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HTUR/MS/sdr

2 May 2013

### **Illegal Detention of TUCOSWA leaders on May Day**

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents 175 million workers in 156 countries and territories - including Swaziland - to strongly condemn the government's interference in May Day celebrations, which included the arbitrary detention of five TUCOSWA leaders.

I understand that police raided the head offices of TUCOSWA at 8 am on 1 May 2013, arresting the President of TUCOSWA, Barnes Dlamini, and the 1st Deputy Secretary General, Mduduzi Gina. Their arrest followed that of Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary General of TUCOSWA, Muzi Mhlanga, 2nd Deputy Secretary General, and Jabulile Shiba, the Deputy Treasurer General, who were all placed under house arrest for the entire day. May Day celebrations organized by TUCOSWA at the Salesian Sports Ground in Manzini were forced to be called off, as police prohibited workers from shouting TUCOSWA slogans or to display TUCOSWA banners.

Pro-democracy campaigns have also been banned by the government and activists silenced through arrest and criminal prosecution. On 12 April 2013, Wonder Mkhonza, Deputy General Secretary of the Swaziland Processing, Refining and Allied Workers Union, was arrested for allegedly being found in possession of political pamphlets and is now facing charges of sedition.

As you know, the right of workers to organize and participate in May Day events is protected by Convention 87. As the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has explained, "The right to organize public meetings and processions, particularly on the occasion of May Day, constitutes an important aspect of trade union rights." The Committee has also noted repeatedly that, "The detention of trade unionists for reasons connected with their activities in defence of the interests of workers constitutes a serious interference with civil liberties in general and with trade union rights in particular."

The ITUC condemns the interference in May Day celebrations and in particular the detention of TUCOSWA leaders. Further, we urge the government to release immediately Wonder Mkhonza. Swaziland must comply with its international obligations and recognise the right to freedom of association, including the right to organise public meetings and demonstrations.

Finally, we understand that the government has so far made no effort to find a solution as to the registration of TUCOSWA following the February 2013 decision and order of the Industrial Court of Swaziland. While we disagree with the reasoning of the court and believe that TUCOSWA should have been granted registration, we nevertheless strongly urge the government to work with TUCOSWA to ensure that it is granted registration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

General Secretary