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UNION SYNDICALE DES TRAVAILLEURS DE GUINEE (USTG)
ORGANISATION NATIONALE DES SYNDICATS LIBRES DE GUINEE (ONSLG)
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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE
UNION SOLIDARITY
CONFERENCE TO PROMOTE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN GUINEA

Roadmap for sustainable development
in Guinea

Conakry, 23-24 May 2007

On 23 and 24 May, over 180 trade unionists from Guinea, Africa and other continents, together with non-resident Guinean civil society representatives, leaders of the government and national institutions, employers' representatives, religious figures, diplomats posted in Guinea and representatives of international institutions (ILO, World Bank, IMF) took part in the International Trade Union Solidarity Conference to Promote Sustainable Development in Guinea, held at Hotel Mariador Palace in Conakry.

The general strike action taken in March and June 2006, then January and February 2007 brought the profound malaise affecting this West African country to the surface and finally opened the door to dialogue. Following up on this success, the trade union movement organised a two-day conference, providing a forum for intense debate and reflection regarding the consolidation of sustainable development in the country.

Those taking part in this international event expressed respect and admiration for the Guinean unions' and civil society's determination to preserve peace, democracy and social justice.

They insisted on the need for a peaceful transition and for change in the short, medium and long term.

The Conference was inaugurated in the presence of Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate, and ended with an appeal to the Guinean authorities, all the social forces of the nation and the international community to take every step needed to ensure genuine democratic reforms and a peaceful transition in Guinea. The participants agreed on the need for far-reaching political, economic and social reforms and to ensure sustainable development and the protection of the environment.

Conclusions and recommendations were drawn up in relation to the three main themes of the Conference: human and trade union rights, economic and social development, and governance and institutions.

Democracy and Human and Trade Union Rights

The various interventions drew attention to the fact that Guinea is not only a country with a great wealth of natural resources, but also a country with a rich legal and judicial heritage. Guinea is a goldmine for researchers of all kinds. It is a veritable laboratory in the area that concerns us: democracy, human and trade union rights.

In theory, Guinea is equipped with an arsenal of national, regional and international legal texts guaranteeing its citizens' individual and collective rights to exercise and defend human rights.

In practice, the majority of the population is, for numerous reasons, faced with insurmountable obstacles to the exercise and defence of these rights, which are constantly violated, first and foremost by the institutions and authorities that are supposed to promote and protect them. These violations are committed at all levels, starting with the highest authority, the State.

The Conference insisted on the need to:

As regards raising consciousness about human and trade union rights:

- make the national, regional and international laws and regulations on human and trade union rights widely known and understandable, preferably in the national and local languages;
- raise awareness about them among the general public and strengthen knowledge about the ILO standards system and its use;
- fight constantly to defend them;
- train human and trade union rights activity leaders and, at trade union level, ensure workers' organisations are also in a position to provide ongoing education and training in these areas;
- include courses on trade union rights in secondary education;
- at trade union level: organise a trade union forum to identify future guidelines and strategies for the defence of human and trade union rights, based on the rule of law, and set up a focal point on human and trade union rights in each trade union centre;
- defend these rights individually and collectively;
- permanently provide the entire population with access to civic education;
- make institutions more dynamic, decentralise them, and equip them with the necessary human, technical and material resources;
- promote gender equality at all levels.

As regards strengthening justice and the fight against impunity:

- set up an Independent National Commission of Inquiry into the human rights violations committed in January and February 2007, and June 2006;
- promptly complete the inquiry and bring the perpetrators of the violations to justice;
- set up a human, trade union rights and democracy observatory;
- provide guarantees ensuring the safety of trade union leaders and human rights defenders;
- institutionalise the post of Mediator of the Republic;
- defend freedom of the press and punish any abuses levelled against journalists;
- consolidate a system of administering justice that is impartial, independent, efficient and professional - in this respect, adequate resources need to be allocated to the judicial system in order for it to function properly;
- fight effectively against impunity in all its forms, and ensure that the perpetrators of human and trade union rights violations are duly identified, prosecuted and punished;
- strengthen the Ministry of Employment, so that it plays a key role in, for example:
 - ensuring an effective labour inspection system;
 - ensuring a modern and rapid service for the administration of labour justice;
 - ensuring that decent jobs also imply decent wages (including the minimum wage) and that the living standards of workers and their families, are raised.
- guarantee respect for land and property rights, at the same time as seeking solutions for those who hold no ownership titles but have been occupying their land for many years and protecting the population against any type of extortion;
- guarantee respect for health and safety standards at work, including in the mining sector;
- ensure that the national legislation on mining is compliant with the international conventions of the ILO and includes a social and human rights dimension.

Social and Economic Development

Following the presentations and debates on issues related to debt, public finances and job creation at all levels of society, the Conference set out various demands.

In addition to good governance, transparency, and the fight against corruption, the need to ensure respect for the environment was also raised.

The Conference calls on the Guinean authorities and the international community to ensure:

As regards the basic conditions for social and economic development:

- the fight against impunity, corruption and bad fiscal governance;
- a good quality system of primary education that is accessible to all, including young girls, and sufficient investment in education at all levels, including the provision of good working conditions for teachers;
- intensive literacy campaigns targeting the entire population and women in particular;
- awareness raising, particularly among women, in order to ensure their active participation in development and to steer them towards schooling;
- the involvement of trade unions and civil society in the drawing up and management of the country's social and economic development strategies, with all the transparency required.

As regards the management of public finances, debt and economic development:

- genuine economic governance, including a cleanup of public finances, so that the fruits of growth are aptly reinvested in sustainable development;
- urgent revision of the mining conventions is necessary, to permit the Guinean state to genuinely and effectively appropriate all the wealth that would, undoubtedly, allow for sustainable development in Guinea and improve the living standards and working conditions of all its workers;
- benchmarks for cancelling all of Guinea's debt and for the reinvestment of this debt in social development programmes;
- price controls on basic foodstuffs;
- publication of the budget, given that reducing the budget deficit is possible and transparency would prevent massive fraud, improve revenues and promote democracy;

- maintain the independence of the central bank;
- monetary discipline.

As regards promoting decent work

- an ambitious decent job creation programme, with particular emphasis on young workers and the rural sector (agriculture and livestock), would cut unemployment and provide informal economy workers with decent jobs;
- the promotion of entrepreneurship via a credit fund for the setting of and support of SME and SMI as an alternative source of employment and a means of combating unemployment;
- the creation of decentralised development and agricultural banks with affordable repayment rates;
- a favourable climate for investments in the country, both for national and foreign investors, on the condition that these firmly commit to promoting and securing decent employment;
- technical and occupational training adapted to the urgent needs of the various economic sectors in the country;
- the reshaping and strengthening of employment policy in keeping with the current context.

As regards social protection:

- draw up an appropriate national social protection policy;
- guarantee comprehensive access to low-cost, quality social services;
- allow a growing number of women to have access to free, quality medical consultations;
- ensure the food security of the entire population;
- guarantee a social protection system for all Guineans, and urgently implement a programme to this effect, in cooperation with the ILO.

As regards protecting the environment:

- adopt an environmental policy that creates decent jobs and respects nature by using renewable (solar) energy and promoting the decentralisation of economic activities to regenerate inland regions, stabilise the rural population and avoid the overpopulation of the capital and other major cities;
- promote a policy of less-polluting public and private transport that would reduce the human cost and make it more financially accessible.

Governance and Institutions

The Conference delegates demand the urgent re-establishment of a genuine social state and the rule of law in Guinea, as well as the application of the principles of good governance, and, in concrete terms, demand:

As regards the State: the re-founding of the State, by:

- ensuring respect for the separation of judicial, executive and legislative powers;
- raising citizens' consciousness of the need for respect from the State;
- guaranteeing the neutrality of the Administration, in compliance with Article 23 of the Fundamental Law (Constitution);
- ensuring that the role of the Republican Army is to serve the nation, and that it is not used as a tool to serve the political agenda of the Administration;
- bringing an end to nepotism in the appointment of civil servants;
- taking decisive measures to ensure the annual adoption of the Finance Law (national budget), given the negative repercussions of the very seriously delays in this area;
- ensuring that the bidding procedures for public procurement contracts are transparent, and preventing influence trafficking in the awarding of public contracts;
- providing guarantees for transparent public administration;
- pursuing the process of decentralisation, ensuring that decentralised entities have real powers of administration (human and financial resources).

As regards the present consensus government and the National

Assembly:

- the urgent revision of the Fundamental Law (Constitution), with a view to constitutionalising the post of Prime Minister and limiting the mandate and age of candidates for the presidential elections (to avoid a lifelong mandate).

As regards political parties:

- ensure that they have free and fair access to the media;
- initiate meaningful dialogue between political parties and civil society;
- ensure the training and awareness raising of citizens.

As regards strengthening justice and the fight against corruption:

- involve citizens and instil a sense of responsibility, with a view to making everyone accountable for their actions;
- ensure the punishment, based on swift and impartial judicial procedures, of the perpetrators of crimes (corruption, be in the private, public or mixed ownership sector, or committed on an individual basis), in cases where the misappropriation of funds or the extortion of goods is established, and ensure that the funds or goods are returned to the rightful owners;
- transfer the Administration and Control of Major State Projects (ACGP) from the Presidency of the Republic to the Ministries in charge of the Plan and to the entity exercising economic and financial control;
- replace the DAAF (Directorates of Administrative and Financial Affairs) within Ministerial departments and public institutions with a structure to ensure the transparent and efficient (computerised) management of public resources;
- introduce, at the various levels of the administration, mechanisms by which they can be accountable to citizens and their organisations;
- promote corporate governance in keeping with national and international laws, so that it forms one of the pillars of sustainable development in Guinea;
- introduce an assets declaration requirement for members of the government and high-ranking State officials prior to their taking office;
- strengthen the judicial system, making it better equipped to fight effectively against corruption;
- set up and train inspection bodies and organise regular audits of State structures.

As regards social dialogue:

- reaffirm that social dialogue – a complement to collective bargaining – is not only a means of improving living and working conditions but is also a means of preserving peace, and that collective bargaining in itself must be promoted and reinforced;
- recognise the worrying social dialogue deficit, be it bipartite (workers-employers) or tripartite (workers-employers-government), by ensuring that the existing framework (including the Economic and Social Council and bipartite dialogue within companies) function properly and be allotted the appropriate resources;
- set up a National Social Dialogue Committee equipped with a sufficient budget and autonomous management, with a view to interpreting the agreements signed at State level;

- organise at least bi-annual meetings between the Prime Minister and the trade union organisations to take stock of the situation and at least once a year between the President and the unions, for arbitration;
- build the social dialogue capacities of the social partners;
- make a distinction between social dialogue (government-social partners) and civil dialogue (government-social partners and civil society) by institutionalising the framework reflecting this spirit.

As regards the electoral process:

- call legislative, communal and community elections as soon as possible;
- ensure transparent, free and democratic electoral processes, though the training, for example, of the State agents called on to work with the CENI (Independent National Electoral Commission);
- ensure the involvement of civil society (including trade union organisations) in every stage of the electoral process, by strengthening their capacities as observers and by including Guineans living abroad;
- as soon as the electoral process commences, engage in public awareness raising campaigns using a wide variety of channels (media, civic and electoral education, etc.) to ensure that all citizens know how to register on the electoral roll, how to vote, and how to behave during elections;
- provide a rapid solution to the problem of obtaining identity cards by removing the obstacles to their issuing (cost, procedures) as well as the election cards of Guinean citizens, so that they can enrol on the electoral registers;
- ensure the speedy passing of the Law on the CENI (Independent National Electoral Commission) and the setting up of this Commission and its sub-structures (at prefectural, sub-prefectural and communal level);
- ensure that no prominent member of the government stands for the next presidential elections;
- give independent candidates the right to stand for election.

We, therefore, propose the convening of broad national consultations involving all stakeholders, with a view to discussing the major challenges facing the Nation.