2010 MAY DAY:
CONSOLIDATING WORKERS’ SOLIDARITY
AND THE LEGACY OF KWAME NKRUMAH

POVERTY: Threat to Constitutionalism and Multi-party Democracy in Ghana?

1ST TRILATERAL CONFERENCE: Prospects and Challenges

COMMUNIQUÉ: Trilateral Conference
CONSOLIDATING WORKERS’ SOLIDARITY AND THE LEGACY OF KWAME NKRUMAH

2010 May Day Address by Brother Kofi Asamoah, Secretary General, Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC) on Behalf of Organised Labour.

We are celebrating this year’s May Day at a time when the challenges to workers unity and solidarity have become even greater. We take particular note once again of the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, the Vice President and the Ministers of State, Employers representatives and other distinguished personalities as a recognition of the strategic role workers play in the social, economic and political development of Ghana.

This year, we are celebrating May Day under the theme “Consolidating Workers’ Solidarity and the legacy of Kwame Nkrumah” We salute the hard working people of Ghana for their endurance and spirit of sacrifice over the years and pay special tribute to Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah the founder...
of the Republic of Ghana, the man adjudged the greatest African of the last millennium and named among the first one hundred person who had the most significant influence on mankind in the last one thousand years, for his abiding faith in and commitment to the working people of Ghana.

Organised labour has dedicated the 2010 May Day to Kwame Nkrumah a part of his centenary Birth Day Celebrations. We are celebrating this year’s May Day at time when the challenges to workers unity and solidarity have become even greater. We are referring to the negative structural effects of globalization on working people in the developing world and in particular the continuing effects of the world financial crisis that struck the industrialised capitalist world. Here at home, the lack of any effective programme of job creation, the increasing number of the unemployed people particularly the youth, low wages and insecurity of employment threaten workers unity and solidarity. We are particularly concerned with law courts which continue to stick to 19th century common law principles of employment that allowed employers to terminate employment without any reason.

Your Excellency, throughout the history of the trade union movement, and in particular, the Ghana trade union movement, it is unity and solidarity that has maintained the efficacy, strength and relevance of the movement in the face of great odds. Without unity and solidarity, the workers’ movement is ineffective and becomes an easy prey.

Today, as we celebrate May Day dedicated to the founder of modern Ghana and the touch bearer of the African liberation movement, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, it is important to recall the critical role that workers’ unity and solidarity played in the anti-colonial struggle and the post-independence days of the late 50s and early 60s. It is an undisputed historical fact that the trade union movement was critical in our independence struggle; that workers, through their trade unions, played a key role in the independence struggle alongside the Convention People’s Party (CPP), the political instrument that opened the gate...
to freedom not only for Ghana but for the whole of Black Africa. The ability of the trade union movement can be directly linked to the transition from house and enterprise unions to national trade unions. In 1945, the trade union movement was able to hold its first congress which set in motion the processes that subsequently led to the establishment of what we see today as Organised Labour.

Without unity and solidarity at the union front, the independence struggle would have been more difficult to win. Brother Chairman, it is important to emphasize that in today’s labour relations in Ghana, there is the re-emergence of house and enterprise unions. What is even more worrying is the destructive and misguided notion being peddled by some so-called labour consultants that trade unions are no longer necessary in the modern world of work and that unions can be replaced by the so-called labour or industrial relations consultants and technicians. Nothing can be further from the truth and Organised Labour wishes to take this opportunity to sound a firm note of warning to those so-called labour experts who are polluting the mind of workers that they can replace trade unions.

As we all know, Trade Unions played a decisive role in the thirteen-day strike that followed the declaration of ‘Positive Action’ on January 8, 1950 by Kwame Nkrumah. At independence, therefore, the TUC enjoyed a special relationship with the ruling government, even as it strove to defend and promote the interests of working people. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah made politics a matter for working people in a manner that no other leader had achieved. He saw the potential of the working people as an unstoppable force of change and made the workers movement the foundation of the anti-colonial movement. Kwame Nkrumah saw the potential of the workers’ movement to transform our society and invested heavily in it by vigorous policy of industrialization, job creation and education.

Job creation was high on the agenda of the CPP Government to meet the demands of the teeming masses of our people for employment and the need for national development. Jobs were created in manufacturing, agriculture, ports and harbours, the railways, road construction, the Tema Harbour project, the Volta River
Nkrumah’s decision to establish state farms was informed not only by the concern for employment but also the introduction of modern scientific large scale farming for rapid national development.

Project and in the latter years the increasing drive to full employment under the Work and Happiness Programme within the framework of the Seven Year Development Plan.

Your Excellency, Fellow Workers, the Seven Year Development Plan is, without doubt, the most comprehensive development plan that Ghana has seen in our post-independence history. The plan sought to transform Ghana from a country of shopkeepers and consumers into the showpiece of modern industrialised economy in Africa, a period where there would be full employment. It was even envisaged that there will be shortage of labour force and the need to import labour from neighbouring countries to fill some of the vacancies. This is in contrast to the situation today, where mass unemployment and underemployment and redundancies are the order of the day. Nkrumah’s decision to establish state farms was informed not only by the concern for employment but also the introduction of modern scientific large scale farming for rapid national development. Nkrumah’s Workers Brigade Programme was equally motivated by a commitment to create employment for Ghanaians.

Again, we recall that trade union unity and solidarity in those days won for the labour movement thirty-four (34) of the forty-seven (47) ILO Conventions that have been ratified by Ghana between 1957 and 1966 when Nkrumah’s CPP government was overthrown by the American CIA inspired coup d’état of February 1966. Among the conventions ratified by the CPP to promote the wellbeing of workers were Convention 98 concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, Convention on Equal remuneration; Convention 26 on Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery, Underground Work (Women), Convention on Night Work (Women); and Convention of Forced Labour, to mention a few notable ones. These conventions were not only ratified by Ghana but were supported by the passage of relevant legislation to protect and promote workers rights and interests.

Brother chairman, I venture to say that all these gains could not have been

The smart turnout of labour students at the 2010 May Day was a sight for sore eyes.
attained without workers’ unity and solidarity and the support of Kwame Nkrumah. Can we say that the trade union movement has enjoyed comparable support from any other government since Kwame Nkrumah’s CPP? The answer is a resounding no.

Brother chairman, Organised labour finds it necessary to draw the attention of His Excellency, the President, to the disturbing spectacles of many companies and enterprises that are directly and indirectly preventing their employees from joining or forming trade unions. Workers seeking to form or join unions in those workplaces continuously face daunting challenges and obstacles in dismissals, harassment, intimidations and threats. Some employers in the private sector are encouraging workers to form “Enterprise Unions” with no linkages with the trade union movement in order to control and manipulate the workers. These are clear violations of the constitutional guarantee of the right of workers to form or join unions of their choice thereby undermining workers’ rights.

This practice is particularly rampant in certain enterprises owned and run by some foreign nationals. We cannot, as a country allow workers’ rights to be infringed with impunity.

Brother chairman, the need for trade union unity and solidarity is even more critical in this new phase of the emerging

The need for trade union unity and solidarity is critical in this new phase of the merging oil and gas industry where giant foreign companies, with huge financial resource and political support from their home governments will be major players, with capacity to influence even governments against national interest and the specific interests of their work force.

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ing oil and gas industry where giant foreign companies, with huge financial resource and political support from their home governments will be major players, with capacity to influence even governments against national interest and the specific interests of their workforce. This is not the time to divide our ranks. This is the time for unity and solidarity among workers. That is the only sure way we can protect our rights we have won over the years and to win new ones.

We draw attention to the developments at the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) and ask for your immediate intervention. Your Excellency, to bring an end to the ongoing “Power Play” in the supply of crude and related factors to save the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) from collapse.

It is important to reiterate the point that workers unity and solidarity also means the readiness of workers to fight with all the powers at their disposal for their rights. While Organised Labour seeks to promote peaceful and harmonious industrial relations, we cannot be taken for granted. We are ready and able, when the circumstances demand, to use our collective strength to fight our legitimate interests and rights. In order for the labour movement to effectively deal with the attack on trade union rights and the challenges of our times, it is important that we harness our strength through unity and solidarity. What unites us, as workers is far more important than our incidental and passing misunderstandings and differences. We should begin to work seriously towards one strong and democratic trade union centre that will bring together the full weight and force of the united workers’ movement to bear on the course of development of our dear country, Ghana.

Your Excellency, before I take my seat, I would like to appeal to you, on behalf of Organised Labour to use your good offices to ensure that workers who are rendering services to the public also enjoy improved pay and working conditions like their counterparts in the formal private sector. We have already received assurance from you that your government is committed to the implementation of the Single Spine Pay Policy starting from July 2010. We trust that the policy will be implemented in a way that will bring significant improvement in the level of public sector pay administration. We would also like to appeal to you to ensure that one of your legacies for the working people of Ghana is improve pension for retirees to save pensioners from the hardships they go through.

On behalf of the leadership of Organised Labour I say Aye-koo to all the working people of Ghana. May God Almighty Bless us all!

Long Live Workers Unity and Solidarity! Long Live Organised Labour!! Long Live Ghana!!!
POVERTY: A threat to Constitutionalism and Multi-party Democracy in Ghana?

A presentation by Bro. Yaw Baah, Deputy Secretary-General, Ghana Trades Union Congress at the National Commission for Civic Education 10th Annual Constitution Week Celebrations, Roundtable Discussion, 11 May 2010 at the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT, Accra

INTRODUCTION

We are dealing with two important terms - Constitutionalism which means “government according to a constitution” or “adherence to constitutional principles of government” and Democracy which means any of the following:

• “Government in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled”;
• “A country, state, etc. with such government”;
• “Majority rule”

There are various forms of governance but what makes constitutional democracy so attractive is its underlying principle of equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal treatment for all citizens, at least in principle. Ghana’s constitutional democracy is still a fledgling one. But it is maturing very fast.

We fear that if the incidence of poverty increases, it will get to a stage where Ghana’s constitutional democracy and the stability that has come with it will be replaced by chaos

The Presenter

The topic for this roundtable suggests that the constitutional democracy we have in Ghana is something we all cherish that is why we are here discussing what constitutes a threat to our democracy – poverty. We fear that if the incidence of poverty increases, it will get to a stage where Ghana’s constitutional democracy and the stability that has come with it will be replaced by chaos as has happened in neighbouring countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire. This fear is a genuine one.
It is the responsibility of those who have the mandate to allocate our national resources to ensure that there are decent jobs in the economy for everyone who wants a job. If we are unable to create jobs for everyone, then we should ensure that those who have jobs and regular income are able to cater for those who cannot have jobs and income.

Right from the outset, I should say that the solution to poverty is employment. It is, therefore, the responsibility of those who have the mandate to allocate our national resources to ensure that there are decent jobs in the economy for everyone who wants a job. If for some reason we are unable to create jobs for everyone, then we should ensure that those who have jobs and regular income are able to cater for those who cannot have jobs and income. We can achieve that using our tax system and other forms of transfers. We need a courageous leader to apply this simple but most effective socio-economic logic.

**POVERTY IN GHANA**

The question we are trying to answer at this roundtable can be reframed as follows: *Is poverty a threat to the adherence to constitutional principles?*. To answer this question, one should understand poverty and its impact on individuals and the society as a whole. Some analysts define poverty broadly to include all forms of vulnerability (this is how Vladimir Antwi Danso, one of the panelists at the roundtable, defined poverty). But I would like to focus on income poverty.

Poverty or, to be more precise, income poverty is generally defined as the lack of sufficient resources necessary to maintain a certain standard of living as defined by an official national poverty line. Individuals and households who survive under the officially defined national poverty line are referred to as the ‘poor’. Poor people experience hunger, poor health, social exclusion and insecurity. Generally, people are poor because they lack access to productive resources – human, financial and material resources.

The Ghana Statistical Services (GSS), based on the fifth round of the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS5) conducted in 2005/2006, fixed the lower and upper poverty lines at GHC288 (¢2,884,700) and GHC371 (¢3,708,900) per adult per annum respectively. The upper poverty line represents the overall poverty

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<tr>
<th>Table 1: Poverty in Ghana</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2005/06</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical Zones</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accra (GAMA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Coastal</td>
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<td>Urban Forest</td>
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<td>Urban Savannah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Coastal</td>
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<td>Rural Forest</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Rural/Urban</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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*Source: Calculated from a report on Poverty Trends and Patterns in Ghana (GSS, 2007)*
line in Ghana and this is equivalent to about US$1 per day. In other words all those who earn below the upper poverty line are classified as “poor” and all those who earn below the lower poverty line are considered “extremely poor”.

According to the GLSS5 (2005/06), 6.2 million people, representing 28.5% of Ghanaians were “poor” (i.e. they survived under GH¢371 per annum) and 3.9 million (representing 18% of Ghanaians) were classified as “extremely poor”. Approximately 86% (5.3 million) of the poor are living in rural areas. Nearly half of the poor are located in Rural Savannah. Even for those living in urban areas where the incidence of poverty is relatively low, Urban Savannah has the highest number of the urban poor with a total of 321,256 poor people followed by Accra (271,832) and Urban Forest (216,230). Urban coastal contributes the least to the total urban poverty (67,958). The details are presented in Table 1.

The incidence of poverty as shown in Table 2 is highest in Rural Savannah with over half of the population (60.1%) living below the upper poverty line. It is followed by Rural Forest (27.7%), Urban Savannah (27.6%) and Rural Coastal (24%). The lowest incidence of poverty is reported in Urban Coastal (5.5%) followed by Urban Forest (6.9%).

### Table 2: Incidence of Poverty by Locality (using the upper poverty line of $1 per day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical Zones</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accra (GAMA)</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Coastal</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Forest</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Savannah</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Coastal</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Forest</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Savannah</td>
<td>60.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Average</strong></td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<tr>
<th>Rural/Urban</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Average</strong></td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from a report on Poverty Trends and Patterns in Ghana (GSS, 2007)

It is important to note that in spite of all the aid inflows plus the revenue from cocoa, gold and timber, Ghana was able to lift just about 1,753,000 people from poverty. During that period, the size of our economy more than doubled and the growth rate of GDP averaged over 5 percent per annum. The growth in our economy over the past twenty five years or so has benefited a few privileged individuals.

POVERTY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Poverty in Ghana has been declining since the early 1990s, according to the statistics, albeit at a very slow rate. The total number of individuals classified as poor declined from 7,931,000 in 1991/92 to 7,203,000 in 1998/99. That means 728,000 individuals were lifted out of poverty between 1991 and 1999. But there was a sharper decline in poverty between 1999 and...
2005. According to the 2005/06 Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 5), 6,178,000 individuals were poor compared to 7,203,000 in 1999. This means in the six-year period between 1999 and 2005 over one million Ghanaians were lifted out of poverty. Overall, Ghana managed to lift 1,753,000 people from poverty in the thirteen year period from 1992 to 2005 – an average of 134,846 per year.

It is important to note that in spite of all the aid inflows plus the revenue from cocoa, gold and timber, Ghana was able to lift just about 1,753,000 people from poverty. During that period the size of our economy more than doubled and the growth rate of GDP averaged over 5 percent per annum. Clearly, the growth in our economy over the past twenty five years or so has benefited a few privileged individuals. The majority of the people are not benefiting from the worth created during this period. That is why after 25 years of economic growth we still have over six million people in Ghana who are surviving below one US dollar a day. If we shift the poverty line to two US dollars a day over 70 percent of Ghanaians may be classified as poor. And we should note that there are workers in the formal sector including the public sector who were classified as poor. In the 1999 GLSS, almost one in five public service workers (23%) was poor. However, the incidence of poverty among public servants fell to below 10 percent in 2005.

We can now appreciate the importance of this topic, even if we define poverty narrowly as income poverty. There is no doubt that Ghana has made some progress in terms of poverty reduction and in terms of democratic governance. But it is also true that there is still a huge room for improvement in both poverty reduction and democratic governance.

In the past two decades Ghana has stood out among its peers in Africa with exemplary democratic credentials worth emulating by many others on the continent. The peaceful changes of governments since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1993 are a sign of a maturing multiparty democracy. However, while the democratic process has guaranteed some amount of economic and political freedom for some Ghanaians, there is the general feeling that it has not produced enough pro-poor gains for the majority of Ghanaians. As the data show, poverty has been declining since 1992, the year Ghana returned to constitutional democracy. This may be an indication of a positive relationship between democracy and poverty reduction. But the slow rate of poverty reduction suggests that just a small fraction of the population is benefiting from the fruits of democracy. Poverty, therefore, remains a threat to constitutional democracy despite the gains we have made in poverty reduction in the past eighteen years or so.

The threat to the political stability posed by poverty seems to have been ignored even though we witness these threats on a daily basis in the form of crimes such as armed robbery, drug trafficking and violent actions from the so-called foot-soldiers of the two main political parties – The National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party.

According to John Dunn (1993), democracy is an uneven and non-linear process of
In fact, some foot soldiers expect that they will receive direct benefits - both in cash and in kind – from the government. If we are lucky such people with unmet expectations may wait for four years and peacefully vote the government out. But we cannot be lucky always.

CONCLUSION

The positive relationship between internal security and democracy is in no doubt. Job security and income security are essential ingredients for creating a peaceful and democratic environment. It is, therefore, important that job opportunities are created for those who can potentially be involved in crimes and related activities that can jeopardize internal security and democracy. The only way we can consolidate the gains and grow our democracy is to create jobs especially for the youth who can potentially reverse the successes Ghana has made in democratic governance since we returned to constitutional democracy 1993.

The answer to the question, “Is Poverty A Threat to Constitutionalism and Multi-Party Democracy in Ghana?” is yes, in my opinion.
Prospects and Challenges of the Ghana TUC, COSATU and NLC Trilateral Conference

Presentation by Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa, at Trilateral Conference of Ghana TUC/COSATU/NLC, May 4-6, 2010, Accra - Ghana

I cherish the opportunity to make this presentation to the first trilateral conference of COSATU, NLC and Ghana TUC. My presentation will cover the origins of the trilateral cooperation of the three organizations, the nature and content of the relations to date. We will then turn to the broader context of the African condition, the challenge of achieving the African nation and unity, African institutions and the need for strengthening as well as engaging with them. We conclude by pointing to the strategic position of the African labour movement, strengthening its role and the critical challenge of trade union unity now and not later.

ORIGINS OF THE TRILATERAL COOPERATION

The origins of the trilateral cooperation may be traced to the similar and shared history of activist struggles by the three federations in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle.
national meetings, e.g. International Labour Conferences and international trade union meetings and conferences.

During the 1980s a number of interactions through mainly education workshops, took place between NLC and Ghana TUC as well as the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) and the Gambia Workers Confederation (GWC) within the framework of educational activities of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council. Throughout the 1990s, strong contacts were maintained between the NLC and Ghana TUC. Over those years, contacts were also maintained by both organizations, more so by the NLC, with the comrades in the south, COSATU of South Africa. The beginning of the new century saw the strategic and conscious institution of bilateral leadership exchanges between COSATU and NLC and between NLC and Ghana TUC. In January 2000, ‘not long after the NLC reclaimed itself from four and half years of military intervention and take-over of the federation’ says NLC President Omar, it hosted its first bilateral conference with COSATU in Abuja. This was followed in February 2002, with the NLC hosting another first bilateral conference with Ghana TUC in Lagos and Abuja. COSATU in turn hosted the NLC in a return bilateral conference in Johannesburg in September 2002. In May 2003, Ghana TUC hosted the second bilateral conference with the NLC under the theme ‘strengthening our common bonds towards peace, democracy and development’.

The holding of bilateral conferences and exchange of high level delegations of COSATU/NLC and NLC/Ghana TUC as well as high level contacts between leaders of the three federations was followed by union to union contacts between affiliates of the three federations. We make exception of the union to union relations between Public Services Workers Union (PSWU) of Ghana TUC and Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCCSTRSE) of the NLC which already existed from the early 1990s. We recall readily the exchanges that developed between a number of affiliates...
Union to union exchanges between affiliates of the three federations have strengthened the bonds of solidarity and also facilitated the sharing of union experiences, especially in relation to collective bargaining and organizing of Ghana TUC and the NLC. They include those between the Teachers and Education Workers Union (TEWU) of Ghana TUC and the Non Academic Staff Union (NASU) of NLC, General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) of Ghana TUC and the Agricultural and Allied Employees Union (AAEU) of NLC, Local Government Workers Union (LGWU) of Ghana TUC and the Nigerian Union of Mineworkers (NUM) of COSATU and the Ghana Mineworkers Union (GMWU) of Ghana TUC.

NATURE AND CONTENT OF RELATIONS
The issues that featured in the bilateral conferences helped in laying the basis for the relations. The COSATU/NLC bilateral considered the state of the international trade union movement, organizational challenges in the new millennium, the informalization of labour and the two federations’ responses to organizing in the informal economy, the African Union and NEPAD, and HIV/AIDS as a challenge for unionists. For the NLC/Ghana TUC bilateral, the issues that were deliberated on included, internal democracy and organizational strengthening, democracy, peace and good governance, decent work and core labour standards, NEPAD and the African development agenda, trade and macroeconomic issues, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and trade union responses, and rebuilding the Organization of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA).

Further to these, the three federations have participated in each other’s delegates’ congresses since 2000. This participation has helped the organizations to know more about one other, especially regarding their common democratic credentials. There have also been special meetings of the top leaders of the organizations in Johannesburg and Abuja in 2003 and 2005 as well as during international meetings in Geneva, Vienna and elsewhere.
over the period. These meetings have helped their coordination of common positions on issues relating to the African and international trade union movement. There has also been participation in each other’s training activities which has helped the development of links at various levels of organization and also added to the sharing of union experiences. Union to union exchanges between affiliates of the three federations have strengthened the bonds of solidarity and also facilitated the sharing of union experiences, especially in relation to collective bargaining and organizing.

More room for exchanges between the three federations and their affiliates exist given their range of experiences in organizing, social security, collective bargaining and social dialogue, policy engagement and advocacy and campaigns, and also workers’ capital. Promoting trilateral cooperation around the identified areas and making each federation and its affiliates stronger in them contributes to strengthening the African trade union movement as a whole around those areas. Through further exchanges with other federations in other countries on the continent and through more effective coordination of initiatives at regional level, the African trade union movement can make better progress on these issues.

THE AFRICAN CONDITION

Hardly anyone from among us needs to be informed anew that Africa is at the “bottom of the heap” as far as the human development indicators are concerned. Sadly 34 out of 49 least developed countries are reported to be in Africa. Unemployment in countries across Africa goes up to 40 per cent even by conservative estimates. Underemployment is widespread. This is especially reflected in the large informal economy which accounts for up to 90 per cent of the labour force in some African countries. Massive inequalities exist in incomes and living conditions, within the three countries of our federations. In fact, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, provide some of the worst examples in the world.

Africa represents the paradox of the endowed land with poor people. The modern history of Africa can be traced with Africa experiencing waves of massive inequalities exist in incomes and living conditions, within the three countries of our federations, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, providing some of the worst examples in the world.
of globalization and contact with the rest of the world that have always left Africa and its people worse off overall. In the last millennia and half, Africa has experienced the trans-Saharan slave trade accompanied by Islamization and considerable Arabization; the trans-Atlantic slave trade duly accompanied and followed by colonial conquest, Christianization and Westernization. Colonization marked a high point of domination over Africa since the beginning of the last millennia and was consolidated by the dismemberment of Africa and its parceling out in 1885 at the Berlin Conference attended by leaders and representatives of European nations and the USA who created African states with borders according to the interests of the colonial powers. Colonization further consummated the cultural invasion and imposition on Africa resulting in the loss of African heritage, the adoption and use of foreign languages as the medium of modern socialization and education; and the virtual destruction of the self-confidence of African people.

In the period since, with the pacification of Africa and its integration into a global system of western domination according to the terms of foreign economic and geopolitical interests, Africa has carried on with a loss of identity and continuing crises of governance, demonstrated by conflicts, political instability and a caricature of democracy with its predominance of fraudulent elections and widespread violation or absence of rights. Africa remains locked up in this situation largely because it is led and managed by elites that neither recognize the fundamental contradiction between the African condition and the interests of world capitalism nor perceive the challenge of Africa acting as one in its relations with the rest of the world as the precondition for her progress and that of her people. Africa’s elites have led in perpetuating Africa according to the spaces in which it was dismembered by the colonial predators.

We pose the question as to where the trade unions and their leadership position themselves between these elites and the masses of Africa? In answering this question one of the imperatives we raise is the issue of
trade union unity and the fragmentation of the trade union movement in Africa, with the existence of two regional trade union organizations as one of the main symptoms of this weakness. While accepting that the existence of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) and the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) is rooted in the history of the movement in Africa, it is time to pose the question as to whether we should be simply trapped by that history or be ready to consciously address the issue of unity of the movement in Africa. While the two organizations have agreed to cooperate, their continued existence as separate organizations, with similar representative structures, both laying claim to representing African workers, virtually epitomizes the absurdity of ‘one body with two heads and also in this case two stomachs’. African workers’ leadership and representation is thereby weakened.

CHALLENGE OF AFRICAN NATION AND UNITY

Nations are products of community, history and culture of a people or peoples. But they do not grow spontaneously. Nations are created and built. They are nurtured and constructed by women and men acting as conscious agents. Modern nations have been the results of the conscious effort of organized and fighting peoples, adventurers, explorers, inventors, healers, entrepreneurs, cultural and spiritual workers, working women and men.

Major work has been done in Africa to canvass the quest for the African nation. I would like to refer comrades to The African Nation: The State of the Nation by Kwesi Kwaa Prah and published by the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies (CASAS based in Cape Town, South Africa). The publication spells out the place of Africa in history, shows the impact on Africa of her relations with the rest of the world and points to the imperative of African unity and the construction of the African nation as a condition.
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE GHANA TUC, COSATU AND NLC TRILATERAL CONFERENCE

It is useful to recall that often when Africans act together in their own institutions or during international forums the common positions taken are progressive and are largely in the interests of the majority of Africans for the emancipation of African people.

Again, I underline to comrades that the intellectual and historical foundations have already been established/laid for a united Africa. I refer you to Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State by Cheikh Anta Diop (published by Lawrence Hill, New Haven, Connecticut). According to Ayi Kwei Armah in New African Magazine, February, 2010, Diop’s work: presents a thorough overview of Africa’s inventory of energy (fossil, geothermal, solar, wind, tidal, nuclear, hydroelectric and biological), mineral, water, agricultural and human resources. It surveys the distribution patterns of these resources, and suggests adjustments that could be made in order to organize them to create a series of regional industrial, agricultural and energy bases serving the people of the whole continent. This wide range of feasible improvements in African life depends on one design condition: that our planners approach Africa not as a jumble of disconnected sovereign states, but as a unified field. The thesis is that in Africa today, economic, social and cultural improvements are feasible, but only if the enabling condition – African unity – is achieved.

The case for the African nation and unity has long been made and eloquently too.

AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS

It is useful to recall that often when Africans act together in their own institutions or during international forums the common positions taken are progressive and are largely in the interests of the majority of Africans. This is notwithstanding the fact of the many weaknesses of nascent African institutions. Growing and strengthening African civil society participation in African institutions can contribute to reshape them into genuine organs for the development of African unity and progress/emancipation. The African institution most accessible by African trade unions is the African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission (AULSAC). There is also the newly established African Union Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as well as African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. The AULSAC is supposed to be tripartite, bringing to-
STRENGTHENING AND ENGAGING AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS

The potential for full trade union intervention in these structures has neither been pursued nor achieved. This is either due to the absence of the appropriate procedures and the opportunities for intervention or the weaknesses of trade union capacity for making the requisite input into decision making. The AULSAC which is tripartite is composed by representatives of employers, workers and ministries of labour. The conclusions of their meetings which are considered as those of experts are normally placed before the meetings of Labour Ministers which immediately follows for adoption. While acknowledging that of all AU bodies until recently, this is the one that provides an opportunity for the voice of labour to be heard at all, it is also a fact that the structure of its meetings does not allow for the full realization of its potential. Even though the voice of workers can get heard in this structure, its decisions and conclusions are not made

At sub-regional level, the SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, COMESA and others exist as institutions that trade unions and organized civil society can reshape and strengthen for the benefit and progress of Africa.
in such a manner as to ensure that what actually emerges is the negotiated agreement between all the three parties. A lot remains to be done to ensure that the rules and procedures for engagement within the AULSAC makes it truly tripartite and an African institution for sharing common cause and agreement on matters of employment, workers’ rights, labour markets, migration and other issues that fall within its mandate.

Other AU structures like the ECOSOC, ACHPR as well as the sub-regional organs exist as ones in which the trade union movement can intervene for the benefit of African workers, but the absence of a united African regional trade union movement contributes in large measure to the weakness of the movement in strengthening these African institutions and engaging with them for the benefit of the African people. With a united front and purpose by the African trade union movement, these African institutions can be reformed to provide the requisite space for input into decision making by organized workers and other civil society.

We also pose for consideration in time to come some general but pertinent issues for our progress towards achieving unity and forging the African nation. The need to pursue a policy for recognizing Africa’s space as one and for opening up its borders for the free movement of people, goods and services within the region as a whole. This should be accompanied by improved policing and attention to security. The need to operate as one entity in multilateral trade relations and the need to establish an African institution with responsibility for conducting free and fair elections in all African countries.

**STRENGTHENING THE AFRICAN LABOUR MOVEMENT**

The history of the African labour movement, and certainly of the three federations meeting in this trilateral conference, attests to the critical role of the trade unions in Africa’s struggle for progress and emancipation. The contributions of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Ghana Trades Union Congress to the independence struggles of Nigeria and Ghana are well known and so also
is the contribution of the Congress of South African Trade Unions to the struggle against apartheid. Since independence and the fall of apartheid, all three federations have been involved in defending and promoting the rights of freedom of association and expression, in protecting and promoting the interests of workers in the world of work, in fighting for the consolidation of democracy, and in striving to achieve genuine national independence in their countries.

The achievement and experience of the three federations in engaging with national institutions should also be transformed into engagement with African institutions and conscious contribution to their development. They can best make this contribution through strengthening African regional trade union organization and making it the medium for engaging with African institutions. In this effort, the African workers and people stand to benefit if the trade union movement operates as a united organization and optimizes its synergies and potential. The forthrightness of the three federations in addressing the challenge of unity that faces the African labour movement is important for making progress on this critical issue. We must welcome the COSATU resolution on African trade union unity adopted at their last congress in September, 2009. I invite the NLC and Ghana TUC to consciously address this issue in their governing structures and to make the necessary contribution towards achieving African trade union unity. It is time to face up to the question of the necessity or not for the existence of two regional trade union organizations for African workers.

The three federations need to continue to explore common positions on issues of concern to African workers at international level. They also need to continue the exchanges that build each other’s capacity in
dealing with core issues of trade unions – employment, incomes, social security, occupational health and safety, social dialogue, sustainable development. This includes their continued interest and valued contribution to the work of the African Labour Research Network (ALRN) and the African Labour Educators Network (ALEN). We also invite the three federations to contribute to the foundations for an Annual African New Year School at which African trade union leaders and cadre engage over current and critical issues for African workers and people.

In addressing the challenge to act now and not later, we invite the three federations to acknowledge the necessity for African unity as a condition for African emancipation and genuine progress of her people. This requires that the three federations pay close attention to pursuing African trade union unity in order to empower the African trade union movement to make its rightful impact on African regional institutions and within the international trade union movement as a whole. We need to act now for good effect and to prevent the African people from being further marginalized and pressed to the bottom.

Organization Decides Everything!
COMMUNIQUÉ: 
1st Trilateral Conference of the of Ghana TUC/COSATU/NLC

4-6 May 2010 - Accra, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The 1st trilateral conference of Ghana TUC, Nigeria Labour Congress and Congress of South African Trade Unions held on May 4-6, 2010 at Accra, Ghana. The Conference arises as a response to the multifarious challenges confronting African working people in general and the working class in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa, particularly. The Conference had evolved as an idea over the past six years based on the need to forge greater trade union unity across the African continent in the spirit of international working class solidarity.

The persistent and continued underdevelopment of Africa and the pauperization of its working people are traceable to the characteristic inequalities fostered by the capitalist mode of production, particularly in its neoliberal incarnation. The force socially positioned to checkmate and change this situation, being the working class; the need for the working class movement of our three countries to forge ever greater unity and solidarity, in the interest of our continent’s masses, had led to discussions and bilateral conferences over the last decade which paved the way to the summoning of the trilateral conference with the theme: “Strengthening Trade Union Solidarity in Africa”.

The Conference noted the following common challenges on the continent: rising unemployment particularly amongst the youth, growing informalization of work, rampant destitution, prevalence of poverty, growing income inequalities and continued immiseration of the mass of the population of the three countries flowing from a similar cause. These arise from the poverty of Africa because of its natural wealth and its continued peripheral position in the global economy.

Towards achieving the set aim of a strengthened trade union movement in Africa for the purpose of transforming Africa in the interest of its working people and poor, the conference discussed extensively and resolved thus:
RESOLUTIONS

1. The Conference-in-session considered the history of the formation and development of modern nations, realizing that these have not just happened but have been established through conscious processes geared at the consummation of peoples’ within defined territories, as communities of fate. In this light, the Conference-in-session resolved on mobilizing support for the re-constitution of the African Union as a Federation. The Conference-in-session further noted that while the establishment of a unified African federation might be a necessary condition for the liberation of Africa from centuries of peonage, marginalization and backwardness over the last half a millennium, it is not a sufficient condition. The Conference-in-session stressed the need for such an envisaged African modern state to be built on a developmentalist socioeconomic agenda that would have at its heart rapid industrialization and a political thrust rooted in popular participatory and people-empowering democracy, wherein the will of the people shall truly guide the actions of African leaders.

2. The Conference-in-session considered the present global economic crisis as a clear reflection of the impossibility of sustainable development for humankind on the basis of neoliberalism and capitalism. The situation of Africa it noted is even direr, fostered by the impact of: decades of implementation of World Bank and IMF-inspired policies that have led to loss of jobs and extreme liberalization of the economies of African countries making them highly vulnerable to external shocks; the rapacious activities of multinational corporations with attendant capital flight and; a class of ruling elites who have looked up more to Western international organizations and their recommendations than down to the people they claim to represent. The Conference-in-session thus called for an alternative, emancipator developmental strategy for Africa that would deepen participatory democracy and a people-oriented economic paradigm.

3. The Decent Work Agenda and global jobs pact were considered by the Conference-in-session as means of strategically engaging states and employers in defence of workers’ rights and for creating more jobs and better working conditions. The Conference-in-session however was strongly of the view that these should be linked closely to the eight basic needs development goals of: food, housing, health, education, water, electricity, transport and communication.

4. Towards forging ever closer unity across Africa, in a process-driven approach to the formation of the African Federation, the Conference-in-session calls for the opening of borders of African countries for the free movement of people and goods, within a context of a united federation in which the welfare and political, social and economic democratic rights of all toiling Africans would be safeguarded.

5. The Economic Partnership Agreements, the Conference-in-session observed, represent attempts at once again furthering structurally putting African
countries at a disadvantage in the global economy. Trade union federations in the Trilateral; are to work closely together in combating the imperialist thrust of the EPAs.

6. The Conference-in-session realizing the dynamics between thinking globally and acting locally stressed the need for trade unions to define our internationalist and continental working class agenda within the presently subsisting African nation-states through: building a united labour movement at the workplace level and nationally; building political power by consolidating alliances with progressive pro-worker political and civil society formations and; organising local economies through industrialization processes guided by growth and development paths capable of leading to the social transformation of our countries in the interest of workers and the poor.

7. The Conference-in-session was of the view that practical steps are not being taken to combat climate change, by states, particularly of Western countries. The continued sacrifice of our collective right to a safe planet, to satisfy the greed of a few that pursue production without sincere commitment to sustainable development, despite some lip service comes with grave consequences for us today and for generations to come. The Conference-in-session thus resolved that the three federations will continue to engage with nation-state governments, social movements and international organisations at the global level, on climate change from a position of social justice.

8. The Conference-in-session realizing the fundamental role of unity in entrenching internationalist working class solidarity, resolved on pursuing an ever deepening organizational and political unity of the African trade union movement within the context of the historical evolution of continental trade union unity, which would eschew a mechanical approach. The Conference-in-session further noted that while it is costly to maintain two continental trade union centres, the call for unity, must extend beyond cost-consideration and be hinged on building working class power on the continent.

9. The Conference-in-session considered it very critical for the trilateral to formulate a strategic framework for the three federations engagement continentally and globally, towards building working class power and defending the interests of African workers, within and with diverse international organisations such as the: ITUC; OATUU; GUFs; AU (particularly within the AU Labour and Social Affairs Commission); UN, ILO, WTO, World Bank and IMF.

10. The Conference-in-session observed that several networks have emerged within the African trade union movement with importance for trade union knowledge generation, political education and awareness building. Amongst these networks are the African Labour Research Network and the African Labour Education Network. The Conference-in-session realized that the proper cultivation of these networks could result in strong research-to-policy and policy-to-action linkages for developing the trade union
movement. The Trilateral would thus work assiduously for the development of these networks including committing resources for their activities and ensuring the continued relevance of their work to the cause of the African worker.

11. The Conference-in-session stressed the need for increased organising of young workers and women in the trade unions, and building their capacities for leadership. The Trilateral shall develop women and youths development programmes, which shall ensure that more young workers and women are active in the building of inclusive democratic unions across our federations.

12. The Conference-in-session realized the importance of building sectoral trilateral linkages amongst the affiliates of the three collaborating federations and the trilateral resolved to actively promote the forging of such ties. These shall include union-to-union and worker-to-worker exchanges; joint conferences; e-conferences and; exchanges of information and perspectives, which shall be encouraged by the federations.

13. The present world capitalist crisis is the worst in almost a century, resulting in resistance which is rising across the world. There however, is the gapping absence of a powerful alternative consensus on the character of another possible world, in concrete terms. The Trilateral was of the opinion that the working class needs to formulate a clear anti-capitalist agenda around which it should mobilize other exploited and oppressed strata and people in the world to challenge the overlords of capitalism through emancipatory struggles that would lead to the emancipatory liberatory of a new world.

14. The Conference-in-session noted the rising poverty which has contributed to the spread of epidemics and pandemics in Africa, including HIV/AIDS. The Conference-in-session considered the need for unions to deepen their engagement with the process of mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS and to equally address the issue of poverty in a way and manner that would ensure that the African masses have control over the immense resources that Africa has.

15. The Conference-in-session noted the need to end unhelpful cultures and practices in our organizations and the broader society and to cultivate alternative emancipatory cultures and revolutionary practices, for us to seize the future from today. These must include: improving communications between ourselves and the institutions we work with through the effective use of modern means of communication such as e-mails and the internet at large and through seconding the best of our cadres to serve in the institutions we have identified as strategic in the pursuance of our agenda.

16. The Conference-in-session saluted the gallant peoples of Cuba who despite continued economic and political attacks by Western capitalist states have maintained their right to self-determination of the pathway to development. The Conference-in-session thus calls on the European Union to desist from its recent
hardly veiled intent of intervention in the internal affairs of the country. The Conference-in-session similarly hailed the determination of Palestinian working people to winning their self-determination as a people and calls for Palestinian sovereignty to be granted forthwith.

17. The Conference-in-session noted with regrets the passage of the Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who had taken ill since November last year. The Conference-in-session extended its condolecence to the Nigeria Labour Congress, and indeed all Nigerians on the loss. The Conference-in-session further calls for the enthronement of peace, unity and good governance in Nigeria at this critical point in its national development.

CONCLUSION

The NLC, COSATU and all Conference participants expressed heartfelt appreciation of the hospitality of Ghana TUC and the Ghanaian people on the occasion of this historic conference. The Federations and entire Conference participants dedicated themselves to fulfilling the Conference resolutions, building a new Africa and forging ever stronger global international working class solidarity.

Long live Ghana TUC!
Long live NLC!
Long live COSATU!

The persistent and continued underdevelopment of Africa and the pauperization of its working people are traceable to the characteristic inequalities fostered by the capitalist mode of production, particularly in its neoliberal incarnation

Communiqué of 1st Trilateral Conference of the of the Ghana TUC/COSATU/NLC