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African Regional Organisation (ICFTU-AFRO)**

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**A TRADE UNION VISION FOR AFRICA TOWARDS
CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISING AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	v
 PART ONE	 1
AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES.....	1
Africa's Development Potential	1
In Search of Development Strategies for Africa's Potential	2
Obstacles to Africa's Economic Development	9
Addressing Africa's Development Challenges:	
Making Development Agenda Work for Africans	10
 PART TWO	 21
TRADE UNION ORGANISING IN AFRICA	21
Background	21
Why do we Need Trade Unions?	22
What is Organising?.....	23
Challenges of Trade Union Organising in Africa.....	24
Recruitment Activity of Unions themselves	28
Role of Workers' Education on Organising	34
Way Forward on Trade Union Organising	34
 PART THREE	 36
FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE	36
Background	36
What is Social Justice?	36
Fighting for Social Justice	37

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAF-SAF	-	African Alternative Framework to SAPs
ACP	-	African, Caribbean and Pacific countries
AGOA	-	US Government's African Growth and Opportunity Act
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU	-	African Union
CAR	-	Compact for African Recovery
CSO	-	Civil Society Organisations
EU	-	European Union
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
G8	-	Group of Eight Industrialised Countries
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product (National Income)
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technologies
IDDA	-	Industrial Development Decade for Africa
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
ISF	-	International Solidarity Fund
MAP	-	Millennium Partnership for Africa's Development
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MDGRs	-	MDG Reports or Reviews
MNCs	-	Multi-National Corporations
NEPAD	-	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
OATUU	-	Organisation of African Trade Union Unity
OAU	-	Organisation of African Unity
PLWAs	-	People Living With AIDS
PRSPs	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SAPs	-	Structural Adjustment Programmes
STDs	-	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STIs	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TICAD	-	Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development
UN	-	United Nations
UNAIDS	-	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNECA	-	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WCL	-	World Congress of Labour
World Bank	-	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
WSSD	-	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i. This “vision paper” wishes to portray the mental picture of a desired future of African workers and their trade union movement. It is meant to articulate, in a nutshell, the direction that African trade unionists wish to find themselves and their communities in the medium to long-term period.
- ii. The title of this “vision paper” is derived from the theme “Organising, Development and Social Justice: Challenges For The African Trade Union Movement” of the Fourteenth Congress of the African Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU-AFRO) to be held in Tunis in September 2005. In turn, this catch phrase of the Congress is based on the various visions on Africa’s development propounded during the last forty years, by both Africans and external development partners. The external partners vary depending on the specific period and context – from the colonial powers, the former Soviet Union, the Americans, the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, the “donors”, the G8 and “the international community”.
- iii. This paper is divided into three parts: Africa’s development agenda, challenges of organising, and social justice. Each of the parts presents a succinct analysis of the situation and the corresponding views from the point of the trade union movement in Africa.
- iv. The main contention of the first part is that the past development agenda for Africa has been characterised by vivid and important differences between the African visions of their future development and the visions of development of the external collaborating partners. The main outcome of this discourse is that the visions of both the Africans and of its partners emanated from governments and not from the people. In particular the African people generally have had very little knowledge of the visions promulgated by their leaders on their behalf.
- v. The current dilemma of the African development paradigm is that while in the past there were substantive differences between the internal and external visions regarding the nature of development and how to achieve it, recently the development vision of the “externals” has won the day. For instance, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which articulates the latest “African vision” has in essence accepted the external vision and articulates it as a consensus African vision and which is hailed by the foreign donors. To many observers, the development vision of NEPAD is, essentially the same vision of the same type of development, which has been propounded by foreign institutions and countries in different languages since the time of independence. NEPAD now articulates an approach to development, which is accepted by most African leaders as well as the leaders of the G8 countries.
- vi. Part Two of the vision paper traces the historical development of the African trade union movement that is closely linked to the political, social and economic development of the continent. In many countries, the trade union movement was brought together prior to or immediately after political independence. From then on trade union activities and membership flourished due to the favourable legislation and political patronage.
- vii. Trade union membership grew steadily during the 1960s and 1970s, but took a downward trend with the emergency of the economic shocks of the 1980s. This is mainly attributed to stringent economic reform measures and public sector reforms that resulted in massive retrenchments and redundancies. The decline in membership was further aggravated by the enactment of new “investor friendly” statutes that were aimed at deregulating the labour market. The labour market scenario became hostile to trade unions thus making it difficult for the unions to organise freely. The backlash of past union friendly labour laws exposed the vulnerability of unions especially in

areas of organising and recruitment. Current investor practices such as hiring on contract basis and casualisation of labour have impacted negatively on trade union membership. Other factors such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, retirements, natural wastage and the growth of the informal economy have also affected union membership.

- viii. Consequently, the decline in membership has affected trade union finances and operations. Internal strife leading to splits in unions have led to union fragmentation, thus further weakening them. In this current state, unions are vulnerable to external machinations and influence. Weak institutional frameworks and physical infrastructure present further constraints for most unions. Unions are also known to lack capacity in terms of human resources including professional acumen.
- ix. In the context of declining density and power, African unions have engaged in a debate about their survival. As part of the implementation process of previous ICFTU-AFRO Congress resolution pertaining to “the challenge of organising,” the trade union movement must re-invigorate its approaches, strategies and programmes on recruitment of members by ensuring that both human and material resources are available to undertake this inevitable task. This is despite the observation that there has been a commendable growth of the membership of the ICFTU-AFRO, as measured by the number of affiliated national trade union centres. No doubt the organisation has gone a long way to start this process and this part seeks to indicate the outcome of the consultations processes with affiliates to determine the innovative approaches to organising. But serious challenges of organising remain.
- x. The end result of the organising campaign must be the conviction that that unity in the African trade union movement is a prerequisite for the labour world to play its rightful role in the management of public affairs, both at the national level and at the regional level.
- xi. The principal message of the final part of the vision paper, which is one of the cardinal values and core principles of the ICFTU-AFRO, is to build and achieve social justice and stability within the economic processes. Unlike in many parts of the world today where many advocates of social justice are getting into some state of despair, the trade union movement wishes to pursue its historical mandate. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO believes that the best way to fight fear is confront it and make the organisation remain the reference point for knowledge on labour issues; centre for solidarity on action against violation of human and trade union rights; a platform for regional debate and negotiation on socio-economic policies; and a source for advocacy, information and policy formulation. The focus of the ICFTU-AFRO in this respect is to achieve conditions of freedom and dignity, economic security and equality of treatment for working people in the African continent.
- xii. The ICFTU-AFRO has sought to achieve this mandate by promoting and defending the rights of working people, institutional capacity building of affiliates and agitating for the improvement of the situation of working women and men and other vulnerable groups throughout Africa. This role has become more and more challenging in the wake of the globalisation process in which market forces are the determinants or major influencing factors of economic outcomes. Today, traditional social partners, legal norms and state authorities are sidelined in favour of market forces, especially in effecting changes in the labour market and labour relations. This in effect continues to have profound impact on workers and their trade unions.
- xiii. The fact that economic globalisation has brought prosperity for a few individuals and growing inequality for the majority, brings into focus the issue of social responsibility and lay bare the fact that markets do not function in isolation from their social and political contexts. The financial

markets have humbled governments, weakened trade unions and increased extreme vulnerability.

- xiv. The trade union movement in Africa is in consonant with the global unions in the belief that a strong social framework is indispensable if we are to overcome the problems of human insecurity and unemployment being aggravated by the free market policy. This is certainly the most realistic way to achieve and ensure a human face to the globalised economy. The instruments needed to reach this goal are social dialogue and policies to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, employment and peoples' security in an atmosphere of good governance that will ultimately translate into economic growth and social equity at all stages of the development process.

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ICFTU-AFRO

Part One

AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES

Africa's Development Potential

*A continent with
huge, but still
untapped potential*

*Africa is rich in oil,
metal and mineral
products*

*Natural beauty,
wildlife and
biodiversity are an
added asset*

1. Africa is the world's second largest continent after Asia, with a total surface area, including several surrounding islands of over 30 million square kilometres. Africa has 53 independent countries - 47 mainland and 6 island states - with an estimated total population of 700 million. While many write off Africa as the continent of despair, other enterprising individuals and organisations have recognised the huge, untapped potential of Africa and are actively pursuing business ventures across the continent.
2. Africa produces more than 60 metal and mineral products and is a major producer of several of the world's most important minerals and metals including oil and gas, gold, diamonds, uranium, manganese, chromium, nickel, bauxite and cobalt. Although under-explored, Africa hosts about 30% of the planet's mineral reserves making it a truly strategic producer of these precious metals (see table 1).
3. Countries such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe dominate the African mining industry, whilst Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Zambia depend heavily on the mining industry as a major foreign currency earner. Substantial oil reserves are also found in Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Sudan. Unfortunately, several African civil wars are funded, and often caused, by some of these commodities, in particular diamonds. Major recent discoveries include the discovery of several potentially diamondiferous kimberlites in Mauritania, and marine deposits of diamonds in offshore southern Namibia.
4. The eastern region of Africa is home to the great wildlife reserves of the Serengeti and Masai Mara plains and the Rift Valley lake system. The Horn of Africa boasts of the source of the longest river in the world, the Nile River, which flows northwards over 6,690 kilometres to end in the Mediterranean Sea.
5. Perhaps Africa's greatest opportunity lies in its biodiversity, which ranges from Sahara desert to tropical jungle, from snow-capped volcanic Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya to the beaches of East and West Africa. Then there is the excitement of stalking big game in the African bush to the thrill of white-water rafting through the gorges below Victoria Falls or the awe of seeing the Egyptian pyramids at sunrise.

Table 1: Africa's Share of World Reserves

Reserves	% of Africa's Shares	Reserves	% of Africa's Shares
Diamonds	96	Gold	50+
Chromium	85	Thorium and	
Platinum	85	Uranium	30
Cobalt	55	Traded oil	20
Manganese	40	Cocoa	70
Bauxite	40	Hydroelectric	
Copper	13	potential	27
Phosphate	50	Oil palm	50
Coffee	33		

In Search of Development Strategies for Africa's Potential

Africa's development vision

6. When the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was created in 1963 in Addis Ababa, it incorporated in its Charter the vision for Africa as follows:
 - a) achieving independence from colonial rule so that Africans can rule themselves democratically; and
 - b) achieving continental unity so that Africa can bring about faster economic growth and development to catch up with the industrialised countries, and be strong within the international system.
7. Independent African countries added to this vision several other elements such as, eradication of poverty and disease, self-reliance and equity. It is fair to say that in the 1960s, most African countries proclaimed and propounded this vision.

One continent, two "blocks"

8. However, before the end of the 1960s, there appeared a major division of African countries into two groups: Monrovia and the Casablanca blocks. The Monrovia block adopted a vision of the future of Africa, giving credence to faster continental political unity, self-reliance and equity with socialism being the main path to development. The Casablanca block, on the other hand, had a less radical vision, emphasising nation building, and a development path through laissez faire and open market.

The rapid growth of the 1960s and 1970s was short-lived

9. Irrespective of the ideological path most African countries actually experienced rapid growth in the 1960s and early 1970s. During the 1960-75 period, Africa grew at the rate of 4.5%, while exports, agriculture and manufacturing grew at 2.8%, 1.6% and 6%, respectively. Unfortunately, the whole of the African continent was later on faced with various crises that saw it to stagnate.

The Monrovia Declaration

10. The OAU and in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) mobilised African intellectual and political resources to discuss the crises and come up with a vision and a plan of action for getting Africa out of the crises and towards a better future. This serious effort led to the now famous Monrovia Declaration (1979) which articulated Africa's vision of its future. It provided the vision and scenario of Africa's future. The Africa of 2000/2020 will "have a high degree of self sufficiency, a democratic national development which will distribute the fruits of our efforts more equitably, will have a strong African solidarity and that Africa will carry more weight in world affairs" Thus, even before the shock waves of the 1980s had struck, African leaders had seen the need for a long-term strategy for structural transformation.
11. This declaration was the African strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. The declaration ranked self-sufficiency in food and industrial development as the driving force for the emancipation of the continent. The declaration was also committed to *inter alia* "the development of indigenous entrepreneurial, technical man-power and technological capacities" to enable the African peoples to assume greater responsibility in achieving rapid development.
12. The declaration provided the vision and scenario of Africa's future. The Africa of 2000/2020 will "have a high degree of self sufficiency, a democratic national development which will distribute the fruits of our efforts more equitably, will have a strong African solidarity and that Africa will carry more weight in world affairs"
13. Since then, plans to 'rescue' Africa have been so prolific that they can fill a school library. Most of these plans have achieved little except gather dust or remain reference materials for students. It has been observed that there have been more planning commissions on Africa than there have been military coups. No one, except for obsessive historians, remember how many of these there have been.

The Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos

14. The Council of Ministers of the OAU meeting in Lagos, in April 1980, formulated a Framework for a Programme for Action for the African Industrial Development Decade (1980-1990). This programme was adopted by Heads of State and Government as the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980.
15. The Lagos Plan of Action provided the framework and strategies for implementing development programmes. It based its strategies on some important principles, which it considered will lead to an alternative form of development and will take Africa out of its crises. These principles were:
 - a) Self reliance should be the basis of development – at the national, sub-regional and regional levels;
 - b) Equity in the distribution of wealth at the national level is a fundamental objective of development;
 - c) Public sector is essential for development and it should be expanded;

- d) Outside capital is an unavoidable necessity and it should be directed to those areas where African capital is lacking or inadequate – such as mining, energy and large scale projects;
- e) Inter-African economic cooperation and integration is essential and should be effected as soon as possible; and
- f) Change in the international economic order to favour Africa and Third World countries is essential and Africa should continue to fight for NIEO (New International Economic Order).

16. On the basis of these principles, the Lagos Plan of Action gave primacy to the development of agriculture (first for food and then for export), industrialisation (to satisfy basic needs), mining industries (to recover total and permanent sovereignty over national resources, establish mineral based industries), human resources, and science and technology.

*The Industrial
Development
Decade for Africa*

17. Conscious of the need to translate the development targets in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, the Heads of State and Government proclaimed the 1980s as the Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA). The main aim was to focus greater attention upon the industrialisation of Africa, and mobilizing greater political commitment, financial and technical support at the national, regional and international levels. At the international level the United Nations General Assembly formally ratified IDDA at its 35th Session.

18. The implementation phase of the IDDA programme (1985-1990) was focused on the local development of factor inputs. Special emphasis was given: to the promotion and realisation of intra-African industrial co-operation; adjustment of industrial strategies, policies, plans and institutional infrastructure; development of core industries in metallurgical, engineering, chemical, building materials and capital goods industries and processing of local raw materials, development and promotion of small and medium-scale industries and entrepreneurship; development of human resources and technological capabilities for industrial development; mobilization of financial resources; and the enhancement of intra-African industrial co-operation.

*Structural
Adjustment
Programmes*

19. Notwithstanding numerous development initiatives most African countries experienced a series of serious setbacks since early 1980s, whose effect was to further adversely affect the rates of economic and social development. Many economists referred to this crisis as “structural,” although there are many causes (both internal and external) to the situation. The external factors, including repeated droughts, the continuing low level of commodity prices in real terms, and the growing burden of debt have played a significant part. Internal factors arising from inappropriate policies, institutional weaknesses, administrative shortcomings, and political instabilities also have a major responsibility.

20. In a determined effort to re-accelerate the withered process of development and in response to the structural crisis, many countries of Africa adopted the now infamous Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). These programmes, supported by international financial institutions (in particular, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) were aimed at reducing fiscal and monetary imbalances by curbing government expenditures and a reduction in

the scope of public sector activities, exchange rate adjustment, price and import liberalisation, institutional reform, and a greater reliance on market forces.

SAPs did not take into account the link between social development and economic policies

21. The IMF/World Bank-sponsored SAPs continued to be embraced by the many governments in Africa, for nearly two decades, with more disastrous implications to the economies. Of particular importance was the degeneration of living standards and economic recession caused by the massive devaluation of national currencies, reduced public spending, and higher external debt payments.

22. The fundamental problem of SAPs was that the IMF and the World Bank did not take into account the close connection between social development and economic policies and the need to establish a broad consensus over the purposes and timing of reforms through widespread consultation. These serious weaknesses were derived from:

- a) the prevailing ideology of market liberalisation and financial stability;
- b) the prolonged period of crisis management associated with the debt crisis of the 1980s and the dramatic breakdown of centrally-planned economies in the 1990s;
- c) pressure from the major economic powers to achieve rapid changes with minimum transfer of resources; and the failure to co-ordinate policies between countries, including the largest industrialised nations, to ensure a high, stable and better balanced growth of the world economy.

African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment

23. The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAF) originated from studies undertaken by the UNECA and was originally presented as proposed framework in July 1989. The proposal was intended as an alternative to orthodox prescriptions of the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and IMF) and its starting point was that Africa's development obstacles were not only economic, but political and social as well.

24. The draft was presented to the UN General Assembly in November 1989, but the United States voted against the resolution. As fate would have it the AAF-SAF did not see the light of day as it was vehemently opposed and often roundly condemned by the World Bank, IMF and the donor community. Needless to say, the AAF-SAF was marginalized and eventually followed the fate of previous African initiatives.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)

25. Partly in response to the critique of many of their structural adjustment programmes, the IMF and the World Bank adopted new frameworks for their concessional lending to poor developing countries in September 1999. Henceforth, then country-owned (and not the IMF or World Bank-driven) poverty reduction strategies were to provide the basis of all concessional lending. This shift in overall policy goals implies that IMF and World Bank policies would have to move away from focusing exclusively on economic growth per se, but also deal with questions of distribution, access to resources and services in order to raise the living standards of the poorest members of society.

*Millennium
Development Goals
(MDGs)*

26. The international trade union movement is hopeful that this strategy will be a decisive step towards more realistic and socially responsible policies by the Bretton Woods Institutions. The invitation to trade unions and other civil society organizations to work with governments in the preparation, implementation and review of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) is welcome. The PRSPs are now considered as the official policy documents with regard to economic and social policies.
27. The PRSP framework provides a new opening for trade unions to engage with their governments and demand a role in policy-making. It also gives unions a chance to work with NGOs and other elements of civil society and forge meaningful relationships with potential allies for future campaigns. Most importantly, the PRSP process represents another area where trade unions around the world can act in solidarity with each other in pushing for pro-poor and pro-worker reforms in the global economy.
28. In September 2000, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration covers issues of peace, security and development, including the environment, protection of vulnerable groups, human rights and governance. The Declaration consolidates a set of inter-connected development goals into a global agenda. These goals are designated as the “Millennium Development Goals” or “MDGs”:
 - a) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - b) Achieve universal primary education
 - c) Promote gender equality and empower women
 - d) Reduce child mortality
 - e) Improve maternal health
 - f) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - g) Ensure environmental sustainability
 - h) Develop a global partnership for development
29. Each goal comprises numerical targets to be achieved by the year 2015. Appropriate indicators have been selected to monitor progress and the goals, targets and indicators must be considered as indicative for country-level monitoring.
30. The MDGs help to reinforce strategies to achieve other internationally agreed objectives reached at world summits and global conferences during the 1990s. They build on the outcomes of these conferences that will, in many instances serve to monitor progress towards human development. MDGs do not undercut in any way internationally agreed human rights standards while at the same time provide useful benchmarks against which progress in meeting human rights, employment and social protection can be measured.
31. MDG monitoring takes place at the global and country levels. At the global level, the UN Secretary-General reports annually to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Every five years, the report will include a comprehensively review of progress towards the MDGs. At the country level, MDG Reports or Reviews (MDGRs) are meant to help engage political leaders and top decision-makers, as well as to mobilise civil society,

communities, the general public, parliamentarians and the media in a debate about human development.

*The space for Africa's
own development
planning*

32. We can identify two comprehensive initiatives by Africans themselves aimed at addressing the developmental challenges of Africa: the Lagos Plan of Action and the companion African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment. But it is also possible to note that at each time, these initiatives were counteracted and arguably undermined by policy frameworks developed from outside the continent and imposed on the continent.

33. What is observable is that whether the planning was derived from within the continent or derived from outside Africa, the development initiatives have largely ignored the democratisation process. In particular, the development initiatives have not taken into account the expansion of space for citizen expression and participation. In other words, the planning processes have fell short of acknowledging the contribution of citizen's struggles and activism.

*Other development
planning initiatives*

34. Other existing initiatives on Africa include: the G8 Okinawa Declaration; the EU/ACP Cotonou Agreement; the EU/ACP Cairo Plan of Action; the US Government's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA); Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD); and the Commission for Africa.

*The New Partnership
for Africa's
Development (NEPAD)*

35. The latest proclaimed African initiative, *the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)* was developed in the same period as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's "Compact for African Recovery," as well as the World Bank's "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?" Based on past experiences, African leaders have noted that peace, security, democracy, good governance, human rights and sound economic management are preconditions for sustainable development. In this regard, the leaders have accepted the responsibility for addressing these issues, and through NEPAD, pledge to work individually and collectively to promote these principles in their countries, sub-regions and the continent.

36. NEPAD is a programme of the African Union designed to address the current challenges facing the African continent, such as the increasing poverty levels, underdevelopment and the continued marginalization of Africa. The proponents of NEPAD regard it as a holistic, integrated strategic development plan to enhance growth and poverty reduction in Africa by addressing key social, economic and political priorities in a coherent and balanced manner. It is seen a vision for Africa, conceived and developed by African leaders. It is also a framework for new partnerships with the rest of the world to accelerate the integration of the African continent into the global economy.

37. Principally, NEPAD is a merger of two new initiatives that had emerged at the dawn of the new millennium as visions for Africa's long-term development. These are the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Program (MAP), proposed by Presidents Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa; and the OMEGA Plan, proposed by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. A third framework, the Compact for

African Recovery (CAR), had been developed by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as a technical input to the elaboration and implementation of a consolidated Plan for Africa. African leaders unanimously adopted NEPAD and AU initiatives in July 2001 at the OAU Summit in Lusaka.

38. The priority areas of intervention to achieve the NEPAD goals and objectives are summarized as:
- a) Peace, security, democracy and political governance;
 - b) Economic and corporate governance;
 - c) Regional cooperation and integration;
 - d) Infrastructure;
 - e) Human development;
 - f) Agriculture and environment; and
 - e) Market access and export diversification
39. An important innovation introduced by NEPAD is the peer review mechanism by which African leaders pledge to undertake self-examination individually and collectively for good economic and political governance.

Obstacles to Africa's Economic Development

*Improved growth rates,
but still far short of
targets*

40. Recent economic trends show that Africa was the second fastest growing developing region behind Eastern and Southern Asia. Africa's performance was underpinned by rising prices of oil and other commodities, an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) and good macroeconomic fundamentals, backed up by improved weather conditions. As a result, real GDP grew at 3.8% in 2003. These signs of progress are encouraging, although they fall short of the continent's urgent need for much more rapid growth. Furthermore, Africa is still a long way from achieving the 7% growth that is required to meet the principal Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015.

*Causes of Africa's
lopsided development*

41. Africa's development is hampered by two inter-related sources: (a) hostile international economic and political order; and (b) inherent domestic weaknesses.

(a) Hostile international economic and political order:

- (i) Depreciating terms of trade derived from the fact that African economies are integrated into the global economy as mere exporters of primary commodities and importers of manufactured products.
- (ii) Misguided policies of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation as well as an unsound package of macro-economic policies imposed through structural adjustment conditionality by the Bretton Woods Institutions and now institutionalised within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- (iii) Unsustainable and unjustifiable debt burden.

(b) Inherent domestic weakness:

- (i) Exacerbated by the hostile global order, the internal structural imbalances of African economies have led to the disintegration of social

- fabric of the continent.
- (ii) Lopsided neo-liberal structural adjustment policies, inequitable socio-economic and political structures have destroyed the industrial base, whilst agricultural production, public services, and the capacity of states and governments in Africa to make and implement policies in support of balanced and equitable national development emasculated.
 - (iii) Workers, peasant, small and indigenous producers, women and children have borne the entire burden worsening the social capital of the continent.

Addressing Africa's Development Challenges: Making Development Agenda Work for Africans

*Africa must seize its
potential opportunities
to promote growth*

42. The trade union movement in Africa concurs with the analysis that the development challenges facing the continent are enormous, and requires not a simple solution. The ICFTU-AFRO has particularly been concerned that prospects for Africa are not promising, with tens of millions barely surviving in a degrading and debilitating poverty. Furthermore, ICFTU-AFRO also recognises the need for an integrated holistic approach. Africa has to adapt to this process and seize the potential opportunities that exist for the economic and social progress of the continent and its integration in the global economy. In that respect, the success of this adaptation depends to a large extent on the actors and the countries themselves. To achieve these objectives, African countries should create the necessary conditions for a conducive environment to boost economic growth, create employment and promote development.

*Employment creation
is key to poverty
alleviation*

43. The ICFTU-AFRO believes that globalisation does not necessarily lead to prosperity for all and is not a guarantee for growth and employment for all. Globalisation embodies many threats and challenges, though it also has numerous opportunities that can be tapped. Given that globalisation is an irreversible process, Africa has to adapt to this process and seize the potential opportunities that exist for the economic and social progress of the continent and its integration in the global economy.

44. The ICFTU-AFRO is concerned that, despite the fact that the IMF and World Bank programmes now focus on poverty reduction and national ownership, their policies are still largely anti-worker and anti-poor.

45. Employment is one of the key challenges and top priorities in Africa, but glaringly omitted in key planning processes of the IMF and World Bank. Focus needs to be placed on highly productive and employment intensive sectors with particular attention on the agricultural sector. Rural development and the creation of productive rural employment must be the main pillar of development policy.

*Build capacity for
effective participation
in PRSPs*

46. Whilst commitments emanating from the IMF and World Bank declaring that country-owned poverty reduction strategies would provide the basis of all concessional lending and that trade unions and others will engage with governments in preparing and implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are welcome, the ICFTU-AFRO have expressed their concern

that early processes have not lived to the expectations. Instances exist where civil society participation took place but where organised labour was not invited at all. In many other consultative processes where trade unions were invited, this did not happen in a meaningful way. Engagements have often been cosmetic and hastily done.

47. On the other hand, one cannot overlook the fact that the responsibility for flawed or unsatisfactory participation processes does not lie exclusively with the Bretton Woods institutions and the national governments of PRSP-countries. Even in cases, where CSOs and among them trade unions were given the space to express their views on government policies in the context of a PRSP, these opportunities were mostly not used effectively by the unions due to lack of technical capacity to engage their respective governments and to come up with credible alternatives to some government policies which directly or indirectly affect workers and their families.
48. Nonetheless, the ICFTU-AFRO is of the opinion that the PRSP framework provides a new opening for trade unions to engage with their governments and demand a role in policy-making.
49. Trade unions have a specific and important role to play in order to ensure that the new poverty reduction commitments on the part of the World Bank and IMF translate into effective change on a country level. Despite the limitations so far observed, the trade unions are still endeavouring to participate in the PRSP process, so long as the right environment and incentives for their effective involvement are put in place. The maintenance of peace and security within and among nations, democracy, the rule of law, the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to development, effective, transparent and accountable governance, gender equality, full respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and the rights of migrant workers are some of the essential elements for the realisation of social and people-centred development.
50. Moreover, PRSPs should contain, more than in the past, measures to improve the access of the poor in particular to income earning opportunities and to effective social services, while seeking to shield them as far as possible from adverse social consequences. Increased priority should be given to investment in human capital through nutrition, health, education and decent shelter programmes, especially to improve the situation of women and children.
51. The ICFTU-AFRO commends the African leaders for putting in place the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The trade union movement also welcomes the recognition by the NEPAD secretariat of the crucial role of the ICFTU-AFRO and the workers it represents. Further reflections on the NEPAD, it must re-iterated, indicate that while many of its stated goals may be well intentioned, the development vision and economic measures that it canvases for the realisation of these goals are largely flawed. As a result, NEPAD may not contribute to addressing the developmental problems, and may actually inadvertently reinforce the hostile external environment and the internal weaknesses that constitute the major obstacles to Africa's development.

*Making NEPAD work
for African workers*

Reconstitution of the developmental state via human-rights based approach

52. The trade union movement in Africa recognises that, above all, these measures require the reconstitution of the developmental state: a state for which social equity, social inclusion, national unity and respect for human rights form the basis of economic policy; a state which actively promotes, and nurtures the productive sectors of the economy; actively engages appropriately in the equitable and balanced allocation and distribution of resources among sectors and people; and most importantly a state that is democratic and which integrates people's control over decision making at all levels in the management, equitable use and distribution of social resources.

53. To achieve sustainable, broad-based economic growth, the trade union movement in Africa believes that more open, accountable and participatory political systems are vital, including a stronger role for the trade union movement and other progressive mass-based democratic civil society organisations. ICFTU-AFRO recognises that political, economic and social reforms must be initiated and carried out by African countries themselves, based on their visions, values and individual socio-economic background. Africa's development partners should therefore support African initiatives in these areas.

54. The African government must reaffirm their commitment to improving the quality of governance, in particular, transparency and accountability in public administration. Government must recognise that criteria for public expenditure should aim at enhancing overall socio-economic development and reducing non-productive expenditures. The building of human and institutional capacities for sustainable development is essential for all of these objectives.

Domestication of MDG targets by African countries

55. The ICFTU-AFRO has taken note of the fact that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have elicited great interest and attracted broad support from the international community. The experience of the last decade has shown that achieving them will be difficult but not impossible. The countries of Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean are on course to fulfil many of the MDGs.

56. Running at an average economic growth rate of about 3.3% (against a target of 7%) a year in the recent past, the trade union movement is deeply concerned that most sub-Saharan African countries will not achieve the goal, and the number of the poor in the region is likely to increase. On present trends, only the five countries of North Africa—with significantly lower poverty levels and better access to education, health, and other social services—are on course to meet the poverty reduction and social development goals.

57. Trade unions are disappointed by the lack of accelerated progress by African countries and limited support from the international community. The ICFTU-AFRO calls for more genuine partnerships between countries and between public and private sector. Definitive guidelines for these partnerships are needed to ensure that proposals abide by UN principles and do not undermine national action, ownership or regulation of vital human services. Deliberate and systematic integration of workers' concerns at levels of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MDG targets are a necessity.

Harnessing the challenges of globalisation and external environment

58. In response to the recent groundbreaking report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) entitled *A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All* (February 2004), the ICFTU-AFRO supports the notion that globalisation can and must change. Building a fair and inclusive globalisation must become a worldwide priority.
59. Due to the challenges associated with the hostile global environment to Africa's development, the ICFTU-AFRO urges action towards stabilisation of commodity prices; reform of the international financial system (to prevent debt, exchange rate instability and capital flow volatility) as well as of the World Bank and the IMF; and fundamental changes to the existing agreements of the WTO regime.
60. Irrespective of whether or not Africa's external debt should be repaid, such payments cannot and will not be met given the structural political and economic constraints that the continent currently faces. If debt is at the heart of Africa's stagnation and marginalisation, then urgent solutions to the problem should be sought. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO calls total and unequivocal cancellation of Africa's debt.
61. The trade union movement in Africa recognises the central importance of international trade to our future development prospect. In this regard, Africa's development partners should work to facilitate market access for African products globally and to assist in upgrading and diversifying African exports. The issue of the provision of agricultural subsidies to Northern farmers, which altogether put farmers in Africa in a total disadvantageous position, is critical in this respect and needs to be reviewed.

Encourage sound macro-economic fundamentals

62. The trade union movement seeks to encourage the notion that national development plans must promote agriculture, industry, services including health and public education. Similarly, plans must be protected and supported through appropriate trade, investment and macro-economic policy measures. A strategy for financing must seek to mobilise and build on internal and intra-African resources through imaginative savings measures; reallocation of expenditure away from wasteful items including excessive military expenditure, corruption and mismanagement; creative use of remittances of Africans living abroad; corporate taxation; retention and re-investment of foreign profits; and the prevention of capital flight, and the leakage of resources through practices of tax evasion practised by foreign investors and local elites. Foreign investment, while necessary, must be carefully balanced and selected to suit national objectives.

Economic development through sensible privatisation

63. It is not disputable that the private sector is vital as an engine for sustainable development. As such, the trade union movement in Africa is particularly interested in the social aspects of privatisation, structural adjustment and economic transformation. However, ICFTU-AFRO is also concerned that Africa is strewn with disastrous effects of privatisation affecting the economic, political and cultural fabric. Experiences of hardship faced by workers and their families have indicated that privatisation and economic transformation of

countries have been undertake without due concern to the stakeholders.

64. The term “privatisation” is now in such common use that it has become a household reference involving the transfer of rights of ownership or service-provision from the public sector to the private sector. However, since privatisation forms an important component in the larger economic reform programme, it received cold reception from workers, among others. Regrettably, this has been due to the fact that social dialogue in the privatisation and restructuring process is often neglected, and hence the lack of appreciation and enthusiasm by trade unions in the process. For changes to mean progress, and reforms to be economically, socially and politically acceptable, a transparent form of consultations with stakeholders is of paramount importance. Trade unions will continue to resist any forms of privatisation that does not seem to take care of their welfare considerations.
65. Unions need to stress that resisting privatisation programmes in their current format does not mean defending inefficiency and the waste of resources at state-owned enterprises. Privatisation is counterproductive to not only for the jobs of union members but also for different development perspectives, including the provision of affordable services for the poor.
66. Similarly, unions need to point out how privatisation widens gender inequalities. Women often occupy the most vulnerable jobs and are the first to be retrenched from privatised entities. In addition, women are also the worst affected when social service become unaffordable because they are expected to look after the children, the sick and the elderly.
67. Many countries in Africa are taking greater interest in regional economic integration and have developed programmes for the promotion of this cause. Trade unions for their part have also explicitly supported the emergence and strengthening of regional integration. The ICFTU-AFRO is on record as having called for increased government efforts to bring about faster regional economic integration. Trade unions have been reliable partners in various activities of such economic and social interest groups.
68. Of concern to the trade union organizations is the fact that the resulting regional integration agreements have mainly concentrated on capital and natural resource mobilisation and have tended to ignore the critical role of human resource mobilisation and other social aspects. Trade unions have reiterated that, for integration to be successful, the stakeholders, of whom workers and their organisations are a major component, must be involved in the design process, decision making machineries and implementation of all programmes and project activities. Social aspects such as poverty eradication, human and trade union rights, the creation of decent jobs and the observance of international labour standards, should always be among the main priorities.
69. The mention of trade unions as one of the beneficiaries under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement is a strong point that could avoid the weaknesses that had beset former Lomé IV Agreement. It is also useful to note that trade unions are no longer lumped together with other members of civil society, thus giving

*Regional integration:
getting it right*

unions the rightful competitive edge. Moreover the objectives as well as the scope of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement are the very ones that trade unions has been campaigning for sometime.

*Conflict resolution and
peace for development*

70. The trade union position is that present efforts to foster economic cooperation and regional integration must be complemented by a continuous focus on the diverse areas of international trade and customs union. Moreover, trade unions need to emphasise on the need for capacity building and strengthening of regional economic groupings with the aim of making meaningful decisions in such forums.

71. Africa has the disadvantage of being a continent at war with itself. Most conflict situations have been blamed on colonial legacies as well as the unequal distribution of resources among the many ethnic communities. Ethnic and religious differences are also responsible for the continent's conflicts.

72. Continued conflicts and political uncertainties in Africa add to difficulties of the region as a whole – limiting groundwork for stronger growth. While the trend for many African countries is one of slow economic improvement, those nations in conflict suffered negative growth and an alarming deterioration in basic conditions (Angola, -0.2%, Burundi, -2.4%, Democratic Republic of Congo, -4.6%, Rwanda, -2.1%, and Sierra Leone, -4.6%).

73. The ICFTU-AFRO is further concerned with the realisation that those born in African countries beset by conflict are also likely to have shorter life expectancy, and the infant mortality rates are also higher than in other more stable countries. Sierra Leone is a striking illustration of this trend, having the region's lowest life expectancy rate, one of just 37 years.

74. Crisis and conflict resolution therefore remains a major concern for the ICFTU-AFRO. Trade unions must add their specific contribution to strengthen the peace and reconstruction process in their respective countries and the region as a whole. By fighting for social justice and decent work, against inequalities and violation of human rights, trade unions can contribute to the eradication of the causes of conflicts. Their ability to organise effectively and carry out a structured social dialogue based on negotiation enables them to be reliable and influential partners in dialogue. Furthermore, given that they are deeply rooted in various social groups, they are able to promote dialogue and the emergence of consensus between different population groups. In the Great Lakes region in Africa, trade unions have accomplished much in their efforts to overcome the bitter legacy of genocide and inter-ethnic rivalry.

*Natural and manmade
disasters and
emergency relief*

75. African trade unionists note with great concern that over the last four decades, and particularly in recent years, a large number of African countries have suffered and are still suffering from natural and man-made disasters. Recent Asian tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean and the perpetual flooding and droughts in Eastern and Southern Africa are cases in point.

76. These disasters have constrained development in many African countries, destroyed the very basis for development, increased the number of refugees,

and diverted human and financial resources that otherwise could have served development purposes.

77. It is the conviction of the ICFTU-AFRO that man-made disasters in our continent are the result of a complex interplay of political, economic and social factors. In this context, lack of democratisation and respect for human rights and the rights of minorities are among the root causes of these disasters.

78. Consequently, trade unions accept that responsibility for disaster prevention and management rests primarily with Africans themselves. African government must therefore be more determined to devote efforts to addressing the root causes of these disasters. The critical role of regional cooperation as demonstrated in the past must also be confirmed.

*The devastating effects
of the HIV/AIDS
pandemic*

79. HIV/AIDS is now considered as the most formidable development challenge of our time. AIDS is now a world-wide problem, but it has hit sub-Saharan Africa the hardest. Statistics show that 75% of the global deaths due AIDS since the epidemic began have been African men, women, and children. It is more disconcerting to read recent reports that nearly 90 million Africans (or up to 10% of the continent's population.) could be infected by HIV in the next 20 years if more is not done to combat the epidemic.

80. What makes HIV/AIDS unique is its impact on development, for it undermines five of the latter's foundations: economic growth, good governance, the development of human capital, and the investment climate and labour productivity.

81. The trade union movement is concerned that AIDS costs a typical African country more than 0.5% per capita growth every year. Because this disease kills so many young adults in the prime of their lives, the impact on both the public and private sector is devastating.

82. The ICFTU-AFRO is therefore deeply concerned that African countries have taken the full force of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The above alarming statistics show that for those of us who live in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is a human catastrophe from which no single one of us in the region will be exempted because HIV/AIDS affects every one. Stigma, silence, denial and discrimination against workers living with HIV/AIDS increases the impact of the epidemic and constitute a major barrier to effectively penetrating the workplace and getting the desired results after implementing HIV/AIDS activities.

83. Workers continue to be subjected to a mandatory HIV test at the time of recruitment and promotions. Creating an environment free from discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS and breaking the wall of silence will ensure a proper response.

84. The ICFTU-AFRO and its affiliated unions must re-emphasise and appreciate the importance of networking and alliance building in order to win the war against HIV and AIDS. The trade union movement must continue to strengthen the relationship between workers, employers and governments at the regional,

national and workplace levels. This would effectively address the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS at the workplace and in the communities that the workers live in.

85. Similarly, the ICFTU-AFRO is convinced that tackling the epidemic effectively should constitute an integral part of our African agenda for promoting sustainable development, poverty reduction, peace and security and political stability consistent with the Millennium Development Goals.

86. To this end, the ICFTU-AFRO has designed a workable framework: the 2000 Gaborone Declaration and Programme of Action. This framework identifies measures to combat HIV/AIDS more effectively at the workplace by developing policies and strategies that will guide the actions of all partners within the trade union movement and the workplace. This framework also aims at highlighting measures of improved HIV/AIDS policies and strategies so that workers infected and affected with HIV/AIDS and their families will have a new vision for the future.

*Promoting labour
standards for economic
prosperity*

87. The introduction of structural adjustment policies in the early 1980s brought to the fore the realisation that the implementation of economic reforms *per se* could be inconsistent with the provisions on basic international labour standards, particularly certain core human rights Conventions, as well as other standards that have special relevance to particular structural adjustment interventions. The trade union movement in particular has expressed concerns that an important element of structural adjustment policies has been to dismantle fundamental forms of labour protection in order to set in motion a development process based on a purely economic rationale.

88. The ICFTU-AFRO strongly advances the view that many international labour standards can be of relevance in guiding the process of economic reforms. While these standards may not address all the issues involved in labour market flexibility debates, they certainly help provide a balance between excessive state regulation and an arbitrary removal of guarantees. The ICFTU-AFRO therefore promotes the notion that in many cases national labour codes could be adapted to changing circumstances on the basis of existing international labour standards. Empirical evidence abound indicating that international labour standards have had a far reaching influence because of the content, but also because they have influenced the more general activities of the international community in such fields as human rights, social policy and development policy.

*Bridging the digital
divide through
Information and
Communication
Technology*

89. The ICFTU-AFRO is cognisant of the fact that the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) revolution offers genuine potential, but also raises the risk that a significant portion of the world will lose out. ICT can have a far-reaching impact on the quality of life of workers in poorer countries if the right policies and institutions are in place, and serve as important spurs to development and job growth. Access to the technologies, and ensuring that workers possess the education and skills to use them, are the fundamental policies that developing countries need to consider if they are to benefit from the ICT revolution.

90. In order for African workers to benefit from ICT and for the trade union

movement to bridge the digital divide, the ICFTU-AFRO urges African government to develop and implement coherent strategy toward ICT, the existence of an affordable telecom infrastructure, and the availability of an educated workforce. On the part of the trade union movement themselves, the ICFTU-AFRO advises national affiliates to pay more attention to the role of trade unions in bridging the digital divide. Trade unions must be soldiers at the frontline of this war—for the benefit of their membership and their larger communities.

*Occupational health,
safety and environment*

91. The increasing concern by trade unions on issues of occupational health and safety (OSH) is derived from the shocking statistics: every day sees 5,000 people (three deaths every minute) die from work-related accidents. It is estimated that four percent of Gross National Product is lost due to interruption in production as a result of workers' compensation, absenteeism, re-hiring and re-training, medical and burial expenses of those who had lost their lives; besides causing a lot of suffering, stress and poverty to the families affected.
92. The increasing concern by workers on issues of occupational health and safety is thus derived from these shocking statistics. While annual rates of such injuries and diseases are declining slowly in most industrialised countries, they are on the increase in developing countries. It is therefore imperative that the improvement of health and safety at the workplace is one of the top priorities for trade unions.
93. The advent of globalisation has complicated the issues much further, affecting African countries differently. Factors related to globalisation, such as the acceleration and liberalization of world trade and the spread of new technology, are generating new types of work organisation and thereby new patterns of exposure to the risks of occupational accidents and disease.
94. Unions should always be vigilant and put more emphasis on health and safety as part of their daily work, particularly during collective bargaining processes. Trade unions must be in the forefront to remind their members, employers and government of the need to pay attention to safety and to guard them against a false sense of security. Employers and workers need to be educated that for every one fatal accident, there are 1,200 smaller accidents that cause three days' or more absence from work, 5,000 injuries requiring first aid and 70,000 near-accidents. That means that to avoid that one fatal accident, it is critical to influence all the contributing factors that eventually lead to death at work when the preventive barriers fail or are missing.
95. In consonance with the outcome of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the trade union movement in Africa endorses the interdependence of the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development. The WSSD has created new opportunities for trade unions to better introduce poverty, equity and workplace issues within national and local plans to address the world's current destructive production and consumption patterns.

96. The ICFTU-AFRO is concerned that there exist unscrupulous investors that are out to make as much money as possible from the sweat of African workers by compromising the environment where the wealth of the continent is derived. For the continent to achieve levels of sustainable development appropriate mechanisms must be established to meet the needs of the present without upsetting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is in this regard that African countries must not think of the environment and economic and social development as separate issues. In other words, environmental problems have to be examined in relation to many major issues, which will also affect or be affected by the future course of development.

Part Two

TRADE UNION ORGANISING IN AFRICA

Background

97. The African Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU-AFRO), with a total membership of 12.85 million workers from 60 trade union national centres in 47 countries in Africa, is by far the most representative, independent and democratic trade union organisation in the continent. The membership of the ICFTU-AFRO covers the whole continent.
98. Its membership is derived from fee-paying affiliated national trade union centres. Having been founded in Africa since 1957, ICFTU-AFRO knows the developments of the trade union movement in the continent and its potential contribution to capitalise on the importance of building capacities of its affiliates in realising sustainable development of the African continent.
99. The decision to set up ICFTU-AFRO was a landmark towards the attainment of unity among African trade unions. By the time the ICFTU-AFRO established a full time secretariat in Nairobi in 1993 the organisation had 28 affiliated organisations, from 27 countries and a membership of 3 million. In a spell of four years, and in the wake of the democratisation process and the collapse of military and single-party regimes, the organisation was substantially reactivated such that by December 1996 there were 43 affiliated organisations in 38 countries with a total membership of 6 million. By the time of the last congress in 2001, the ICFTU-AFRO had more than doubled its membership with 53 affiliates in 44 countries and a membership of 13 million.
100. The job is far from complete, of course, and there can be no complacency. Every worker in Africa needs a union, and ICFTU-AFRO and its affiliated national centres must develop policies and strategies to guarantee that working people are in trade unions regardless whether they are in informal or formal economies. It is with this in mind that this part of the “vision paper” wishes to restart the process of devising approaches and strategies to “meet the challenge of organising”. The starting point is that with this membership base, the ICFTU-AFRO has laid a firm foundation for African trade unions to begin to modernise their structures and broaden their representative base.
101. ICFTU-AFRO has the strong intention of turning the advantages of numbers, representation and regional presence into a dynamic target aimed at moving trade unions in Africa towards the golden opportunities of the 21st Century. In doing so, ICFTU-AFRO and its affiliates will endeavour to forge alliances with those outside the trade union movement with similar objectives and have a proven track record in advocating social, political and economic advancement.

Why do we need trade unions?

*African workers
deserves respect,
through their trade
unions*

*Rich trade unionism
spirit in Africa*

*Trade unions bring
dignity and respect*

102. The African economy is at cross roads, with very few countries having any levels of prosperity, why would anyone want or need a trade union? The answer is simple: because as long as power, greed, and tyranny dwell in the hearts of humankind, there will always be a need to protect the many from just such a few.
103. Do foreign investors and Multinational Corporations in Africa have a right to run their own companies as they see fit? Of course, yes. But when we can observe employers circumventing national and international laws, when they take upon themselves the license to abuse workers out of arrogance and power induced self-centred behaviour then democracy mandates, no, it screams out it's canon that humanity alone deserves respect. The human at the end of that mop or broom or bedpan celebrates his or her dignity by being there. By sharing in the work. By helping investors businesses to flourish. By being willing partners in the interest of development of the continent.
104. Africa is not simply a rich continent, but a continent full of wealth. Wealth not only in terms of natural resources, but also in terms of the human spirit, a spirit that has always been about more than just money. It's about caring enough to do our best even when no one's looking. A spirit that courageously empowers the informal economy worker to peacefully demonstrate to local authorities and say, "enough is enough of street harassment and poor services." It is through this spirit that the African worker joins forces with the liberation movement to defeat colonialism and apartheid. This African labour spirit is that it will never allow itself to be slapped with the abuses of a dysfunctional, abusive work environment. Joined together, these African workers stand tall, stand powerful, stand together with grace and the dignity that self-worth brings. Only through the commonality of such injurious experiences can the mustard seed of faith sprout so tremendously.
105. Trade unions in Africa are the breakers by which we steadfastly hold back the tide of the frailty of humankind. Some business people are twisted by power, by arrogance, by greed that distorts their view. Character defects that cause individuals to lose sight of that precious gift we call humanity.
106. In an Export Processing Zone in Uganda, a foreign investor denies women workers their inalienable right to visit a toilet, forced to work 18 hours each day without overtime, or even fired immediately they become pregnant. No one would treat someone that way. This same employer arrogantly brags that he can relocate to another poor African and be given even more "rights" Is this showing humanity respect?
107. In dilapidated office buildings where a widowed mother of eight children, dust and mop and clean, earning barely livable wages with no employer-provided health insurance, paid holidays, or other benefits. And when that employer is asked about a raise or maternity leave - these extraordinary, gifted, precious souls are simply laughed at in their faces. Is this respect of the African

worker? This same employer takes the position that if these workers don't like it; they can get out.

108. Yes, we need unions. As long as there are employers--who maybe are just born that way--unable to perceive or understand this extraordinary gift we call humanity.

*Labour unions
embrace democracy*

109. Until then, in this continent that will slowly and hopefully find its feet, nourishes and embraces democracy, the African worker must join with each other to herald that freedom from the bondage of tyranny in any form: whether from distant shores, from home-grown exploiters of the poor, from corrupt and gluttonous politicians or from dysfunctional management personalities who gain workplace power.

110. The trade union movement in Africa is not born out of despair, but to confront challenges. We must not be just there, but we must be visible. The starting point for us must remain what trade unionists know everywhere; build our strength from the grassroots; broaden our range of services to our members and modernise our structures and the administration of our resources. Ordinary working men and women must fully identify with what trade unions offer, in terms of our vision, policies and activities. There lies our strength.

111. In a nutshell, yes, Africa needs trade unions. For the young women in EPZs, mothers in factories and offices. For their children. For the generations that come after them. Trade unions must be.

What is Organising?

112. The term "organising" is derived from the word "organisation" which means the act of bringing people or objects together for a common purpose. One of the major functions of an organisation is to provide the structure that is necessary to carry out the mission for which that organisation has set to undertake and to achieve certain objectives. In the case of a trade union organisation, the main purpose is to bring workers together. The primary role of a union is to defend and protect workers' rights and interests. In addition, trade union members also find forums to discuss and find solutions to issues that affect them in their workplaces, and also in the general community. The effectiveness of trade union organising is the ability to recruit and retain members.

Challenges of Trade Union Organising in Africa

113. Organised labour all over the world is facing numerous challenges caused by global economic reforms, technological advancement, drastic changes in the environment, as well as the labour market dynamics. In Africa, the problems of organised labour are further compounded by the absence of reciprocal economic growth and equity, growing unemployment, brain-drain, declining

social services, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, heavy foreign debt burden, civil strife and blatant violations of human rights.

114. Concomitantly, the trade unions in Africa are undergoing very challenging times since the declining membership has resulted in a reduced bargaining scope and the narrowing of the collective bargaining coverage. The workers have been under attack, and legal protection has been greatly undermined.

115. The underlying causes of union membership decline are conventionally held to be:

- a) hostile macro-economic conditions;
- b) the changing composition of the workforce;
- c) the legal and institutional framework laid down by the state;
- d) industrial relations policies pursued by management;
- e) lack of service to members; and
- f) the recruitment activity of unions themselves.

116. The trade union movement must also effectively address some of the other factors known to contribute to the weakening of the trade union movement in Africa: these include the proliferation of trade unions which leads to problems of cooperation, financing and viability; poor organisational structures; lack of internal democracy; commercialisation of trade unionism by some people who encourage splinter unions; multiplicity of political parties that encourage proliferation of trade union centres on ideological grounds; some governments fear strong trade unions and therefore encourage splinter groups; and actions by international trade union bodies aimed at creating splits within national trade union centres with the aim of obtaining membership.

117. In other words, aggregate union membership is dependent upon both the environment that unions face (external factors), and the union response to that environment (internal factors).

*Macroeconomic
factors*

118. Current debates on globalisation are pointing to the fact that Third World countries are emerging as victims of the process. The level of competition with the developed world due to increasing demands on quality, quantity as well as issues concerning tariffs, has left third world countries out of the global international trade. The reduced demand for goods, services and raw materials entails loss of jobs due to restructuring and liquidation of commercial and industrial entities.

119. Liberalisation of international trade, coupled with the globalisation of financial markets and the increasing prominence of multinational companies is today threatening the national context within which trade unions operate.

120. Regional labour markets is an emerging phenomena which entails that major decisions concerning and impacting on national labour markets are increasingly being taken outside the countries concerned. Cross-national comparisons of labour costs affect national competitiveness and also shape corporate investment decisions and these constraints the conduct of national

collective bargaining. The stability of national currencies seems to require that governments adopt deflationary economic policies often against the interests of labour.

121. Globalisation has undermined the effectiveness of trade unions and their existence is being threatened and their role becoming more and more undefined and questionable.
122. It can also be argued that the scope of trade unions now has become much wider as new challenges emerge. At the same time, their collective bargaining positions are getting weaker though not yet extinct. What this implies is that unions must strengthen their own international organisations through information exchange, coordination of policies and undertaking common activities internationally.
123. As discussed in Part I of this vision paper, many economies in Africa are characterised by low economic growth and high unemployment. This has posed serious problems for the trade unions as many workers are reluctant to join unions as new entrants or to remain members.
124. Reluctance on the part of workers to join unions or remain members is based on their fear of job loss in an environment, which is hostile to trade unionism and any form of resistance to working conditions. Today, most trade union leaders' ability to negotiate has been reduced due to reduced economic strength, which has affected their political influence. Due to this loss of "political clout" government no longer takes unions as seriously as they used to. Government has justified its insistence on not always giving in to unions demands due to the current trends with which government has clubbed public sector spending; there is tough monetary discipline, utilities are being privatised and the deregulation of the labour market.
125. The traditional strongholds of unions among manual workers in large establishments in traditional sectors such as coal mining, metal working, textiles, docks, railways, and the public sector have seen rapid decline in the number of employees due to the worldwide trend of privatisation. At the same time, the areas of growing employment have often been in the private service sector and in smaller workplaces, where unions have usually found it far harder to recruit and represent members.
126. Similarly, there have been dramatic changes in the type of workforce. Many trade union movements have mainly represented full-time employees with relatively secure jobs, and they have often seemed to assume that the 'typical' worker would be male. But in many countries the labour force has become more evenly balanced between men and women; part-time employment has become more common; temporary contracts have become widespread; and in addition, in many countries there has been an increase in migrant labour. In some cases, such changes have been linked to the growth of an 'informal economy' and a 'submerged' labour force.
127. These changing patterns of employment pose problems for trade union

*The changing
composition of the
workforce*

organisations. On the one hand, the workers with new and scarce qualifications are often confident that they can survive in the labour market, and advance their personal career, without any need for collective support in unions. Unionisation is even more difficult if - as is often the case - they work for small firms or are self-employed. On the other hand, the marginal workers are difficult to organise because they are often scattered; are sometimes illegally employed; may work fluctuating hours; and are vulnerable to victimisation and dismissal if they do join a union. They may also view trade unions as organizations that are not particularly interested in workers such as them.

*Reduced protection
through legal and
institutional
framework*

128. This entails the replacement of a legislative regime that favours negotiated relationships with one that favours the interest of the employer. Some of the affected legislation includes the reduction of the statutory immunities of trade unions and collective bargaining, increasing the legal rights of members against their unions, attacking the legislative basis of trade union organisations and collective bargaining, and reduction of rights of individual employees.

*Industrial relations
policies pursued by
management*

129. In many countries in Africa there exists a tripartite industrial relations system which aims at inducing social economic development while helping maintaining political stability. However, due to the changing policies and legislation, companies have redefined the industrial relations practices to their favour. This includes, employing direct contract systems with employees declaring workers to be in management; categorising them as essential workers or using individual pay agreements and intimidating workers who venture into trade union activities.

130. As unions grow weaker, employers become more emboldened and sophisticated in their union-avoidance strategies. The union avoidance and 'union busting' activities of employers designed to remove union influence from workplaces and thwart efforts to build membership have been well documented in international studies. Employer tactics include: the dismissal and harassment of union activists and members; relocation of operations; antiunion publicity campaigns in the workplace and community; the use of a range of sophisticated human resources management techniques to quell the desire for unionisation; as well as a range of union 'substitution' activities such as employee involvement schemes and the promotion of in-house unions. Variations in the antiunion activity of employers have been used to explain difference in organising successes between industries and sectors and in explaining aggregate membership loss in the United Kingdom and North America.

131. Employers have also engaged in counter-organising by setting up company unions or by encouraging more conservative unions to cover their workplaces to prevent a militant union gaining a foothold. Some unions tried to get around employer harassment by meeting outside the workplace or sending union organisers 'undercover'.

132. Furthermore, employers and government have allowed themselves to violate trade union rights with impunity. Ignorance on the part of workers about their rights and fear of losing jobs has contributed to such. For example in instances where workers have gone on strike due to non payment of salaries or

inability of employers to meet their obligations, such strikes have been deemed illegal and yet it is also illegal not to pay workers their salaries.

133. Politics of creating splinter unions, at the instigation of employers and government agents, have led to the proliferation of smaller trade unions and this has considerably weakened the trade union movement financially, politically and in relation to solidarity.
134. The weakening of trade unions is one strategy employed by multinational corporate bodies. Many countries have been infiltrated by a lot of such organisations especially within the EPZs, which have connived with government to use all means possible to counter trade union activities, especially organising and recruiting within the zones.
135. Collective bargaining has historically been the greatest single tool which workers through trade unions have used to participate in the affairs of the enterprise they work. They have also used this process to improve their terms and conditions of service and contribute to the well being of the enterprise.
136. It must however, be noted that in a liberalised economy, collective bargaining has become very complex and requires trained negotiators and researchers. Unfortunately, trade unions do not yet have the capacity to address the new and emerging labour related issues within a liberalised economy. Trade unions therefore require building capacity through skills training amongst their negotiators and researchers.

Recruitment activity of unions themselves

137. It is generally agreed that many factors that influence the effectiveness of organising are beyond the power of unions to control. Nonetheless, trade unions must be able to be innovative enough to control their responses to the circumstances in which they find themselves. It is therefore important to investigate union's responses to their environment – union organisational configuration, policy and strategy at a national and local level, and the way in which these factors might influence union effectiveness of organising.
138. As formal organisations, trade unions are governed by their constitutions. As such most trade union constitutions set out the industries and occupations that the trade union organises. Normally, in addition to the constitutions, there are policies passed by union conferences or congresses which set more specific targets, for example committing a union to allocate a certain level of resources to organising and recruitment activity, or to targeting particular companies or organisations. The union's senior full-time officials and elected executive then have to translate these targets and aspirations into action. Anecdotal information indicates that most unions in Africa struggled to turn their organising aspirations into practice for several reasons. On top of the agenda is that full-time officials were reluctant to devote their time and resources to recruitment activity.

Role of trade union constitutions and structures on organising

*Innovation in
organising and
recruitment policy and
practice for effective
organising*

139. ICFTU-AFRO wishes to urge trade union leaders in its affiliated organisations to expend more energy and resources on this area. This can be achieved by offering more training courses, increasing recruitment budgets, and hiring of more dedicated organising officials.

140. Empirical studies in many countries show that unions that don't innovate will fail to respond to the challenges of a changing environment and consequently they will be less effective at organising. The ICFTU family is awash with innovative approaches to organising and recruitment policies. These range from organising techniques such as sponsorship of Organising Academy trainees in the United Kingdom to the adoption of the US 'organising model' methods like house calls.

141. Other approaches include wider dimensions of management and campaigning innovation which takes into consideration the three markets for trade unionism: workers, employers and the government. For instance, in the current phase of neo-liberal environment where there is no growth in the government sectors a union can seek employer support, the support of the non-union workforce, or both. A union that has the support of neither employers nor employees will die. In practice this means that a union can either recruit the majority of the workforce in a non-union plant, then use that support to force the employer to grant recognition. Or reach an agreement with the employer first by persuading them that union recognition is an effective and efficient way of managing personnel issues, then recruiting among the workforce with the employers blessing or acquiescence. Union policies of partnership and co-operation may make employers more willing to grant recognition voluntarily.

*Union democratisation
as a tool for organising*

142. There is no doubt that unions will be more effective in membership recruitment and organising if they are run democratically because democracy makes the leadership more responsive to the preferences of members. If a union responds to the preferences of members they are more likely to stay in membership than if the union ignores their wishes. In this regard, strategies of sectoral or national unions are likely to be a very important influence on the effectiveness of organising. National trade union centres or federations can influence local union organisation and strategy through the support and training which they provide to lay reps in the workplace.

143. However, the nature of this support is likely to vary within unions as much as it varies between unions, reflecting social relations and work organisation at the point of production, the values and attitudes of the full-time officials and union activists involved, and the strategic value of the bargaining unit to the union. In other words, local leadership accountability to the rank and file is an essential prerequisite for union renewal.

*Role of activism,
militancy and
indoctrination in
organising*

144. Another prerequisite of union renewal is the recruitment of new generations of activists because union activists provide the organisational means to face new challenges. In practical terms this means that union activists recruit new members, and mobilise existing members to resist management demands. The most practical expression of activism is to become a shop steward or branch official.

145. A fierce debate is currently raging within academic circles on the question of whether militancy or co-operation is the more effective strategy for trade unions. Some argue that militant workplace trade unionism is the only effective strategy because co-operation will only result in union demobilisation, leading ultimately to marginalization and collapse. The counter argument is that militancy will lead to fierce employer counter mobilisation, which is likely to be successful given the current economic and political conditions. Instead unions should focus on developing co-operation with management so both can secure 'mutual gains'. The concepts of militancy and cooperation can be operationalised by looking at the role that the workplace union plays in the management of change.

*Role of community
in trade union
organising*

146. While there is recognition that broad labour-community coalitions that include capitalists may emerge in particular localities to protect local interests against external threats such as retrenchment, it is unlikely that such coalitions would form to promote union memberships. Probably trade unions need to view community as not only based on particular locality but can also be constructed from workers' ethnic and faith organisations and identities.

*Creative campaigns
using the grassroots*

147. There are higher levels of success when unions run aggressive and creative campaigns utilizing a grassroots, rank-and-file intensive strategy, building a union and acting like a union from the very beginning of the campaign. Thus, campaigns where the union focused on person-to-person contact, house calls, and small group meetings (study circles) to develop leadership and union consciousness and inoculate workers against the employer's anti-union strategy can be associated with significantly higher rates of membership recruitment.

*Organising as a
cross-cutting trade
union agenda*

148. Unions can also be successful in organising when there is an emphasis on developing a culture of organising that permeates everything the union does. This includes a serious commitment of staff and financial resources to organising at all levels. Organising cost money—for organisers, transport, accommodation, and communications. In a time of declining members and dues, most unions are struggling with how to best allocate increasingly scarce resources. Thus, unions will only be successful in transferring resources into organising if they are able to convince union leaders and their members that the future of their union depends on organising, and organising depends on transferring resources from servicing to organising.

*Gender parity as an
organising agenda*

149. On the realisation that labour force has become more evenly balanced between men and women, all organising campaigns must put in place a policy on promotion of gender equality and ensure that this is achieved through education to both men and women, through appointment to positions of leadership and strive for 30% female representation in every activity.

150. The current levels of women organising are indeed very deplorable: make up only one third of the African trade union membership and an embarrassing 1 percent of union leadership. There is not a single woman representative at key positions of the ICFTU-AFRO Executive Board. Sincere and sustained political and economic commitments are needed in order to overcome the outdated conservative cultural attitudes towards women if any progress in trade union

organising is to be realised.

151. A successful organising campaign must also examine obstacles hindering the development of trade union membership including at leadership level particularly among women and ways of tackling these obstacles.

*Young workers
holding the key of the
future of the trade
union movement*

152. The future of trade unions in Africa and in particular, their effectiveness in promoting and defending workers interests depend on how the young people are involved, in their activities. It is therefore imperative that trade unions strengthen their capacities, in organising and recruiting young workers to join trade unions, providing proper and adequate services and encourage young workers to participate in trade union work at every level.

*International solidarity
and organising*

153. In a few countries in Africa, the ICFTU's International Solidarity Fund (ISF) support for organising has provided the only resources to enable weak trade unions to carry out organising work. Indications are that this support has been invaluable and many affiliates reported increased in membership, which they would not have achieved, had it not been for the support from the ISF. Countries that report favourably on the ISF support are those that are recruiting in new areas such as in the Export Processing Zones as well as those that are emerging from armed conflicts. Some unions have used such support to recruit trade union members from particular groups, such as women and young workers, or in sectors such as agriculture.

*Organising the
un-organised*

154. Advocates for change argue that unions need to dedicate significantly more resources to organising the unorganised and that they need to adopt new organising tactics based upon workplace mobilisation in order to turn the tide of membership decline. Without such changes advocates of organising reform argue, unions will not survive.

155. The cases in point here are the police and prison services, the civil service, immigration and custom services, and retired workers. The former services constitute an important sector for the maintenance of peace and internal order, yet no serious attention is paid to ensure that their conditions of employment are the subject of negotiation and public comment and debate. In South Africa, the police and prison officers are now being organised, as indeed is the case in many countries in Europe.

156. The case of organising retired workers is equally compelling. Many of them live in abject poverty, while those who had earned pensions are hardly any better as their earnings are eaten away over the years by inflationary pressures. They, too, need trade unions to fight for improvement in their pensions.

Affiliation fees

157. The ICFTU-AFRO has also been discussing with trade union leaders on the issue of membership and level of fees and how they can be made to meet the needs of trade unions. In addition, various questions can be posed in this regard. What will be the most effective methods and ways of collecting membership fees? How are these fees in any case raised?

*Provision of service
to tackle membership
decline*

158. Admittedly, one of the causes of the decline in membership is poor service from organisers and the trade union leaders in general. National unions need to realise that they can never recruit new members if the current members are not happy with the services provided. Successful organising campaigns can only be realised if we ensure effective structures that respond quickly and decisively when our members cry for help. Recruitment will not take off if we do not act against hopeless organisers and leaders who do not deserve the confidence the workers have placed in them.

*Modernising trade
union structures and
practices*

159. Trade union structures and practices need to be modernised with a view of ensuring that they are both attractive and responsive to the aspirations and interests of existing and potential members. Genuine democratic space needs to be created on a decentralised basis for the participation of rank-and-file members in union's decision-making processes and activities. This space must take account of special groupings such as women, youth, disabled, retired and informal economy workers.

160. There is also need for unions to mobilise constituencies of marginalized groups and create avenues within their structures to effectively incorporate them in decision making.

*Organisational
structure of ICFTU and
ICFTU-AFRO*

161. As in any organization, the growth of the ICFTU-AFRO in the last two decades, have brought with it new challenges. Whilst the breadth and the diversity of its membership brings with it a continental reach, it also means that the organization must modify its modus operandi if it has to represent the interests and views of all sections of its membership equitably and faithfully.

162. The ICFTU-AFRO has managed to respond to this challenge by broadening its policy formulation and advocacy on development issues of the day. Beyond this, the organisation must find a right mix between universality of agenda items and the need to build consensus in such a broad membership-based institution. Of course, it shall not always be possible to satisfy all affiliates, or a given category of affiliates all the times, but extra efforts must be found within the existing structures and resources to reach at least an amicable position, if not a consensus.

163. Additionally, there is thus a need for the ICFTU-AFRO to ensure that its Rules and Standing Orders are up-to-date with the existing realities of globalisation. Similarly, such rules must be consistent with the ICFTU Constitution and its practices. In this regard, the Congress must establish procedures that shall examine the Rules and Standing Orders of the ICFTU-AFRO and ensure that they sufficiently take into account changes that have taken place within the ICFTU and its other regional structures.

164. The Congress must also develop more systematic means to identify common priorities, joint resourcing of activities, staff profiling, positions and sub-regional and sectoral representation in line with identified issues.

*Organising the
informal economy is a
trade union necessity*

165. The issue of whether or not to organise the informal economy has generated endless debates within trade unions. This is partly because the informal economy though is a fast growing sector in many countries; it is indeed an unfamiliar territory to trade unions. The ICFTU-AFRO has recognised the positive contributions of the informal economy to Africa's development, but it is concerned about the low quality of jobs in this domain, and the fact that these jobs are not decent and do not really provide adequate livelihoods.
166. For trade unions therefore, the informal economy is both a challenge and a dilemma. The central role of unions is the defence of workers' rights. In the informal economy, rights are usually not protected, with the result that working conditions are not improved because workers are not able to organise. As a first step, unions should ensure that basic workers' human rights are respected in the informal economy including through interventions with governments and employers. The ICFTU-AFRO has, on many occasions, called for cooperation between governments, employers and trade unions and for the use of appropriate tripartite structures.
167. It is against this backdrop that the trade union movement in Africa should make efforts to organise informal economy workers, equipping them with the basic trade union tools that could help them defend their rights, improve their working conditions and, at the same time, increase their income-generating possibilities.
168. They should be helped to build alliances with other civil society groups with the aim of helping to campaign for the overall improvement of the situation of workers in this domain. The trade union movement must adopt a longer term perspective towards organising the informal economy. It must also recognize that organising the informal economy is critical if the trade union movement is to have a wide membership base and retain the capacity to protect workers.
169. To successfully organise the unorganised, unions must do more to accommodate the needs of informal economy workers through specially tailored activities. Trade unions must have the ability to deliver tangible benefits and increased protection to workers in informal activities. The ICFTU-AFRO recommends that national trade union centres and affiliated organisations urgently review their own priorities, internal structures and resource allocation to determine whether sufficient attention is being devoted to the informal sector.

Role of Workers' Education on Organising

170. Workers' education is the anvil upon which the trade union culture is created and adapted to changing needs. Workers' education is a vehicle for building the capacity of trade unionists in order to enable them to cope with new challenges, have deeper insights into their trade unions and master the tools to change society through democratic participation. Education and training are important long-term responses to the challenges of globalisation and trade unions capacity

building. It is through grassroots education and mobilisation of their members and community allies that unions have won victories on many challenging issues, including membership recruitment and organising.

171. It is important for union organisers, negotiators and educators, shop stewards, and the rank-and-file to be continuously on newer ways of tackling new challenges of work conditions such as issues of retrenchment, HIV/AIDS and other emerging issues affecting the function of unions. The newly re-defined workers must also be included in labour education programmes.

Way Forward on Trade Union Organising

172. Overall this part highlighted the link between trade union decline and organising in Africa. Although there exist no empirical studies that have tended to focus specifically upon union organising in Africa, the analysis has benefited from examining the rich understanding of African trade union leaders to enhance the insights into this aspect of union strategy.
173. A dialogue between contemporary researchers and labour historians is essential to provide the best possible framework for organising workers today and in the future. While trade union growth theory highlights a range of exogenous factors to explain fluctuations in membership, there is a need for both contemporary researchers and labour historians to recognise that trade unions are active agents in shaping their own destiny.
174. There may be innovative approaches to organising that could be resuscitated from the past and modified for current circumstances. Community-based approaches may be more effective when targeting specific groups such as immigrants and indigenous workers. Unions might also draw upon the strategy of targeting key non-unionists as a part of their campaigns to organise unorganised workplaces. History tells us that there are a number of factors that impede effective union organising such as faction-fighting and competitive organising.

Part Three

FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Background

175. In an increasingly knowledge-based economy, Africa, no less than any other region, faces the challenge of reconciling the need for social justice with modern technological advancement and work practices, by ensuring full respect for the fundamental rights at work which form the bedrock of an open and democratic society.
176. Today there is growing formal recognition of the need to take decisive action to solve Africa's problems. The deterioration of the economic, political and social situation in Africa, however, and the rise in direct attacks on trade union rights throughout the continent over the last few decades have prevented such recognition being translated into common strategies and a clear commitment to providing the resources needed. The African trade union movement must mobilise its forces to ensure that African economic and social development has a solid social dimension, and that there is strong democracy in which social justice prevails.

What is Social Justice?

177. It is important to define the phrase "social justice" because many people have taken advantage of its malleability to justify the accomplishment of whatever goal they think is important. The term "social justice" should not mean whatever someone wants it to mean. It is probably the absence of a clear definition that the pursuit of social justice accounts for most human misery. For instance, when government officials attempt to impose their view of "social justice" they oftentimes cause tremendous harm, including genocide.
178. Consider this. When Stalin thought it was important to have communal farms rather than privately controlled farms, he could argue that "social justice" required the Soviet state to take both the property and lives of millions of farmers. Similarly, Pol Pot, the communist leader of Cambodia could argue that "social justice" required the Cambodian government to kill all intellectuals because they posed a threat to the security of the state. The numerous coup d'états that engrossed many countries in Africa were carried out in the name of protecting the rights of the majority. The Rwandan genocide of 1994, where hundreds of thousands were slaughtered was far from a natural catastrophe: it was a premeditated killing campaign carefully organised by a small group of politicians who saw the slaughter as a strategy for holding on to power. Although human rights groups supplied detailed evidence to the international community and urged immediate action, policy makers failed to halt the killing.

179. This is definitely not social justice. It is, therefore, imperative that unionists defy those laws and actions that promote immoral behaviour under the guise of social justice.
180. What does “social justice” mean? The term “social justice” was first used in 1840 by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, and given prominence by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati in *La Costituzione Civile Secondo la Giustizia Sociale* in 1848. John Stuart Mill gave this anthropomorphic approach to social questions, almost canonical status for modern thinkers thirteen years later in *Utilitarianism*. Mill imagined that societies could be virtuous in the same way that individuals can be. Perhaps in highly personalised societies of the ancient type, such a usage might make sense—under kings, tyrants, or tribal chiefs, for example, where one person made all the crucial social decisions. Curiously, however, the demand for the term “social justice” did not arise until modern times, in which more complex societies operate by impersonal rules applied with equal force to all under “the rule of law.”
181. Without the need to further invoke intellectual debates on the terminology, while at the same time avoiding ideological complications and legal coercion, the ICFTU-AFRO wishes to refer to social justice as about preventing trade union and human rights abuses and ensuring adherence to international law with due consideration given to equality between and within countries, promotion of social dialogue and balanced trade.

Fighting for Social Justice?

*Making globalisation
work for all*

182. Globalisation is a buzzword that means different things to different people. For instance, the numerous protests by many activists at many global economic forums are actually targeted at different and at time-contrasting issues. Some activists are against corporate capitalism while others are protesting against market integration and consumer culture. At the same time, there are others protesting against “unfair trade”, referring to cheap imports from poor countries. Some environmental activists are against modernisation or development itself, referring it to be synonymous with globalisation.
183. Whatever the definition of globalisation, what is clear is that the main driving force behind the current form of globalisation may appear to be the search for maximum profits and cheap labour. Two factors that have played an important role in the process of globalisation are technological advances mainly in areas of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the operations of multilateral institutions, namely, the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These two broad factors have together combined to overcome natural barriers of space and time, and have been instrumental in pushing for multilateral trade liberalisation. In all this, the driving agents have been the multinational corporations (MNCs).
184. It is in this respect that the ICFTU-AFRO calls for fundamental changes in the

globalisation phenomenon so that it works for working people, the unemployed and the poor. Globalisation can and must change if the trade union movement is to achieve its objectives of ensuring universal respect of workers' fundamental rights, decent work for all, substantially reducing inequality, promoting sustainable development, offering real perspectives for closing the gap between rich and poor countries, and putting an end to mass poverty. The ICFTU-AFRO acknowledges that building a fair and inclusive globalisation process must become a worldwide priority. The deep-seated and persistent imbalances in the current workings of the global economy are ethically unacceptable and politically unsustainable.

*Globalising trade
union solidarity for
social justice*

185. At the 18th ICFTU World Congress held in December 2004 in Miyazaki, Japan, trade union organisations around the world recognised that many of the complex and growing challenges facing the trade union movement worldwide are direct consequences of, or are closely linked to, the current pattern of globalisation and the pressure it places on workers' rights and conditions. Globalising solidarity through building truly effective trade union internationalism is a permanent and crucial challenge for all trade unionists, and is of central importance to the future of the trade union movement.
186. The ICFTU Congress resolved to commit the ICFTU to the creation of a new international trade union confederation with common values, principles and objectives. In this regard, the ICFTU in closely consulting with the World Congress of Labour (WCL) with a view to establishing a unified and pluralistic organisation representing the world trade union movement. The new workers' body shall affiliate democratic, free and independent trade unions, respecting their diverse origins and particular forms of organisation.
187. This new body will bring to the fore extraordinary challenges to the trade union movement in Africa. The ICFTU-AFRO is called upon to further deliberate on the mechanisms on the new system of international trade union movement, and determine its mode of realisation in Africa. The ICFTU-AFRO must take cognisance of the fact that a series of mergers of global unions have been shaped in the last couple of years at the sectoral levels.
188. A new generation of trade unions' institutions, leaders, officials, and representatives will be generated to lead the movement in more hopeful times. What sort of shape do these new mechanisms find the trade union movement in? What do trade unions want to achieve in the coming years, and how can unions work together to make that happen? What will be the mission and vision of the new dispensation? How will this mechanism affect the existing local, sectoral, national, sub-regional and regional trade union structures? These are some of the fundamental questions the ICFTU-AFRO needs to face.
189. It is vital that each trade union affiliate continuously develop a long-term vision for what it wants to achieve, and how it wants to achieve it, alongside the collective goals stated at regional and global Congresses. Whatever structures established, we must be prepared to genuinely reform within their focus.
190. Probably, one way of enhancing "trade unionism" is to consider the creation

of one union for all working people in a particular country. The touchstones for such a union would be inclusiveness, good representative structures and a strong, devolved democracy. Such a national centre would be able to focus the entire trade union movement on winning the hearts and minds of non-union members.

191. This argument is strongly supported by looking back over the last five years—several global sectoral unions with a long and proud history have joined together to form new unions. Such a trend could also be followed-up by sectoral unions at the national level.

192. There should be no illusion that such an idea will be welcomed by many small, profession-based unions—largely due to strong affinity and the urge to lead. Should this be the case, other alternatives to merger could be considered, for example to develop strong partnerships and strategic alliances, and not in competition, with one another.

*Trade union
development
co-operation and
co-ordination*

193. International trade union solidarity has been the force behind the mobilisation of resources and organisation of working people to fight against exploitation, oppression, injustice, victimization and discrimination. So much mileage has been achieved through co-operation and international solidarity. Previous interactions between the ICFTU-AFRO and its co-ordination partners have emphasised the importance of coordination and sharing of information about on-going and future projects in Africa with the objective of avoiding duplication of efforts, and enhancing the effectiveness of the trade union assistance programmes.

194. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO wishes to uphold the practise of organising annual project co-ordination meetings aimed at fostering the exchange of relevant information about the trade union situation on the continent, discussing the needs and priorities of the ICFTU-AFRO Trade Union Assistance Programme and promoting stronger co-operation for effective social justice.

*A stronger ILO for
social justice for all*

195. Social justice is the guiding principle of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and, of course by extension, the main tenet of all ILO Member States. It is thus, imperative that there is strong support for the ILO in pursuit of its enduring historical mandate to promote social justice and the rights and interests of working people. The ICFTU-AFRO welcomes groundbreaking report published by the ILO entitled “A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All,” urging that building a fair and inclusive globalisation must become a worldwide priority. There must be an urgent rethink of current policies and institutions of global governance.

196. There must be respect for and proper implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association and the International Labour Conference Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards. Similarly, the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, which has increased the organisation’s standing and visibility needs to be built upon to maximise the organisation’s concrete contribution to making effective access to freely chosen work available to all, undertaken in full respect of fundamental rights, with

good levels of social protection.

197. The trade union movement also believes that by respecting and reinforcing tripartism in its own activities, strengthening the capacities of democratic workers' and employers' organisations, and promoting social dialogue at all levels, the ILO will contribute importantly to achieving the Decent Work Agenda. In this respect, it is critical to support tripartism that has continuously provided the ILO with key comparative advantage and the basis for its advocacy and practice of freedom of association and social dialogue.

198. Towards this end, the Congress is encouraged to support the visibility of the global UN specialised agency specialising in social justice and rights and interests of working people.

*Defence of human and
trade union rights*

199. The abuse of trade union rights remains one of the major issues of concern to the trade union movement in Africa. In many countries, trade unionists are continuously harassed, live under constant threats and intimidation. Many trade unionists face victimisation by employers and government authorities in their trade union activities. The ICFTU-AFRO remains watchful and we have to condemn these abuses of human rights, campaign against them and put pressure on the regimes concerned. Certainly, this is what we are doing all the time and is the *raison d'être* of the free and independent trade union movement.

200. There has been a remarkable growth of African countries in the process of ratifying the fundamental labour standards. However, labour observers are not over stressing the mere numbers of ratification of conventions. It is claimed that many governments hardly comply with some of the conventions they ratified. This means the will to enforce them does not, in some cases, seem to exist. In several cases governments in Africa report that they do not have the means due to the limited capacities of the Labour ministries.

201. At the same time, the ratification of the conventions is an important starting point and can be used to put pressure on governments in cases where there are abuses of trade union rights. While it is important that trade unions continue to play their part to put pressure for ratification of conventions, there is a need now to ensure that application of the conventions is also given high priority.

*The fight against
armed conflict and
international terrorism*

202. Along with bread and freedom, peace forms part of a trio of essential priorities, which has driven the international trade union movement since its early days. The priority of peace and security is indeed closely linked to the trade union struggle for democracy, human rights, social justice and non-discrimination. The main question, therefore, is what can trade unions do in the face of an armed conflict, whether it be a conventional war between two countries, a civil war or even acts of terrorism?

203. The trade union movement in Africa, in league with international trade union solidarity, is striving for peace, whether it be prevention or reconciliation, with the weapons of dialogue and solidarity. As well-practiced negotiators, trade unionists are experienced in the management and resolution of all types of conflicts. The ICFTU-AFRO shares the view that the countries where

the institutional participation of trade unions is greatest are also those where the level of conflict is the lowest. From the regional level where unions are bringing together people from neighbouring countries to tackle the causes of actual and potential conflicts, to the national level, where trade unionists in a number of countries put their own lives at risk in defence of democracy and social justice, the trade union movement is in the forefront of campaigning for an end to conflict and an end to the causes of conflict.

204. The ICFTU-AFRO extends its profound sympathy and solidarity to the families and friends of victims of appalling terrorist attacks on various targets around the world. Among the victims are large numbers of emergency workers who sacrificed their lives or were injured in their heroic efforts to save the lives of others. These criminal attacks brutally display a profound hatred and intolerance, which must be opposed by all people of good will. Ending fear, insecurity and injustice in all their forms must be intrinsic to the international community's struggle against terrorism.

International court of justice

205. The ICFTU-AFRO supports the establishment of the International Court of Justice as a mechanism for the advancement of international justice and the enforcement of human rights. With such courts, it is hoped that in the future, perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, be they heads of state, military generals or foot soldiers will be systematically brought to justice.

206. The judicial systems of the various African countries should be re-designed in such a way that foreign investors who damage the economy and infringe on human and workers' rights are prosecuted at the International Court of Justice.

207. ICFTU-AFRO should call on the AU to create an African Human Rights Court, where individual citizens of member states can appeal for justice in cases of human rights violations.

Workers' rights in the World Trading System

208. The globalisation of the world economy through increased trade and foreign investment by multinational companies (MNCs) has been accompanied by mounting concern in both developing and industrialised countries over its social impact. There is an increasing belief that trade liberalization is exacerbating income inequality and undermining democratic decision-making by national governments. These concerns - dismissed as of little account by too many governments - contributed to the collapse of talks at the 3rd Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle in 1999. Whilst it was hoped that 4th WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in 2003 had set the agenda for a genuine Development Round, the trade union movement is being disappointed that deadlines are systematically being missed.

209. If the current WTO negotiations are to produce an outcome that could benefit working people, particularly in developing countries, the broken promises from Doha must be resolved and developing countries' concerns dealt with first, before discussion gets underway on the rest of the Doha agenda. WTO members must recognize that trade is only one of the elements in the three pillars of sustainable development endorsed at the World Summit

on Sustainable Development in 2002. Debt relief, democracy, environmental protection, poverty eradication and decent employment (including the respect of fundamental workers' rights) must simultaneously be achieved as part of a wider, far-reaching agenda to achieve development and higher living standards for all people, in accordance with the objectives outlined in the preamble of the WTO Agreement. In addition, WTO agreements must not undermine the rights of democratic governments to conduct their own education, social welfare and public investment policies.

Promote trade justice

210. Trade unions and other elements of the civil society have expressed concern that international trade rules are unfair to developing countries. It has been noted that while poverty was on the increase in Africa, many parts of the developed world wallowed in wealth—allegedly some of it from Africa. To illustrate the trade imbalance, is the considerable decline of robusta coffee world prices since 1980, while those of manufactured goods imported by poor countries have risen sharply. Furthermore, the Doha Agenda on market access for non-agricultural goods would result in further de-industrialisation. At the same time since tariff on industrial products constituted a significant part of Africa's revenue, further cuts would undermine governments' ability to attain the MDGs.

211. While more than two-thirds of the continent survive on less than US\$ 1 a day, a cow in Europe and Japan receive US\$ 2 and US\$ 7 respectively in subsidies each day. The WTO regime has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a rich few, increasing poverty for the majority of the world's population, and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

212. In this regard, developed countries must review their policies on subsidies and trade. Developed countries should undertake to forge a new kind of partnership with Africa based on mutual respect and solidarity.

Migrant labour

213. The ICFTU-AFRO takes note of the fact that 20 million African men and women are migrant workers and that by 2015 one in ten Africans will live and work outside their countries of origin. These migrant workers contribute to the economic development of their host countries, while providing the much-needed foreign exchange to their home countries through remittances.

214. Nevertheless, the trade union movement is concerned that migrant workers are left at the mercy of the countries of immigration due to lack of policies and interventions in the countries of emigration. With no choice in foreign lands, migrant workers often do the "three-D" jobs – dirty, degrading and dangerous jobs yet these migrants often have better qualifications than citizens of their host countries. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO called for better involvement of African governments, trade unions and the wider civil society rather than leaving African migrant workers at the mercy of receiving countries and employers. More specifically, the trade union movement in Africa must feel duty bound to safeguard the interests and rights of migrant workers. Moreover for Africa to benefit from its Diaspora (in terms of remittances and brain gain), as articulated by NEPAD, African countries should assist the country's migrant workers wherever they are.

*Africa's debt burden
cannot be met and
should not be met*

215. The African debt crisis is an issue that has been the dilemma of most development actors for quite sometime now. The African continent is said to owe the international community up to US\$ 350 billion, and given the current economic scenario, it is certain that debtor countries will not be in position to pay back the loans and also effect meaningful development in their economies.

216. Africa's external debt cannot and will not be met given the structural political and economic constraints that the continent currently faces. Urgent solutions need to be sought if debt is at the heart of Africa's stagnation and marginalisation. In this regard, the ICFTU-AFRO calls for the total and unequivocal cancellation of Africa's debt.

*Institutionalise
anti-corruption
drives for sustainable
development*

217. Better and more transparent governance, sensible economic policy and accountability must be adopted by African governments and the developed world so as to promote ethical behaviour that will not tolerate violation of human rights nor any illegal activity, including bribery and corruption. In addition, measures must be adopted to promote a corrupt free society and governments must be encouraged to show co-operation in this regard by improving on ordinary citizen's access to information on public spending.

*Restoration of
development aid*

218. Two important sources of finance, foreign direct investment (FDI) and official aid, have been observed to be declining in size, and tend to favour those countries with lucrative mining and oil industries or countries with sound social and economic policies. Of the US\$2.52 billion in FDI that flowed into sub-Saharan Africa during the last decade, three countries together alone accounted for much of that total – Angola, US\$626 million, Lesotho, US\$170 million, and Nigeria, US\$876 million. If South Africa is excluded (both as a recipient and a source of FDI), five other countries accounted for a further US\$576 million (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, and Sudan), leaving the remaining 40 countries of sub-Saharan Africa to compete for just \$US275 million in annual FDI flows.

219. This is a pity, because aid was just starting to work when it was squeezed. The trade union movement must demand the restoration of development aid, with much of the increase on health, the fight against HIV/AIDS scourge, education, water and sanitation, as well as infrastructural expansion and maintenance projects.

