

STATEMENT
WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS MAJOR GROUP

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Chair,

The Workers and Trade Union Major Group represented in this meeting by the International Trade Union Confederation Regional Office for Africa (ITUC Africa) would like to express their gratitude to organizers of the meeting for facilitating our participation in this meeting. We would like to assure the organizers and Parties of our firm commitment to the two parallel processes i.e. the Rio+20 SDGs and the Post 2015 Development Agenda processes. It is our belief that eventually the two processes will converge to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources.

Chair,

The experience of MDGs provides a practical lesson from which all of us have to take into account during these two processes. Though introduction of MDGs and their implementation at the national level have registered significant successes since 2000, their formulation process and the MDGs themselves exhibited serious flaws in a number of ways:

The initial MDGs formulation process was non - inclusive not only to CSOs but to Governments in the developing world. No wonder many described them as ‘economic prescriptions’ from the developed to the developing world. To workers and their Trade Unions and in fact to all CSOs even when their involvement was solicited, this was limited within the scope of ‘consultations’ and was not extended to implementation, monitoring and verification of programs. Such kind of engagement should be avoided as we move forward towards development of SDGs and a post 2015 development framework. Stakeholders should move from the ‘consultative enclave’ to a more active engagement. On this regard, Workers and Trade Unions would urge distinguished delegates to reconsider the participation of the Major Groups in the Bureau as this is in line with decisions taken during the Rio+20 conference where Parties agreed to ‘*establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that would be open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global SDGs to be agreed upon by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)*’. Workers and Trade Unions are requesting for the observer status in the Bureau not because they do not trust their national governments but as per the resolve expressed during the Rio+20 Conference of which African Governments endorsed and have repeatedly reaffirmed in various forums including the RIM and various Ministerial Meetings. Excluding Major Groups will not make the process ‘open’ as per the Rio+20 decision but ‘closed’ which will seriously undermine the spirit of the Rio+20 as contained in the Outcomes Document – The Future We Want. It is also important to note that participation of Major Groups in a Bureau is not a completely new thing; already there exist an example within the UN system where Major Groups have representatives in a Bureau. A good example is the UNEP SAICM Bureau where 2 seats are reserved for Major Groups representatives and currently the seats are occupied by representatives from Workers and Trade Unions and the NGO Major Groups. We all WANT THE SAME FUTURE; there is no need of excluding Major Groups.

Chair,

Workers and Trade Unions also would like all stakeholders not to repeat weaknesses that were inherent in MDGs which included exclusion of important themes such as Social Protection and Decent and Green Job creation. Studies carried out by the International Labour Organization (ILO) show that while on average in developed countries Social Protection systems cover more than 70% of their citizens in Africa the coverage is on average around 6%. It is hard to imagine how people who have no social protection or who have no jobs will participate effectively in sustainable economic development activities. These will instead participate effectively in unsustainable economic activities for survival. They are a ticking bomb ready to explode at the slightest

opportunity. The current social upheavals in some of our countries provide a good lesson to all of us. We therefore urge our governments to give due consideration to Social Protection Systems and to Decent and Green Jobs creation when formulating SDGs or any other set of Global Development Goals.

Africa should also avoid developing goals that completely do not have indicators or have inadequate indicators for measuring their performance as was the case in some MDGs. Finally, Africa should avoid focusing attention on quantitative achievements (the miracle of numbers) at the expense of qualitative indicators that will allow the region have a good measure of the quality of achievement. For example it is not sufficient to know the number of jobs created without knowing the quality of such jobs. It is also not helpful to know the number of women accessing maternity or health service without knowing the quality of such services including the time spent to access such services.

Last but not least, while formulating the Environmental theme, Africa should not only focus on climate change, pollution and other forms of environmental degradation but should also include Goals, Targets and Indicators that will ensure the Sound Management of Chemicals. Africa has become a dumping ground for hazardous chemicals from other parts of the world; the Cote d'IVOIRE accident and the toxic dumping off the coast of Somalia are wake up calls for all of us. Many workers, farmers, children and women are also seriously affected by toxic chemicals in this region as per ILO studies. The UNEP 2012 Global Chemical Outlook Report shows that our environment and ecosystems are seriously degraded by chemicals. The Rio+20 Outcome Document (**The Future We Want**) support the UNEP Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and has requested both developed and developing countries to support and implement it. We therefore believe that time has come for Africa to fully integrate the Sound Management of Chemicals in its development strategies.

It is our sincere hope that, the outcome of this meeting will take into account all these issues for the benefit of our current and future generations. Together we can achieve **THE FUTURE WE WANT**.

I thank you **Chair** and **distinguished delegates** for your kind attention.