



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

**BY**

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### **ON THE COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY MAY 2021**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** - Every year, the world of work celebrates the International Labour Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Predated by conceptual intent to protect the cardinal human rights, from its first celebration, International Workers' Day has always been a moment of promotion of the rights of workers.

During the last two years, the COVID-19 has taken from the world of work the joy of celebration of social achievements for the betterment of workers and their families. Beyond and more than the health crisis, this is a human crisis affecting all segments of our societies, bringing more vulnerability and insecurity in already economically and socially precarious world of work. With the idiosyncratic conditions and perilous impact of COVID-19, the socio-economic sector has been dealt a big blow, thus adversely affecting the labour markets. The AU through the ground breaking and commendable work of the Africa CDC has done tremendous work to support AU Member States to respond debilitating COVID-19.

For long, we lived with shortfalls in the African labour market. They have been brutally unveiled by the COVID-19 crisis which created a labour market crisis in the world. In Africa, it is now crucial to address the informal economy issues, to build more resilient and inclusive labour market systems, leaving not a single of worker behind. We should also be attentive to the rights of migrant workers who are contributing to the wealth and resilience of our communities, as well as to their rich cultural diversity and heritage.

The African Union Report of the Socio-Economic Impacts of the pandemic underlines the huge shocks on the economies and the high cost paid by the world of work with companies' closures and jobs losses, supply chain disruption in critical sectors such as transportation, food processing and health.

The African continent needs to come together, governments, employees, and workers' organizations, and win the fight against the disease, protect and safeguard jobs, ensure business continuity. We should work out effective exit strategies for the world of work, preserving the potential of building stronger economies after the crisis. To this end, AU produces a *Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa* with an overriding goal to

improve labour migration governance in Africa geared towards realization of Agenda 2063 vision.

African responses to the virus need to provide options to prioritize informal economy which holds most of the jobs and livelihoods. Against this backdrop, in cooperation with the NEPAD and the ILO, and in consultation with Business Africa, OATUU and ITUC-AFRICA, the Commission developed and issued the AU Guidelines on COVID-19 at Workplace. We are confident that together, we will defeat the obliterating impacts in the world of work in Africa and emerge stronger.

As the world of work requested through a decision of the extraordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment, a meeting will be organized in this very symbolic Month of May, to frame a continental coordination and cooperation mechanism on social security. It is my call to all Member States and Social Partners to participate in this important event which will pave the way to needed platform for enhancing the rights of all categories of workers, including migrant workers and workers in the informal economy and rural sector.

Going forward, the focus should be on building resilient and inclusive social security systems; using the labour market services to recognize the huge contribution of informal economy to the focus along with formal economy; creating unemployment insurance mechanisms; putting the social dialogue institutions in the center of the construction of the post COVID- 19 recovery and take into consideration the realities of the world of work. At this momentous period, it is pivotal to accentuate the importance striving to create safe workplaces that respect, promote and protect the Human Rights for all, especially children. Respectfully, with excellent cooperation of ILO, AU adopted a Ten Year Plan Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery (2020-2030), enjoining Africa restore their childhood as worst forms of child labour are unacceptable and are an affront to our common values.

The fight against the pandemic continues. While COVID-19 imposes health, social and economic crisis, it can also be seen as an opportunity for African people to cultivate impetus and efficiencies on fiscal and economic governance thus creating more job opportunities and save lives and livelihoods. Building forward better should not be an option, but a resolve of AU Member States in order to craft necessary responses including for the post pandemic recovery.

AU seizes this moment to wish all AU Member States and beyond, a peaceful commemoration of the International Workers' Day.