

1 MAY 2024

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PRESS STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCodd) joins the rest of the world in commemorating International Workers' Day. We stand **in solidarity with workers** across Zimbabwe and the globe as this day serves as a reminder of the many challenges faced by workers and the resilience and determination they exhibit in the face of adversity. The global economy is still recovering from the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia-Ukraine conflict, Climate Change, growing debt burdens, runaway inflation and increasing inequality, crises whose impact is felt increasingly by labor as incomes lose their value, governments impose increased taxes and economies continue to seek stability.

In Zimbabwe, these challenges compound the unequal socioeconomic standing of citizens and have worsened hardship through inadequate access to healthcare, job insecurity and disparities in income and working conditions. The devastating effects of the El Niño-induced drought have further heightened food insecurity and economic vulnerability, particularly among agricultural workers and rural communities. The resulting strain has perpetuated a cycle of poverty, leaving vulnerable populations (including labor) increasingly marginalized.

As a pro-poor movement, we are also concerned by rising commodity prices and an unstable currency worsening the situation for citizens. This is also at a time when government is imposing heavy taxes on citizens. While also reflecting on labor, we must note the unemployment rate which remains high. This has left majority of the youth vulnerable to social vices such as drug abuse and crime, an increasing challenge especially in urban areas. Further, majority of those who identify as employed are in the informal sector which is continually harassed by authorities with no social security/insurance benefits or protection from the government.

ZIMCodd pays tribute to the resilience and dedication of labor, particularly those in agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and other sectors. We recognize the sacrifices made by workers and call for greater solidarity and support to ensure their well-being and dignity. In the same vein, we recommend government adopts the below to relieve the pressure on labor:

- Invest in creation of decent jobs in the formal economy and ensure social protection especially at retirement.
- Facilitate the transition of the informal to formal sector providing adequate protections, credit facilities and opportunities against monopoly capitalism.
- Allow the opening up of civic space for democratic expression against the challenges that labor is facing.

As we stand in solidarity with workers everywhere, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a society where every worker is empowered, respected and able to thrive. In the same light, we call on all labor, social movements and civil society to join hands against inequality, unfair taxation, high unemployment and shrinking civic space.

Happy International Workers Day!