

**Press Release****AFRICAN UNION IS RESOLUTE TO ACCELERATE THE ADVANCEMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1 May 2019:** The international community will be commemorating the International Workers' Day as a recognition of the contribution of the workers. It came as a result of the courageous labour class who organized themselves on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1886, and in unity amplified their voices against all forms of unfair labour treatment and abuse by the powers that be at the high echelons of organizations. By demanding the decent work, the labour force laid historical foundation for the evolution of the labour movement which is epitomized by the Labour Day or May Day which the world continues to commemorate to date. The International Workers' Day is an official public holiday in many countries around the world to honour the contributions of the labourers or working class people in driving the economies and development across the world. However, the 2019 International Worker's day is tempered by the shock and deep sorrow at the tragic deaths witnessed in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe due to the catastrophic impact of Cyclone Idai. The Africa Union Commission (AUC) recognizes profound loss, first to the families and to the affected countries as people who died, and in most cases got displaced were the workers.

In no uncertain terms, labour forms the central part of social fabric upon which all economic advancement is anchored. Even in the mechanical era of present time, the importance of labour cannot be underestimated. Labour is the primary factor of production in sectors such as manufacturing, trade, agriculture, construction of buildings, bridges and roads etc. Congruent to the International Worker's Day, driven by the pioneering spirit of recognizing the pivotal contribution of the workers in African economies, the African Union established the division on Labour and Employment that is charged with the mandate to proffer and promote the policy frameworks on Labour related affairs in Africa. Featuring prominently, in the work of the division of AUC, Labour and Employment is to spearhead the policies that seek to harmonize labour norms and standards, including the promotion of the conditions of employment for the workforce in African Union Member States with a view to imbue the spirit of transformative and progressive legislative frameworks in the labour sector. The AU Labour and Employment policy discourse is the microcosm of the Agenda 2063 development framework, focusing on the conundrums confronting the labour markets in Africa.

The 2019 International Worker's Day is commemorated under the theme: 'Uniting Workers for Social and Economic Advancement' – a theme that intimately resonates with the thrust of the AUC policies that are inter alia: Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security, The African Union Social Agenda 2063, Draft Disability Strategic Framework and the Regional Action Plan on Ending Attacks and Discrimination against People with Albinism in Africa, Draft Ten

Year Action Plan on Eradication of Child Labour, Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in Africa (2018-2030), a Five Year Programme on Decent Work for the Transformation of the Informal Economy (AUC-ILO), Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Forum of Social Insurance Institutions on Social security extension to workers in the informal economy and rural sector, and social security for migrant workers.

The policy frameworks aforementioned were presented for consideration by the AU Member States, Ministers of Social Development, Labour and Employment meeting that took place on 1-5 April 2019. Highlighting the critical importance of sustainable Social Security and Social Protection for the labour sector, the AUC Commissioner for Social Affairs, Her Excellency, Mrs. Amira Elfadil observed that “It is my considered view that harnessing the socio-economic dividend through scaling up social security and social protection will have a direct transformative impact on labour sector in Africa. By extending social protection across labour market, Africa will be able to prevent and overcome labour related calamities that adversely affect people’s well-being particularly those who are in the informal sector.

Abundant evidence of social protection’s positive impact exists. The research shows that extending social protection and social security to workers leads to improved access to basic social security services to address persistent backlog concerning the improved conditions of employment, for instance, the dimension of inclusion of disability in continental policy frameworks within the labour sector, as well as their mainstreaming in national budgets, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Disability in general and in the labour market, is recognized as an important policy issue by the AU and its constituent Member States, however it is not given the required status to make a real change for persons particularly the workers living with disabilities.

In line with the 2019 theme of the International Workers’ Day which puts thrust on social and economic advancement, the African Union through its policy frameworks is resolute to accelerate advancement of substantial strategic investments to the course of social development, social security and social protection within realm of labour markets and employment in order to create sustainable and conducive environment for inclusive growth in African countries.

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