

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Zimbabwe: Unions Call on France not to Invite Mugabe to France-Africa Summit

Brussels, 2 February 2007 (ITUC OnLine): Alarmed at reports that France may be planning to invite President Robert Mugabe and senior Zimbabwean officials to a 15-16 February France-Africa Summit in Cannes, Zimbabwean trade unions have been joined by their French, British and other European counterparts in calling for the French government to refrain from inviting representatives of the repressive regime to the event.

In a joint letter to the French Foreign Ministry on 30 January <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/DOUSTE_BALZY_ZIMBABWE_EN.pdf>, the ITUC French affiliates CFDT, CGT and CGT-FO have pointed out that any such invitation would go against the targeted sanctions against the Zimbabwean authorities which are due for formal renewal by the European Union later in February. The ITUC and the ETUC have called on their affiliates in the EU to press for the renewal of sanctions (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article513>).

British trade unions and Zimbabwe democracy groups protested today outside the French Embassy in London to reinforce the message, while the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has issued a public call for France to "bar Mugabe and his cronies" and the Dutch government is understood to be one of those pushing for retention of the sanctions following a request from the national trade union centre FNV. The ZCTU, also an ITUC affiliate, has been subjected to a sustained and brutal campaign of intimidation by the regime while the country's economy, once one of the strongest in Africa, has spiralled into meltdown as a result of government incompetence and nepotism.

Further evidence of the Mugabe government's repression of trade unions came this morning, with the family of Raymond Majongwe, Secretary General of the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) woken by security forces at 5am and subjected to threats and harassment. Majongwe, who is also a senior official of the ZCTU, has been detained and beaten on numerous occasions in the recent past.

"Governments around the world, including France, should make it clear that they reject the catastrophic policies of the Zimbabwean regime, and in particular its vicious repression of trade unions and others committed to justice and human rights", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "Allowing Robert Mugabe and his henchmen to attend this Summit would send a most dangerous signal and provide them with encouragement to carry on with their programme of violent repression, to the great detriment of the people of Zimbabwe", he added.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates.

Website: www.ituc-csi.org

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2
224 02 10 or +32 476 621 018

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