



**Statement by Mr. Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary,
International Trade Union Confederation – African Regional
Organisation (ITUC-Africa)
on the World Social Forum Day of Mobilisation**

26th January 2008

The celebration of the World Social Forum Day of Mobilisation provides yet another occasion to re-dedicate ourselves to the struggle for a just society. On this day we call on the independent trade union movement to rekindle its commitment towards the realisation of the goals of the decent work agenda and the achievement of democracy and social progress for the people.

The seventh WSF was hosted in Nairobi in January 2007 and was the first ever to be held in Africa. Nairobi 2007 provided the space for freedom of expression and assembly that has come to characterize the WSF and offered an important opportunity and challenge to the African trade union movement and its civil society allies. As a movement, we succeeded in having the ILO Decent Work Agenda accepted as one of the issues at the forum and it was in Nairobi that the international trade union movement and its allies launched the Decent Work for a Decent Life Campaign. One year later, the campaign for decent work is mounting and beginning to bear fruits.

Decent Work for Decent Life for All

The goal of the ILO Decent Work Agenda is not just the creation of jobs, but also the creation of jobs of acceptable quality and to ensure that economic growth and human dignity go hand in hand. We hope that our campaign around the ILO Decent Work Agenda and other issues of relevance to the world of work would contribute to our effective participation in decision making for the trade union movement is better placed to influence the direction of the emerging social movement given its historical role and wealth of experience in the struggle for equity and social justice. We should continue to create awareness of decent work amongst citizens, decision makers and key institutions; to show that decent work is the only sustainable way out of poverty and is fundamental to building democracy and social cohesion.

Economic Partnership Agreements, Development and Regional Integration

A major issue that must engage the attention of the African trade union movement is the Economic Partnership Agreements that are being pursued between the European Union (EU) and African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. ITUC-Africa is concerned about the current state of EPA negotiations and how this has undermined Africa's progress towards regional integration and poverty eradication. At a recent trade union conference on EPAs held in Kampala, Uganda, it was noted that the limited involvement of trade unions and other progressive forces of civil society in the negotiation of the initial EPAs frameworks in Africa has been a contributing factor to this unfortunate state of affairs.

The African trade union movement has recently re-affirmed the just demand that the primary objectives of the EPAs should be development, regional integration and poverty eradication. We have stressed the need for each component of the agreements to be consistent with these objectives.

We have also proposed that the EPAs take into account the social aspects of development by including a social chapter in the final agreement. The envisaged social chapter should include binding commitments on the active promotion of Decent Work in its four components of labour standards and workers' rights, employment creation, social protection and social dialogue. It should also reflect the fundamental principles contained in the following Articles of the Cotonou Agreement: Article 50 on Trade and Labour Standards, Article 25 on Social Development and Article 31 on Gender Issues. Finally, the chapter should provide for social partners to file complaints with EPA institutions in cases where trade leads to violations of trade union's rights.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

The ITUC-Africa calls on the entire international community to implement an overarching strategy for sustainable development in order to halt unsustainable consumption practices. Cooperation from all and sundry for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and renewed intergovernmental commitment to the realization of the next stage of the Kyoto Treaty on Climate Change is imperative. The ITUC-Africa has a shared vision for long-term cooperative action, including a long-term global goal for emission reductions in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities, and taking into account social and economic conditions as well as other relevant factors.

Combating the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The HIV/AIDS pandemic remains a very serious challenge for Africa and its people and hampers progress in the region. There is the need for greater resources to be put into sensitization, care, support, and building capacity for African countries to produce affordable anti-retroviral drugs as well as contribute to the global search for cure.

The rights of people living with HIV/AIDS need to be protected at work and in society through active campaign and the use of union organs and collective agreements to combat stigmatization and victimization.

Trade unions in Africa should be more active in the implementation of National HIV/AIDS policies and workplace programmes instead of leaving the space for commercial-oriented organisations to exploit workers.

The Kenyan Post-election Conflict

Nairobi and Kenya that provided so much space and freedom for the WSF is today involved in a major political crisis that threatens all the gains of democracy and development that have been made in this African country. The ITUC-Africa expresses its deep concern about the continuing waste of human lives and the wanton destruction of vital properties in the raging dispute over presidential election results in Kenya, and appeals to all parties to speedily bring to a halt this unfortunate situation. The ITUC-Africa welcomes the public declaration by the contending parties to commit to negotiations to achieve peace and the resolution of the current political crisis.

We appeal to the international community for support to salvage the plight of the victims of this conflict and share the grief all those who have lost their loved ones due to the crisis.

Nairobi, 26th January 2008