

28 September 2023

ITUC/TUCA statement on conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 191 million workers in 167 countries, and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), representing 55 million workers affiliated to 53 organisations, express their concern and call for a return to dialogue in the face of the conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The ITUC and TUCA express their deep concern over the current conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which has already had a significant impact on communities on both sides of the border. The shared administration of the Massacre River is part of the historical agreements reached between the two countries and ratified in accordance with international instruments for the benefit of their populations.

On 15 September, the government of the Dominican Republic announced the closure of its land, sea and air borders with Haiti as a result of a dispute related to the construction of a canal on the Massacre River, which crosses the border line and is shared by both countries. This new development has sparked a climate of heightened tension with the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic, and we call on the parties to seek solutions that avoid such confrontations, avoid mistreatment and human rights violations, and to find solutions based on mutual respect and the principles of human dignity.

The continued closure of the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti will have far-reaching consequences, affecting workers and their communities on both sides, with the possible loss of thousands of jobs. At least 25% of the food consumed in Haiti is imported from the neighbouring country, as well as medical equipment and medicines. The escalation of this crisis may therefore lead to economic and social instability and further worsen the severe humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

It is crucial that both countries return to the negotiating table and resume the process outlined in a joint declaration in May 2021 and the actions outlined in Article 3 of the agreement signed by both countries in 1929, which states, “both parties shall submit to arbitration all differences of an international nature arising between them on account of a claim of a right made by one against the other, under a treaty or on other grounds, which they have not been able to settle through diplomatic channels and which is of a legal nature, being determinable through the application of the principles of law”, in order to seek a peaceful solution to this dispute.

Honouring these commitments at this juncture is an essential step and a precondition for peace and tranquillity on both sides of the border. Addressing these concerns requires steps to be taken that respect human rights and humanitarian principles. We urge the trade union centres of both countries to build approaches based on respect for human rights and to join forces in the search for solutions that do not affect the most vulnerable people and the working people in either country.

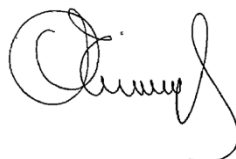
Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to the vision we shared at the International Solidarity with Haiti Conference, held in Ouanaminthe in January this year, where we supported the reconstruction of a new Haiti based on the rule of law and social justice as fundamental pillars, without recourse to external military occupations.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned about the UN Security Council's intention to approve the sending of a new international mission without the effective support of social or labour organisations and other actors in Haitian society, a move that could aggravate the internal crisis.

The ITUC and TUCA reiterate their unwavering support and solidarity with the Haitian people and their affiliated trade union organisations.



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