

## ITUC INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2018 STATEMENT

On International Youth Day, 12 August, young workers reject a world steeped in corporate greed, misogyny, racism and xenophobia, and in which workers are denied our fair share. Young workers are speaking out against [violence and harassment](#) in the world of work and beyond. We raise our voices in unity and solidarity with older workers, women, migrant, LGBTI+, disabled, indigenous, racialised and marginalised workers, who are often exposed to the worst forms of discrimination, violence and harassment. When we find solutions for the most exposed, we find solutions for the majority.

*"It's become a very ugly environment for women. This is all caused by one man, our manager. We all know about it and it's not a secret anymore. He has sexually harassed a lot of young women and there's nothing we can do about it. If you are young and beautiful, you become his target. He promises young girls a better work position and also an end-of-year bonus in exchange for sex." – Young female flower worker in Tanzania*

This story is one example of the many millions of young women and men for whom violence and harassment is a constant reality in their working lives. From sexually unwanted comments, suggestive remarks or jokes, staring, verbal abuse, sexually explicit emails, SMS texts or social media messages, to demands for sexual favours, unwelcome touching, hugging, to physical assault or even rape, violence and harassment can take many forms. Declining decent work opportunities means young workers are overrepresented in precarious and informal work, and in sectors in the formal economy where violence and harassment are more prevalent due to the nature of their work – such as interaction with customers, clients or patients, unequal power relations, unfavorable and unsafe working conditions, and low union density. Many young people, particularly young women and persons with intersecting identities of race, class, gender identity, religion or disability, also experience violence and harassment as [students](#) and at the very early stages of their working life – while looking for a job, working as an intern, volunteering or doing a traineeship or apprenticeship.

*"I recently resigned my post due to being bullied by a manager after a conversation between myself and a few friends was leaked regarding my transition. I was bullied into self-harm, suicidal ideation, and I resigned, as I felt I had no other option. I am now struggling to get a job because I'm transgender." – Young transgender worker in the UK*

Too often gender-based violence and harassment goes unnoticed, unseen and unspoken. And the cycles of violence continue to thrive, in silence, in the darkest corners of our workplaces and society. It's not just the victims that are affected – it's everyone involved who suffers. Therefore, it goes without saying that violence and harassment is a human rights violation. It is also a public health problem.

Set against this background, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is currently developing an international legal framework to end violence and harassment in the world of work, for which unions have been lobbying for many years. The recent testimonies seen through #MeToo, #balancetonporc, #NiUnaMenos and others, and the mass mobilisations against gender-based violence in so many parts of the world, are a stark reminder that we need to take action – now.

It is crucial now, more than ever, for [young people to be at the forefront of activism and social transformation](#). It is our mission to create fair societies and safe and healthy environments for all – in

our workplaces, schools, universities, homes and communities. If we all play our part, the change will be enormous.

Nana Koomah Brown-Orleans  
Chairperson, ITUC Youth Committee