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ITUC-Africa's statement on the death of twenty Nigerian Youth - the severity of the youth unemployment situation in Africa

The tragic news of the death of twenty able young men and women in their pursuit for gainful employment which occurred in Nigeria on Saturday, 15th March 2014, clearly depicts the severity of the youth unemployment situation in Africa. These potent youth including three pregnant women, died following a stampede at the National Stadium in Abuja, Nigeria, during an aptitude test organized by the Nigerian Immigration Service where hundreds of thousands of desperate young men and women are reported to have gathered at a number of venues to take their chances at securing employment after their tertiary education. The overall turnout of hundreds of thousands of these youth as job seekers for 4,556 job slots in the Nigerian Immigration Services is evidence of the current pathetic situation facing youth and graduates not only in Nigeria, but the continent as a whole.

The African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) joins the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) to express deep dissatisfaction at the recruitment procedure adopted by the Nigerian Immigration Service. The invitation of such a large number of youth to physically participate in the exercise and further asking each applicant to pay one thousand Naira clearly portrays the opportunistic intent behind the recruitment exercise as pointed out by the NLC.

This devastating incident raises the question of recruitment procedures adopted by many institutions and agencies in our countries today. Vulnerable young men and women often fall prey to various forms of unfavorable circumstances during these exploitative exercises such as the Nigeria incident.

In the wake of this catastrophic incident and in line with the concerns expressed by the NLC, ITUC-Africa calls on African governments to set minimum standards in job recruitment processes. Credible methods should be adopted in mass recruitment processes to avoid such disastrous misfortunes. Forms of recruitment procedures that exploit vulnerable young men and women must be checked and measures taken to sanction those institutions who do not comply.

Importantly, ITUC-Africa emphasizes the need for African governments to prioritize job creation on their agenda.

We reiterate that with the youth now making up the largest share of the population in most African countries, it is more urgent than ever to pave the way for more productive job opportunities. It is necessary that the mantra of job creation often sung during election campaigns by most Presidential aspirants translate into action during their tenure of office.

Government round the continent must urgently explore ways by which young people entering the labor force will be able to secure decent jobs to avoid social crises such as the Abuja Stadium incident.

On behalf of the sixteen million workers represented by ITUC-Africa, we wish the families of the deceased youth our sincere condolences. We hope that this episode would be a push for governments all over to address seriously the unemployment crises facing the youth in Africa.

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