

São Paulo Declaration

As adopted by African trade union confederations and CUT Brazil on the 29th of April 2011 in São Paulo, Brazil.

We, the African trade unions: UNTA Angola, COSI and CSA Benin, CCSL and UNTC CS Cape Verde, UNTG Guinea Bissau, NLC Nigeria, UNSAS, UDEN and CNTS Senegal, COSATU South Africa, CSTT Togo, ITUC Africa, StreetNet International and students from the Global Labour University in Brazil, among other countries, from Ghana, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania together with CUT Brazil gathered in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, from the 25th April until the 1st of May, recognizing the historical links that unite the South American and African continents, reaffirm the importance of strengthening the continued ties forged during the era of the transatlantic immigrants from Africa who now are part of the Brazilian society in order to build and renew those important relationships in the era of the neoliberal globalization.

The historical links between Brazil and Africa dates back to the days of slavery and became deepened in the struggle for its abolition, as well as during the struggle for liberation from colonialism in Africa.

We recognize and welcome the major efforts undertaken by the Brazilian government in order to implement social and economic policies meant to redress the historical imbalances that led to the marginalization of workers and the poor in the country's social structure which, in our view, is an important lesson for our work as trade unionists in the African continent, particularly, at a time when we are aggressively engaged in seeking to redress both colonial and neoliberal inequalities and the legacy of underdevelopment.

However, the debt with the afro descendents in Brazil is still huge which is why there is a need for a long term strategy aimed at ensuring the durability and sustainability of the gains made so far for the advancement of a fair and egalitarian future for all, regardless of gender, race and ethnicity.

In the same spirit, we recognized the persistence of the unjust legacy of underdevelopment, inequalities and extreme poverty that continue to define the living experiences of most people in Africa, workers in particular, and call upon the trade union movement to play a leading role in mobilizing society in order to confront these social, economic and political ills for the advancement of people centered development and justice.

It was a week of vibrant discussions, rich cultural exchanges and sharing of experiences by workers from both continents in the true spirit of sisterhood and common pride. In this regard, amongst other issues discussed, were;

1. The meaning and practice of decent work in relation to our economic and social structures and how they impact on workers and the poor;

2. The policy development processes, social dialogue and political environment in which macroeconomic alternatives are being discussed in order to advance the objective of fair, just and inclusive development;
3. The experiences from developing countries and how they are engaged in the transformation of their models of development, social structures and how they are building partnerships to advance the common social agenda;
4. The challenges of a sustainable and inclusive development and social order in our countries with specific reference to the strengthening of the south-south relations for the redefinition of the unjust world economic order.

In that regard, the following proposals for consideration in the development of a cooperation framework and the basis for further engagement amongst ourselves and with the rest of the international trade union movement, were made;

1. We shall advance a developmental model that puts people at the center of the whole process;
2. The struggle against neoliberal globalization and its manifestations such as privatization and casualization of jobs are an integral part of the struggle for decent work;
3. We reaffirm the centrality of the role of the democratic State in driving development and creating enabling conditions for popular participation in policy development and public governance;
4. The neoliberalization of the economy has not only deepened inequalities and poverty, but has also worsened the conditions of work through the massive informalization, casualization and general insecurity of work, which have a definite feminine character, as women are the worse victims. This is why the struggle to organize informal sector workers and domestic workers must be a priority;
5. We reaffirm the right of people to self determination and condemn foreign military interference and occupation. We support democratic and popular struggles by the people to demand their sovereign right to rule themselves. This equally applies to the control and ownership of natural resources by the people;
6. We make strong commitments to engage our national governments on the need to ensure a progressive deal that includes reduction in CO2 emissions and make finance available for developing countries to address mitigation and adaptation challenges in ways that prepare them for transition to a global green economy;
7. Our understanding of south-south relations is premised on the following principles:

- a. The struggle for a new and just international order based on solidarity, cooperation and equality;
- b. The development in our own countries of socioeconomic systems that confront underdevelopment, poverty, inequalities and unfair allocation of resources resulting in the exclusion of the majority from productive and meaningful life.
- c. The agenda for south-south cooperation and its perspectives must be driven and owned by the people and their organizations, in which case, the trade union movement must play a central role. It is for this reason that we commit ourselves to a central and leading role of the trade union movement in defining and driving the active involvement of the people for global solidarity, workers rights and social justice for all.
- d. We undertake to deliberately promote; cooperation, knowledge sharing, experiences in various areas, amongst them; research work, science and technology to enhance better living and working conditions, climate change and organizing models for effective worker solidarity.
- e. To identify and track the activities of multinational companies in our countries, so as to ensure that we are able to campaign in defense of workers' rights, the environment and our economies. This we shall do though enhancing worker-to-worker contact in same companies to share experiences on how to respond to workplace restructuring and anti-worker/union practices.
- f. To deepen the perspective of decent work as more than just a workplace matter, but as an instrument to fight poverty and ensure decent living for all people. In this regard, it is a means to ensure fair income distribution and equal access to resources and power for workers and society in general.

We stand in solidarity with all workers and people struggling against injustice, exploitation and persecution of whatever form, which we believe is an integral part of our struggle for decent work and life.