We, the representatives of African workers’ and employers’ organisations, meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from the 3rd to 4th September 2004, on the occasion of the first African Social Partners’ Forum on the theme “Decent Work: a driving force for Africa’s development”;

Reaffirm our firm commitment to the process of social dialogue and our willingness to work together for decent employment, wealth creation and poverty eradication. We therefore invite our governments to promote social dialogue, based on freedom of association, as a motor for the development of our continent.

We recall previous declarations of African Heads of State and Government on employment, poverty and social development, and reaffirm the importance of NEPAD and the recommendations of the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation.

Together with our regional organisations OATUU, ICFTU-AFRO, DOAWTU and the PEC, we, representatives of national trade unions and employer’ organisations call on African Heads of State and Government:

1. to make decent work, as defined by the ILO, a global and an African objective, and to place it at the heart of socio-economic policies in Africa. The decent work agenda opens the way for Africa to work itself out of poverty through the creation of decent employment opportunities, the respect of standards and fundamental rights at work, the provision of social protection for all and the reinforcement of tripartism and social dialogue.

2. to promote integrated development strategies to tackle poverty through a comprehensive macroeconomic and social policy framework. Since high sustainable economic growth is a necessary but insufficient condition for employment creation and poverty reduction, economic growth must be sustainable, employment-intensive and pro-poor. Furthermore the role of the state, to create a favourable regulatory and incentive framework for the creation and development of enterprises, to ensure a fair redistribution of the benefits of growth and to ensure universal access to public goods, must be strengthened.

3. to focus on highly productive and employment intensive sectors with particular attention to the agricultural sector where most of the working poor are found. Furthermore, dynamic forward and backward linkages should be developed between peasant agriculture and the rest of the economy particularly, the public sector and the priority sectors of NEPAD which include industry, infrastructural development and telecommunications;
4. to actively promote **gender** mainstreaming in socio-economic policy as a basis for the application of basic human rights and a means of empowering women in Africa. Implementing proactive targeted policies aimed at eradicating gender discrimination and promoting decent employment opportunities for women is a key challenge that has to be met in order to eradicate poverty in Africa.

5. to respect the fundamental **rights of workers** without which no sustainable human development is possible. All workers, including those in the informal economy, should freely exercise their right to organise and should be represented in socio-economic policy-making.

6. to work towards the transformation of the **informal economy** through strategies such as the development of cooperatives, the promotion of youth and female entrepreneurship, and the provision of technical and vocational training for informal economy workers. Furthermore, considering the scope of youth unemployment in Africa, active labour market policies must be implemented, within the framework of national employment policies, to tackle the problem;

7. to undertake concrete measures to extend **social protection** to the poor. Specific proactive measures must be implemented to deal with the HIV-AIDS pandemic in Africa through preventive measures and initiatives to facilitate access to affordable medicines by the poor. Targeted education and sensitisation programmes for working women and men also need to be implemented. African countries have to override the patent rights in order to provide affordable generic HIV/AIDS drugs.

8. to promote **tripartism** and institutionalise **social dialogue** since this is indispensable for sustained national development, ensuring social peace as well as conflict prevention and resolution. The social partners are willing to work towards building broad national socio-economic consensus on development strategy in order to maximise employment-intensive growth and promote social development. The vitality of social dialogue is dependent on strong, autonomous and representative partners and institutions of social dialogue. Hence the need to reinforce the capacities of the actors of social dialogue and institutionalise this process at all levels.

9. to strengthen **democracy** through the participation of the people and good state and corporate governance in order to promote transparency, accountability and combat corruption. This requires the political will to strengthen the rule of law and provides the basis for the implementation of the action plans to be adopted during the Summit;

10. to engage the **international development community** to ensure policy coherence among them and prioritisation of employment creation in poverty reduction strategies. The alignment of donor support to country-owned strategies also calls for debt cancellation to free resources for socio-economic development, enhanced market access for the goods of developing countries, the eradication of trade
distorting subsidies and unfair trade rules as well as adherence to the Monterrey commitments.