On the occasion of the celebration of this year’s May Day, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), on behalf of the Executive Committee of OATUU and on behalf of the millions of African Workers, wishes to congratulate Workers all over the world and Africa in particular and to share the joy with you for the feat you have chalked in your trade union work in protecting, defending and promoting Workers interest and rights at work.

As we take stock of our achievements, let us not also forget the numerous challenges confronting the African Workers, their families and the population at large. Among these challenges are the issues with Child Labour. According to the 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour, one-fifth of all African children are involved in child labour, a proportion more than twice as high as in any other region. Nine per cent of African children are in hazardous work, again highest of all the world’s regions.

Africa has the largest number of child labourers; 72.1 million African children are estimated to be in child labour and 31.5 million in hazardous work. Children in the youngest age bracket also constitute the largest group in hazardous work in Africa. This group of very young African children are facing hazardous work conditions directly endangering their health, safety and moral development and this is of special concern to us as workers. These children are the human resource the continent can train to contribute to the socio-economic development of Africa and so we must be interested in what happens to them. As world leaders met in 2015 and adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 17 interrelated goals and 169 associated targets to guide global development. SDG Target 8.7 we remind and urge African governments to:

"Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

Equally important is the Decent work deficit that stares at governments and workers all over the Africa. In addressing the Decent Work deficits and the Future of Work we want, we call on Governments to modernise their economies and reinforce economic growth, since we can convincingly say that this is a game-changer for Africa. We urge African nations work hard so as to experience economic dividends since it is critical to create much-needed digital infrastructure, put the right regulatory frameworks and invest in skills that would allow workers, entrepreneurs and government officials to explore opportunities in the digital world.

The digital transformation has the potential of unlocking new pathways for inclusive growth, innovation and create jobs, as well as enhance service delivery and reduce poverty in Africa. African workers and their families will be the eventual beneficiaries of the economic success and growth. It is expected that the digital economy would create more jobs, encourage entrepreneurship for youth, raise productivity of farmers, bring more women into the labour workforce and create new markets to boost economic growth.

The youth employment is another challenge that confronts all African countries, regardless of their stage of socio-economic development. High unemployment rates among the African
youth, irrespective of the levels of education, indicate that the youth are either poorly prepared for the labour market, or the labour market is inadequate to receive large numbers of youth that are seeking employment. This problem, if not well attended to could lead to social risks and so we call on all stakeholders to use social dialogue in finding solutions to this problem as well.

As regards the Future of Work, it is assumed that fully automated jobs will displace lots of worker in the near future not only those in the developed world but also those in the developing world like Africa. As Trade Unions, we need to be concerned about the challenges associated with this emerging issue because if care is not taken the Future of Work could be in danger. We as OATUU therefore, call on Trade Unions to engage all stakeholders on the need to come on board and find lasting solutions that require a more robust strengthened and entrenched social dialogue that will be centered on social justice for all. Also, to be more proactive as Trade Unions, we call on our members to engage on sensitisation, continuous training and re-training to ensure adaptability to whatever emerging changes that may come in the world of Work.

On this May Day celebration, we wish urge African Workers and Trade Unions that despite the numerous challenges confronting them in their world of work, they should continue to contribute to in the political dispensation of their respective countries for the consolidation of democracy, They should oppose all neo-liberal anti-people socio-economic policies that most African countries have been blackmailed into adopting by International Financial Institutions, Donor Countries and Agencies. Without doubt, African Trade Unions remain among the best institutions the African Governments can rely upon as effective and reliable partners to carry out political, socio-economic activities for the benefit of Workers, their families and the people.

OATUU will continue to avail itself and offer its expertise in finding lasting solutions to the challenges confronting Workers and their families.

We wish all Workers Happy May Day celebration!