enduring interface between the premier continental Organization and its organized labour constituency. The purpose of the Forum is “to rub minds, share aspirations, discuss the main agenda of the period and find common and appropriate solutions to urgent problems. It is also designed to apportion assignment and allocate responsibilities and to define a commonwealth of efforts and divide the labour of love within.”

The Director stressed the commitment of the AU to engage workers and work with the Labour Movement on a continuous basis to deliver on the premise of independence and development for Africa. He added that this year’s conversations between the AU and the Labour Movement will also be a continuation of that of the previous year. The conversations will embrace the 1<sup>st</sup> 10 year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063, the contribution of Trade Union and Organized Labour to the AU’s Year of Women Empowerment, the role of Organized Labour in ECOSOCC with emphasis on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent General Assembly, as well as, in AU partnership processes with particular emphasis on the Arica-EU partnership program. (Full speech of the Director on the AU website [www.au.int](http://www.au.int))

In turn, the Presiding Officer of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union (ECOSOCC), Mr. Joseph Chilengi, highlighted the imperatives of Trade Union participation in ECOSOCC processes. He outlined the history of Trade Union participation in ECOSOCC, its advantages and current challenges. “ECOSOCC is weak without effective Trade Union presence and the Trade Union Movement cannot effectively achieve its objectives outside ECOSOCC. “ He also highlighted the need for

the Labour Movement to follow the processes of institutional development and growth of the AU. He singled out ongoing proposals for AUC structural reform as a subject demanding urgent attention and to which the Trade Union movement and OATUU in particular must be especially sensitive. Failure to do this may lead to a situation in which the African Union takes a retrogressive step and emasculates the people-centred element that characterized the transformation of the OAU into the AU.

The Secretary-General of OATUU, Mr. Arezki Mezhoud, noted that the AU-OATUU Partnership Forum is an ideal instrument of social dialogue for the promotion of the aspirations of African people. He observed that the topics to be discussed were based on consultation between the AU and OATUU and designed to focus on the challenges of our times that the Forum must reflect upon and contribute to the search for solution. The challenge of Africa's development, he asserted, can only be realistically tackled through a concerted effort of all stakeholders. Moreover, the measure of Africa's progress would depend on how well women and youths are effective part of its solutions. Women empowerment and capacity building must therefore be domesticated in order to realize the objective and aspirations of Agenda 2063.

The Ghana Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, Mr Haruna Iddrisu, delivered the official opening address on behalf of His Excellency, Mr. John Mahama, the President of the Republic. He noted that the President was away from the country on official assignment and thus he has been assigned the responsibility to stand in for the President.

In this context, the Honorable Minister reviewed the cardinal tenets or elements of the "Africa That We Want" in the framework of Agenda 2063. These include a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, an integrated continent based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism, a prosperous and safe Africa, Africa with a strong cultural identity and significant presence on world stage amongst others. He evaluated the progress we have made in each of these regards and what needs to be done now to consolidate achievements, make up for deficits and to push the agenda forward. He underlined the factor of women empowerment as one of the most pressing drivers for achieving African goals and objectives and applauded the focus of the 2015 Partnership Forum concern as placing focus on where focus is due. On this note, he declared the Forum officially open.

The Master of Ceremony, Mr. Alex Boney, the Secretary General of the Ghana Trade Union Congress, thanked the Minister for taking time off his busy schedule to open the meeting. He observed that the Minister's contribution will be part of the official working documents and will guide the processes of the meeting and definitely influence its outcomes.

Subsequently, the meeting continued on the basis of the work program and agenda adopted by the Forum.

Over the next three days the Forum will discuss specifically the role of Trade Unions in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> ten Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063, address issues of Women Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063, appraise Trade Union participation in ECOSOCC and reflect upon and come out with a policy action framework for Trade Union in AU partnership processes, with particular emphasis on the Africa-EU partnership program for Africa's development.

Established by the AU, the Partnership Forum comes within AUC commitment to work with the AU Member States and partners to create and strengthen social integration system by ensuring that the contributions of civil society are mainstreamed through all aspect of the AU principles, policies and programs.

Organized annually by the CIDO and OATUU, the Forum provides a structured platform for cooperation that would harness the support of organized labor to the integration and development efforts of the African Union. It also enables organized labor to contribute effectively to AU activities and foster partnership with Member States, the AU Commission and all segments of the African Civil Society.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Partnership Forum will conclude on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and submit its report to the AU Executive Council for adoption.

#### ***About the African Union***

*The African Union is spearheading the development and integration of Africa in close collaboration with the Member States of the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens. The vision of the African Union is to accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and united Africa that is at peace with itself and which plays a dynamic role at the continental and global level, and led by a responsible, effective and proactive Commission.*

#### ***About the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU)***

*OATUU is a labor organization founded in 1973 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the initiative of the Organization of African Unity. Members of the OATUU include some 50 African national trade-union organizations. Its aims are to build trade-union unity on the African continent, to coordinate the action of national union organizations, and to support, in general, the interests of the African working class.*

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