

TRADES UNION CONGRESS (TUC)



CONGRESS POLICY STATEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS [2021-2024]

ADOPTED AT THE
11TH QUADRENNIAL DELEGATES' CONGRESS
20TH-24TH MARCH, 2021
HELD AT GNAT VILLAGE, ABANKRO

THEME

*75 YEARS OF TUC: BUILDING STRONGER UNIONS IN A CHANGING
WORLD OF WORK*

TUC VISION STATEMENT

TO BE AMONG THE BEST LABOUR ORGANISATIONS IN AFRICA

TUC MISSION STATEMENT

TO UNITE ALL WORKERS OF GHANA INTO AN INDEPENDENT AND DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION FOR IMPROVED WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION, SOLIDARITY, AND SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

TUC MOTTO

THE UNITED FAMILY OF WORKERS BY HAND AND BY BRAIN ALL OVER GHANA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 One of the major activities at every TUC Congress is the discussion and adoption of policies that guide the work of TUC in the following quadrennial. For example, at the 10th Quadrennial Congress which was held at KNUST in Kumasi in August, 2016, eighteen specific policies were adopted covering a very wide range of areas including organizing, gender equality, labour relations and social dialogue, education and training, occupational health and safety, youth, social protection, child labour, housing, economic policy management, governance and decentralization, employment, incomes, climate change and environment, informal economy, energy and power, representation on public boards/commissions/committees, international relations, unity, solidarity and mergers.

1.2 The specific policies that were adopted at previous congresses provided a very useful guide to the work of TUC. However, they were not flexible in the sense that they were adopted for a whole quadrennial, based on the prevailing circumstances at the time of the adoption of the policies. What it meant was that if or when there were changes in the circumstances in the course of the quadrennial the application of some of the policies (with specific objectives and strategies) became difficult or even impossible.

1.3 This Policy Statement is different from the previous policies. Instead of adopting specific policies with specific objectives and strategies for four years, this Policy Statement presents broad areas/pillars that will receive special attention in the next quadrennial (2021-2024). Specific priorities will be selected from the

pillars/priority areas at the beginning of every year, based on the circumstances in that year. For example, the priorities of 2022 will be prepared by the TUC Secretariat (with the relevant objectives, strategies, and action plans) and presented to the General Council in December, 2021 for discussion and adoption so that implementation of the activities can start in January, 2022. This will be done every year during the quadrennial until the next congress in 2024 where the policies will be evaluated and reviewed.

1.4 With these changes, it is our hope that this Policy Statement will remain relevant throughout the quadrennial, not only for TUC but also for its affiliates.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 On September 8, 1945, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) was established in the offices of the Railway Workers' Union in Sekondi-Takoradi to promote and protect the interests of the working people of the then Gold Coast. For 75 years, TUC has become institutionalized with influence that transcends industrial relations or even the world of work because of the significant role it played in the struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The TUC is recognized and respected by all the important actors in the Ghanaian society.

2.2 TUC came to the industrial relations scene in the stormy political waters of a colony preparing itself for independence. TUC quickly became the centre of political agitations. It mobilized workers in all sectors and across the length and breadth of the country to support the politicians working to free the country from the shackles of colonialism. Its national character, geographic spread and influence over the entire workforce made TUC an important ally in the struggle

for political independence which was proudly achieved in March 1957, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah.

2.3 TUC subsequently joined forces with the Conventional People's Party (CPP) government to prosecute the agenda of transforming Ghana. The CPP government was overthrown in 1966.

2.4 In the turbulent period of military rule after Nkrumah was overthrown, TUC was among the few organizations that railed against the military misrule including gross abuses of human and workers' rights. TUC participated fully in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1992 Constitution which ushered in the Fourth Republic.

2.5 TUC leveraged its close relationship with CPP to push for the ratification of all relevant ILO conventions to protect the rights of the working people of Ghana. Between 1957 and 1966, Ghana ratified 35 ILO Conventions (out of 50 ILO Conventions ratified by Ghana so far).

2.6 TUC helped to establish a legal regime which was conducive for the growth of unions and the realization of workers' rights. In particular, TUC was very influential in the passage of the 1958 and 1965 Industrial Relations Acts.

2.7 Unions were offered some special privileges at the time, thanks to TUC's close cooperation with the CPP Government. For example, there was a "closed shop" arrangement that allowed workers to automatically become members of existing unions at their workplaces. This led to a tremendous increase in trade union membership in the 1960s.

2.8 In addition, check-off system of union dues collection was introduced which made it mandatory for employers to deduct trade

union dues at source and pay directly to unions. This arrangement helped to improve the finances of trade unions.

2.9 TUC has effectively and jealously guarded the legal regime that has allowed workers to form or join a union of their choice and to bargain collectively. For instance, TUC used its influence in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1992 Constitution to ensure that trade union and workers' rights are firmly entrenched in the Constitution.

2.10 TUC also played a very key role in the labour law reforms in the early 2000s that led to the passage of the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651). The TUC is currently advocating the reform of the current Labour Act (Act 651) to offer full protection for workers and their unions.

2.11 TUC played a very crucial role in the establishment of the Social Security Scheme (as a provident fund scheme in 1965) which became Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) in 1991.

2.12 TUC continues to assist its affiliate unions to recruit members and support them in collective bargaining. It has used its resources including expertise and its goodwill with employers to protect all workers, including those that are not members of the TUC.

2.13 TUC plays a dominant role in the work of the National Tripartite Committee. In 2018, TUC's proposal for a social partnership agreement was accepted leading to the establishment of the Social Partnership Council (SPC), giving the unions another forum for effective social dialogue. The SPC now affords TUC greater opportunity to engage and influence national economic and social policies.

2.14 TUC continues to lead workers in their quest for higher employment and income security, improved working conditions, living wage and income security during retirement.

2.15 TUC's affiliates represent workers in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy, working harder under difficult circumstances to contribute their quota to the development of Ghana.

2.16 In the past 75 years, TUC has been instrumental in economic governance of the country. The TUC has pushed for sound economic policies and reforms that benefit workers and Ghanaians in general.

2.17 After many years of direct participation in party politics, in 1992 TUC took a decision to be *non-partisan* just before the reintroduction of constitutional rule. That means TUC does not align with any political party. But that does not mean that TUC is apolitical. The union continues to work with parties and governments as one of its strategies to promote and protect the interests of workers.

2.18 TUC participates in governance through its representation on boards of important state institutions and submission of proposals for national budgets and policies. For example, TUC plays a very important role in the implementation of the Single Spine Pay Policy and the Three-Tier Pension Scheme. The new pension scheme has given unions and their members greater control over their pensions with the expectation that it will herald an era of enhanced and decent pension for workers when they retire.

2.19 Beyond Ghana, TUC is recognized internationally as one of the most formidable unions on the continent. TUC continues to maintain strong relationship with trade union federations in Africa and across

the world. And, through this network of unions, TUC has contributed to strengthening workers' organizations and their voice globally.

2.20 As we celebrate 75 years of existence of TUC, we are conscious not only of TUC's achievements (some of which have been mentioned above) but also the challenges ahead of us, as we begin the next quadrennial (2021-2024). Too many Ghanaian workers remain outside unions; there are too many small and weak unions; working conditions are deteriorating; earnings remain low, pension coverage and benefits are low; and income inequality is too high. Formal jobs are now harder to find and so the informal economy has become the main source of livelihoods, which makes the task of unionizing workers even tougher.

2.21 These and many other challenges are discussed in detail in the following section.

3.0 CHALLENGES AT THE LABOUR FRONT

3.1 Dwindling Union Membership

3.1.1 One of the main challenges facing the trade union movement in Ghana today has to do with dwindling membership due, partly, to the shrinking size of employment in the formal sector, including the public sector, which has been the main source of union membership.

3.1.2 Out of the total workforce of about 13 million, less than 10 percent is unionized. The privatization and commercialization of public enterprises as part of structural adjustment programme and the cap on employment in the public sector considerably reduced public sector employment. Ghana's economic growth in the last three decades has been without growth of decent jobs. The growth of the

private sector, which was envisaged under the economic reform programme, has also failed to materialize.

3.1.3 The reform of the labour laws in 2003 officially ended the “closed shop” arrangement where workers became unionized automatically. The majority of the workforce is now employed in the informal economy. Over half of informal economy workers is either in self-employment (53.4%) or in family-based small and unincorporated enterprises (16.9%) with huge decent work deficit.

3.1.4 These categories of workers are extremely difficult to recruit into traditional unions that are based on the notion that a worker has an employer with whom the union engages on behalf of the worker.

3.2 Proliferation of Unions and Disunity at the Labour Front

3.2.1 Another major challenge has to do with breakaways. From a handful of relatively large unions in the 1990s, currently there are over 150 registered trade unions and workers’ associations including a significant number of Enterprise-Based Unions (EBUs). The number of unions has increased tremendously since 2003 after Act 651 was passed. At the same time the percentage of the workforce in the formal sector has declined. It means a larger number of unions are scrambling for members in a smaller formal sector.

3.2.2 Many workers have now opted to form or belong to enterprise unions with no affiliation to industrial unions. These enterprise unions do not see the need for joining national/industrial unions. Instead, they hire consultants to undertake collective bargaining on behalf of their members. They collect dues and dispense them largely through welfare packages. Their model of unionism has become more popular with workers even though enterprise-based unions, by their nature,

are not equipped to effectively deal with the broader economic and industrial relations challenges facing workers. This has made many workers who belong to EBUs even more vulnerable.

3.3. Temporary Employment Contracts and Outsourcing of Employment

3.3.1 In most workplaces, the number of contract workers, fixed-term workers and out-sourced workers is growing at a faster rate, compared to the permanent workforce. The law allows unionization of non-permanent workers but most unions seem to overlook such workers despite the overwhelming need for collective organization. The lackadaisical attitude of some unions towards these workers is signaling to employers that such category of workers is cheaper to employ and urging them on to transform permanent jobs into casual and fixed-term ones.

3.4 Legal Barriers to Unionization of Some Public Sector Workers

3.4.1 A significantly large contingent of public sector workforce has been barred by law from forming or joining unions. These include the Police Service, Immigration Service, Fire Service, Prison Service, and the Army. Workers in these organizations work under very difficult conditions. They have practically no say about their working conditions. There is nothing inherent in their work that should keep them from forming or joining a union.

3.5 Unions are Underinvesting in Organizing

3.5.1 There is still a significantly large number of formal sector workers that are not unionized. The traditional unions are not organizing as aggressively as the new regime of industrial relations demands. Unions continue to underinvest in organizing even when it

is so clear that the 'closed shop' arrangement has ended and the unions no longer have captive membership. The constitutional guarantee of freedom of association also means freedom not to associate. In this rather harsh environment trade unions can only thrive if and only if they organize (i.e., recruit new members and retain old ones). Otherwise, they will perish. This calls for dedicated and adequate budget for organizing. But unions are not recruiting organizers. They are still relying on industrial relations officers to organize.

3.6 Unions are Delivering Limited Services to their Members

3.6.1 Despite the changing needs of their members, the main service being delivered by most unions is related to collective bargaining. But there is a limit to clauses we can include in collective agreements. In fact, unions are now losing negotiated clauses in collective agreements at a faster rate than they are able to add to them. Union members are increasingly taking past gains in collective agreements for granted so they tend to place little or no value on their union membership and complain that they get nothing in return for their union dues. Union members are challenging the *status quo* and demanding more accountability and more convincing reasons to continue to belong to unions and pay dues. The failure, on the part of some unions, to prioritize the immediate needs of existing members has led to constant agitation and threat of withdrawal or splits by sections of union membership.

3.7 Partisan Politics Creeping into Unions

3.7.1 Another challenge that needs special attention is the extremely partisan nature of national politics which is gradually but surely dividing the unions along partisan lines. While the TUC is officially

non-partisan, some of its members and even officials are extremely partisan. Some hold extreme partisan views that often undermine whatever trade union values they have committed to adhere to. This makes it difficult to mobilize union members in support of core principles, policies or programmes that may go against their party's position on such important national issues.

3.8 Lack of Knowledge in Unions about the Ideological Basis for the Existence of Trade Unions

3.8.1 Above all, the work of unions has become more challenging because union members and their leaders lack the knowledge about the ideological basis for the existence of unions and what trade unions stand for.

3.9 Low wages

3.9.1 The collapse of employment particularly in the formal economy has depressed wages, worsened working conditions and undermined the strength and resolve of workers and their unions. As “good jobs” become increasingly scarce and million remain unemployed or underemployed, workers are forced to accept whatever level of wage employers offer, for fear of losing their jobs.

3.9.2 The current national daily minimum wage is GHS11.82 (2020) which is just about US\$2.00. The dollar-value of the minimum wage has remained around US\$2 over a decade. Even at this low level, a very significant proportion of working women and men in Ghana earn below the national minimum wage.

3.9.3 Among public sector workers, the initial gain in real wage following the implementation of the Single Spine Salary Structure, has been wiped out as a result of several years of wage increases below

inflation rate. Wage inequality is increasing in both public and private sectors.

3.10 Insecurity of Employment and Incomes

3.10.1 A very significant number of workers, including unionized workers, are facing employment and income insecurity. The labour laws are not offering adequate protection to workers. Employers are increasingly resisting unionization as governments have become openly more sympathetic to businesses. And despite many years of what has been described as “robust” economic growth, the Ghanaian labour market is characterized by high levels of joblessness and informality.

3.11 Low Pension Coverage and Benefits

3.11.1 The outcome of the three-tier pension scheme has turned out to be different from what was envisaged, due mainly to implementation challenges. The objective of the three-tier pension scheme was to provide pension benefits to ensure retirement income security for workers in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Workers retiring for the first time under the new scheme are worse-off in terms of their lumpsum benefits, compared to those who retired under the PNDCL 247.

3.11.2 Coverage of social security remains limited in both the proportion of workers and contingencies covered. Currently, just about 10 percent of the total workforce is contributing to pension schemes and only three contingencies are covered by the social security (i.e., old age, invalidity and survivors’ pension). Almost all workers in the informal economy do not have access to social security.

3.11.3 Paid maternity remains the full responsibility of employers. This is jeopardizing the opportunities for young women to secure decent jobs in the formal segment of the economy. The mandated three months of paid maternity is inconsistent with the national campaign for six months exclusive breastfeeding.

3.12 Weak Labour Administration Institutions

3.12.1 Another important challenge is that the state institutions responsible for labour administration are very weak in terms of their ability to deliver services or perform their basic functions such as enforcing the law to protect workers. These institutions include the Labour Department, National Labour Commission, Fair Wages and Salaries Commission, and Factories Inspectorate Department. These institutions are severely underfunded. For example, because the Labour Department lacks resources including human resources to monitor the implementation of the minimum wage legislation many workers are paid below the minimum wage, they are not registered with the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), and they work in unsafe conditions.

3.13 Effects of Climate Change on The World of Work

3.13.1 In addition to the “old” challenges there are emerging “new” challenges including the climate crisis and its adverse impact on work. The planet is warming at an alarming rate. Finite resources are being used up rapidly. And the environment is becoming more fragile and less habitable. For example, extreme temperatures have accelerated movements out of agriculture and rural areas. This will negatively affect food production and compromise food security. The resulting

urban slumps will have very serious implications for the labour market.

3.14 Effects of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the World of Work

3.14.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) is having a revolutionary impact on the world of work. There are stark predictions about how AI will transform or even eliminate current forms of work in a couple of decades. Research at the University of Oxford predict that 47 percent of current job forms are at risk of being automated in 20 years. According to the World Bank (2016), almost 60 percent of employment is at risk of automation in OECD countries. For sub-Saharan Africa, studies point to a large but uncertain impact on jobs. McKinsey Global Institute (2017) and the World Bank (2016) say that employment in sub-Saharan Africa is a little less vulnerable to automation. Yet, their estimates show that in some countries between 40 and 60 percent of jobs could be affected by AI.

3.15 Child Labour

3.15.1 Child labour is still widespread in Ghana although there has been a significant increase in school enrolment. Available data indicate that one quarter of children who ought to be in the classroom are active in the labour market working or looking for work. These children are missing the opportunities for schooling and for building human capital necessary for productive participation in the labour market. They are likely to constitute the weakest segment of the labour market in the near future. Beside anytime a child takes a job an adult losses one.

3.16 Poverty

3.16.1 According to Ghana Statistical Service data, headcount poverty in Ghana reduced from 51.7 percent of the population in 1992 to 23.4 percent in 2017. Despite this significant progress in the fight against poverty in Ghana, almost seven million Ghanaians, including some formal sector workers, are either poor or extremely poor. In rural Savannah, for example, the incidence of poverty increased from 55 percent of the population to 68 percent in the last decade. Thus, a disproportionate share of the dividends of three decades of economic growth has benefited a tiny fraction of the population. This is evidenced by the increasing Gini index (a measure of income inequality) from 41.9 in 2005/06 to 43.0 in 2016/17. Ghana Statistical Service has attributed the slow pace in poverty reduction to a worsening income distribution or inequality.

3.17 Poor Housing

3.17.1 The poverty situation in Ghana is evidenced by the poor housing situation. Many Ghanaians are living in dilapidated buildings that are not fit for humans. Current estimates put Ghana's housing deficit at 1.7 million units. Annual housing output or supply is estimated at 4,500 units built mostly by private property developers. This means that 90 percent of Ghana's housing needs is unfulfilled.

3.17.2 Government interventions in the housing sector in the name of 'affordable housing project' dotted around the country have failed to solve the housing problem. House prices are high and above the incomes of most Ghanaians due to high price of land, land litigation, high interest rates and profit-driven delivery of housing rather than social housing schemes.

3.17.3 Linked to the housing poverty is the generally poor sanitation for most Ghanaians. Many households do not have toilets. This is true of cities and rural areas. In Upper West Region, for example, just a quarter of households have access to flush or KVIP toilets. The proportion is 13 percent in Upper East. In Accra one in seven households has no access to flush or KVIP toilets. Open defecation is still common in Ghana. The Institute of Environment and Sanitation of the University of Ghana, Legon, estimates that 16 million Ghanaians use unsanitary or shared latrines while 4.8 million had no latrines at all. The situation costs the country US\$79 million annually.

4.0 WHAT CAN THE TUC FAMILY DO ABOUT ALL THESE CHALLENGES?

4.1 It is clear from the foregoing that the 11th Quadrennial is going to be a very challenging period for workers and their unions. The task ahead is indeed very daunting. We need to consolidate the gains achieved in the last 75 years and aggressively tackle the challenges outlined above to continue to be relevant as trade unions.

4.2 It is against this rather gloomy background that we adopt this Policy Statement to guide our work in this quadrennial and beyond. This Policy Statement recognizes the enormity of the challenges ahead. But we are also conscious of the opportunities we can create for workers if we build stronger unions.

4.3 In the next section, we have outlined the *goal* of this Policy Statement. We have also presented and explained the *objective* and priority areas which we have termed *pillars*, around which the policy is built.

5.0 POLICY GOAL, OBJECTIVE AND PILLARS

5.1 Policy Goal and Objective

5.1.1 Our **GOAL** is to *ensure that our members enjoy decent work*, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the various international conventions Ghana has ratified. Put differently, our goal is to ensure that our members work in dignity; they enjoy employment security and living wage; they have access to social security; they are able to exercise their rights as workers; and they participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives.

5.1.2 Our *objective* is *to build stronger unions* that are capable of ensuring decent work for their members and that can effectively promote and protect their interests as workers.

5.1.3 The following section presents what we have termed the *pillars* of the policy. It is from these pillars/priority areas that we will develop priorities for every year during this quadrennial (2021-2024).

5.2 Pillars of the Policy

5.2.1 This policy is built around ten pillars namely: (1) To be more worker-centered; (2) Aggressive Organizing, (3) Promote equality of opportunity for men and women; (4) Improve grassroots participation; (4) Organize aggressively; (5) Rebrand TUC and make it more visible in Ghana and internationally; (6) Intensify education and training for union members; (7) Social Protection and Pensions (8) Housing for workers; (9) Labour relations and social dialogue; (10) Unity and Solidarity within the TUC Family.

5.2.2 These broad areas/pillars are carefully selected. They reflect the collective desire for stronger, responsive, accountable and more visible unions that are focusing on the needs of workers, and delivering tangible benefits to them, improving participation and living conditions for workers in all parts of the country, and providing education and training. The sections below explain the pillars further.

Pillar 1: Worker-centeredness

5.2.3 Congress reaffirms its commitment to the task of promoting and defending fundamental workers right and dignity of work. The *worker*, as always, will be at the centre of our work.

5.2.4 In this quadrennial, the TUC and its unions will seek to programme its activities to focus more on the needs of workers in a more effective manner. We will tackle the laws and practices that impede unionisation and undermine employment/income security of workers.

5.2.5 TUC will forcefully take up the perennial issues of low pay, low pensions, and limited pension coverage. Our goal will be to get a review of the Single Spine Salary Policy and the method for the determination of the national minimum wage as a means of improving salaries and addressing the existing inequities in pay.

5.2.6 A major part of our work will focus on satisfying the immediate needs of our members. This will entail strengthening our industrial relations work, in particular collective bargaining, conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

5.2.7 Beyond these, the unions will aggressively pursue welfare programmes that address the immediate economic and social needs of

workers. The unions will undertake more welfare programmes targeted at helping members to deal with their immediate challenges. TUC and its affiliates will pursue the establishment of the Ghana Labour Bank (GLB) that offers long-term loans at reasonable rates to enable workers acquire decent housing and other essentials. TUC will also promote rent-to-own housing schemes for workers in all regions. National Unions will be encouraged to enroll their members on life insurance schemes to cater for contingencies such as death, accident, disability/invalidity, funeral of close relatives.

Pillar 2: Aggressive Organizing

5.2.8 As discussed earlier, union membership is dwindling. The declining membership has affected the finances of the unions. But most importantly, the low union density affects our legitimacy. Our claim to representativeness is undermined by the fact that we represent less than one-tenth of the total workforce. The rampant abuse of labour rights has serious implications for the relevance, legitimacy and credibility of the entire union movement.

5.2.9 The decrease in formal sector employment is the primary reason for this. At the same time, nearly half of the estimated formal sector workforce of 1.5 million is without unions. We must reverse the decline in membership by undertaking aggressive organizing. Unless we grow our membership, we will not have the legitimacy, influence and the power we need to surmount the challenges ahead of us.

5.2.10 The Organizing Department of TUC will be strengthened to support the organizing efforts of National Unions. We have to commit

resources to organizing. We have to recruit organizers or re-purpose current staff for organizing. We will adopt new strategies for organizing workers especially those in atypical forms of employment. We have to pay special attention to young workers, women, domestic workers and people with disabilities. We will pay attention to the jurisdictional boundaries to avoid confrontation among unions within the TUC Family. Given the immense numbers in the informal economy, our model for organizing informal workers will be thoroughly re-assessed and overhauled.

5.2.11 We will pay attention to the laws and regulations that make it difficult for workers to form or join unions, including laws regulating labour brokerage system. We will continue to push for the review of the labour laws and the bureaucratic hurdles at the labour administration institutions with special reference to the Labour Department.

Pillar 3: Promoting equality opportunity for men and women

5.2.12 Gender refers to the social implications of being male or female. It is a term that encompasses social roles, responsibilities, status, expectations, opportunities and expected behavioural patterns that arise from being female or male in a particular society at a particular point in time.

5.2.13 By ***gender equality*** in the trade union and in society at large, we mean *fair* and *proportionate* attention to the differential needs and interests of women and men as well as opportunities for

representation and participation in the labour market and in the Ghanaian society, generally.

5.2.14 TUC and its affiliates are concerned about gender inequality mainly because it can be used as basis, albeit subtle, to treat males and females differently in the labour market and in productive activities generally, usually in favour of males and at the expense of females.

5.2.15 In the last three decades, some progress has been made in Ghana and in the trade union movement towards achieving gender equality, particularly women's representation in the decision-making bodies as a result of programmes that promote women's interests and rights and ultimately, gender equality.

5.2.16 Nevertheless, the gender imbalance in the trade union movement still persists in favour of males. A lot more needs to be done to improve women's participation in trade union activities. In particular, working women should be supported in a special way to climb up to higher levels of union leadership beyond the positions that have been reserved for them. Women should be properly represented in the trade union leadership at all levels – local, district, regional and national. This is what the TUC Family seeks to achieve in this quadrennial and beyond.

Pillar 4: Improving grassroots participation: DCLs and RCLs

5.2.17 The TUC and its affiliates commit to pursue constructive engagement with its rank and file. As we pursue an agenda focused on delivering value to workers, the grassroots will be engaged in a special

way. This will involve programmes to strengthen local unions, the Districts and Regional Councils of Labour. The District Councils of Labour (DCLs) and Regional Councils of Labour (RCLs) constitute important building blocks for the work of the TUC. The DCLs and RCLs provide unique forums for workers to contribute to the work of the TUC. They are forums for getting feedback, receiving ideas and making the TUC accessible to ordinary workers.

5.2.18 In recent years the DCLs and RCLs have not functioned as expected. Their meetings have been irregular and not appropriately focused. This emanates generally from a lack of dedicated funding for their work. We are determined to change this in this quadrennial. The DCLs and RCLs will receive dedicated funding, consistent and purposeful programming. Leaders of National Unions will be encouraged to participate in DCLs and RCLs across the country.

Pillar 5: Rebranding and Visibility

5.2.19 TUC and its affiliates continue to implement initiatives that are important for workers and the people of Ghana. We use our participation in various forums to hold government and its agencies to account and to secure the interest of workers and Ghanaians. Some of the unions continue to provide important initiatives that contribute to welfare of workers. Unfortunately, these initiatives are not as visible as expected.

5.2.20 In this quadrennial, we need to showcase our achievements and on-going progress towards addressing our challenges. We have to work hard to empower TUC affiliates to speak to issues in their sectors

with the support of the TUC. Senior officers of the TUC will equally be empowered to represent and disseminate information about the TUC and its affiliates.

5.2.21 It is imperative that we rebrand the organization in line with the changing trends. The voice of TUC must be heard on key issues in particular on issues about violation of workers' rights. Some employers still see the TUC and its unions as adversaries that need to be avoided at all cost. We need to allay the fears of such employers and get them to understand that TUC and its affiliates are credible partners.

Pillar 6: Education and Training

5.2.22 Trade union ideology (i.e., the unique system of ideas and ideals that form the basis of trade union action and policy) and working-class consciousness have almost vanished. The ideological impoverishment is widespread and goes all the way into the upper echelons of the unions. We cannot build stronger unions in an ideological vacuum. Our support or opposition for policies and programmes ought to be informed by our ideology. Working class consciousness is key in the mobilization of workers. This cannot be achieved without a strong ideological base that distinguishes us from other individuals and groups. Without this we will be drawn in different directions supporting wrong policies or opposing the right ones.

5.2.23. The dearth of ideology in the union is the result of years of too little trade union education for union members. Trade union education has focused mainly on leaders. The rank-and-file members

of unions receive no or very little education. In terms of content, trade union education remains undiversified and not focused on any strategic vision of the union. The ideological content is almost nil. Moreover, affiliates are no longer sponsoring workers for the Certificate, Diploma and Post-graduate courses in Labour Studies offered in conjunction with the University of Cape Coast.

5.2.24 This situation must change. The TUC and its affiliates have to undertake more and better education and training covering more members. The immediate objective will be to bring back ideology and revive working-class consciousness. The TUC intends to strengthen its collaboration with the University of Cape Coast for more certificated programmes.

5.2.25 We must establish Workers' Education Fund and encourage government, employers and international partners to provide financial and technical support for workers' education at the Ghana Labour College.

Pillar 7: Social Protection and Pensions

5.2.26 In this quadrennial the TUC and its unions will work with all stakeholders to address the challenges that have bedeviled the implementation of the three-tier pension scheme. In particular, we will ensure that workers retiring under the current pension scheme are not made worse off.

5.2.27 We will seek reform of the institutions in charge of pensions including the Social Security and National Trust (SSNIT) and the

National Pensions Regulatory Authority (NPRA). Our proposed reforms will focus on the extension of pension coverage both in terms of workers and contingencies covered, improving pension benefits, improving the administration of pensions and improving retirement income for all.

5.2.28. We will continue to pursue the policy of unifying pensions across all occupational groups. We hold the view that all occupational groups including the securities agencies must be part of the SSNIT scheme. We believe that Ghana has enough resources to establish a non-contributory pension scheme for workers (especially those in the informal sector) who do not have the capacity to contribute towards their pensions but who are in dire need of assistance in old age.

5.2.29 As part of measures to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 on employment, government in collaboration with social partners is in the process of establishing National Unemployment Insurance Scheme to support workers who have lost their jobs either permanently or temporarily. TUC will continue to work with the social partners to ensure that the scheme is established in 2021.

Pillar 8: Housing for Workers

5.2.30 In this quadrennial, TUC and its affiliates will be active in the search for solutions to the housing fiasco. As mentioned earlier, TUC will work with its affiliates, government and employers to establish the Ghana Labour Bank (GLB). The Bank will focus primarily on delivering housing loans and mortgages at a concessionary rate.

5.2.31 TUC will work with government with a view to changing its approach to the delivery of affordable housing. Instead of congregating large housing units in specific locations, which are actually unaffordable, we will urge government to consider giving housing loans to workers and making it possible for more workers to benefit from rent-to-own housing schemes.

5.2.32 Our expectation is that all workers in both the private and public sectors must be able to own their homes which they can pay for incrementally in about 20 years in their preferred locations anywhere in the country.

Pillar 9: Labour Relations and Social Dialogue

5.2.33 Ghana's industrial relations system generally remains sound. The laws and other institutions are in place. The established institutional and legal frameworks have contributed to the relatively peaceful industrial relations atmosphere that currently prevails in the country. The social partners namely government, employers and Organized Labour have shown commitments and mutual respect to one another especially at the national level. The establishment of the Social Partnership Council (SPC) has given unions another important avenue for dialogue on issues pertaining to economic policy.

5.2.34 Social dialogue is firmly established at both national (tripartite) and enterprise (bi-partite) levels. The social partners continue to negotiate the national daily minimum wage. Government and public sector unions also negotiate the base pay on the Single Spine Salary Structure.

5.2.35 However, there are challenges. Tension remains as some employers continue to deny workers their right to unionize. The proliferation of enterprise-based unions has the potential to undermine trade union solidarity and labour relations in general. The large number of unions bringing together a significantly large section of the workforce that remains outside the TUC Family poses a danger to collective action and solidarity.

5.2.36 There is also a challenge relating to the low investment in the social dialogue institutions that need urgent attention.

5.2.37 A process has begun towards the review of the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651). It is expected that the reform will remove ambiguities in the law and offer adequate protection to workers.

Pillar 10: Unity and Solidarity within the TUC Family

5.2.38 Trade unions thrive on unity and solidarity (i.e., mutual support). Unions also rely on large numbers for influence and legitimacy.

5.2.39 Within the TUC Family, it is not uncommon to find more than one union organizing in the same industry or trade and in some cases, organizing within the same enterprise. This practice has the tendency to engender unhealthy competition and compromise unity and solidarity within the TUC Family.

5.2.40 The Constitution and Internal Regulations of the TUC encourage affiliates that are organizing similar trades or industries to merge. This will help stem unhealthy competition and rivalry. Above all mergers will allow for stronger, financially sustainable and more efficient running of unions and enable them to deal with the challenges facing their members.

5.2.41 During the last quadrennial the TUC made strenuous efforts to encourage some of the national unions to merge. Mergers are important because the challenges of organizing as well as the emerging trends of employment relations require larger and stronger unions to surmount.

5.2.42 In this quadrennial, we will continue to work with potential candidates for mergers in the TUC Family to merge. They include unions in agriculture (GAWU and CRIWU); unions in the maritime industry (MDU and NUSPAW); and unions in the construction industry (CBMWU and GCMQWU).

6.0 VALUES UNDERPINNING THIS CONGRESS POLICY STATEMENT

6.1 This policy statement is underpinned by our core values and our vision to continue to play an important role in the development of Ghana. We envisage a Ghanaian society where, collectively, we create opportunities that enhance every individual's ability to enjoy fulfilling lives by contributing meaningfully to their own development and to the development of the entire society, according to their capabilities.

6.2 The TUC is not only interested in the **outcome** of development. We are also interested in the **process** of development. It is the process which serves as the means by which individuals can fully express their potentials, make a contribution to development. In this process we elevate **cooperation** over competition. Cooperation is the most sustainable instrument for tapping human potentials for the achievements of individual aspirations and societal goals.

6.3 Our commitment is to the **development of the human person**. We support policies and programmes that seek to expand human capabilities and attainment of their full potentials.

6.4 We also seek the fulfillment of our aspirations and the achievement of our objectives through **democratic processes** and within the framework of constitutional government.

6.5 We believe firmly that Ghana has enough resources to meet our needs and to improve the lives all Ghanaians - workers, children, the youth, the poor women and men, the aged and people with disability.

6.6 We will continue to espouse the basic **human development objectives** including food security and adequate nutrition for all; adequate and affordable housing for all; adequate sanitation for all; universal access to potable water; access to affordable health care service and facilities in all regions and for all residents in Ghana; complete eradication of avoidable maternal and infant morbidity and mortality rates; complete eradication of Malaria, COVID-19 and other perennial diseases in Ghana, safer road, air, sea and rail transport; absence of drug abuse; improved personal and national security; respect for human rights (with special reference to the rights of children and women); adequate care for the aged, the sick and the

handicapped and social protection in general; respect for workers' rights; absence of child labour; decent work within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); eradication of poverty; and, ultimately long, healthy and fulfilling lives for all Ghanaians.

6.7 We consider *participation in decisions* that affect one's life and the lives of one's family as an essential indicator of human development. We reaffirm our pledge to *“resolutely defend and uphold the democratic foundations on which the future of our Nation must be built and seek the fulfillment of our aspirations and hopes and the achievement of our objectives, through democratic processes and within the framework of constitutional government and concern for the welfare of the country”*

6.8 The democracy we envisage for the Ghanaian society, of which we are part, as individuals and as a group, is democracy with the following characteristics, among many others: respect for the National constitution; respect for Rule of Law and the Bill of Rights; multi-party system of government; universal adult suffrage; respect for the views of minority; respect for the rights of workers and the rights of women and men as groups or as individuals; separation of powers (with special reference to independence of the judiciary and parliament); freedom of the media; free, and fair elections; and freedom of expression.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The theme of this Congress (Building Stronger Unions in a Changing World of Work) was chosen against the background of the challenges, prospects and opportunities envisaged in this quadrennial

(2021-2024). The goal, objectives and pillars of this Congress Policy Statement are consistent with the theme.

7.2 This Policy Statement is designed to serve as a guide to the TUC Family to effectively promote and protect the interests of workers and deliver services to our members. The priority areas/pillars are a good guide for building stronger trade unions that are financially stable, independent, resilient, dominant, visible, influential in the Ghanaian society, and respected by social partners. This requires union leaders that are confident, trustworthy, knowledgeable, credible, assertive, wise and effective who can effectively represent union members at all levels.

7.3 We believe that this Policy Statement is a good blueprint for building and sustaining stronger unions in this quadrennial and beyond.

RESOLUTIONS

1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 Since its establishment 75 years ago, Trades Union Congress (Ghana) has consistently strived to lead workers and assist them in their quest for decent work with special attention to employment security, improved working conditions, living wage, and income security during retirement. Working with governments and employers, TUC has also been instrumental in promoting a harmonious industrial relations atmosphere which is conducive for national development.

1.2 However, as in other African countries, the working people of Ghana are still confronted with several challenges. Contract, fixed-term, and outsourced employment have become the norm leading to employment and income security for many workers; earnings have remained low for both public and private sector workers; the majority of Ghanaians lack access to social security; workers retiring fully under the new pension scheme are worse-off in terms of their benefits, compared to those who retired under the previous scheme; many workers are still outside trade unions even though they have the rights to form or join unions; the majority of workers do not own their

houses; and poverty is still pervasive even among formal sector workers.

1.3 The challenges facing workers have become particularly daunting in recent times as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of workers are losing their jobs, especially those in the private sector. Employers that have kept their workers are struggling to pay them.

1.4 In spite of these challenges, the hopes and aspirations of workers for decent work and fulfilling lives remain undiminished. The struggle for fair incomes and improved working conditions will continue in this quadrennial.

1.5 TUC and its Affiliate National Unions will remain united and continue to struggle for fair wages, social and economic justice, and improved working and living conditions for themselves and their families.

1.6 In this quadrennial, we will not only continue to fight for the rights of workers at the enterprise level through collective bargaining, but we will also continue to strengthen our engagements with policy makers and push for policies and programmes aimed at creating decent jobs as a means of reducing poverty and building a just society that provides basic services and adequate protection for all citizens of Ghana, irrespective of sex, religion, ethnicity and race.

2.0 RESOLUTIONS

We, the delegates at the 11th Quadrennial Delegates Congress of TUC, after extensive deliberations of the Congress Policy Statement and the challenges facing workers, re-affirm our commitment to our

core mandate of promoting and protecting the interests of the working people of Ghana and hereby resolve as follows:

RESOLUTION 1

TUC AS A MOUTHPIECE OF ITS AFFILIATE NATIONAL UNIONS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Mindful of the serious implications of trade union pluralism for the unity and solidarity of the working class; and

Conscious of the need for greater unity and solidarity among trade unions;

The Trades Union Congress (Ghana) shall remain the mouthpiece for all Affiliated National Unions and Associate Members and continue represent the collective interests and voice of all the working people of Ghana.

RESOLUTION 2

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND PENSIONS

Fully aware that vulnerabilities become pronounced on retirement;

Recognizing that every worker would one day retire and depend on their pensions;

Noting the aims and objectives of the three-tier pension scheme;

Gravely concerned about the many weaknesses of our social security system and the implementation of the three-tier pension scheme including inadequate pension benefits especially for those retiring under the three-tier pension scheme, issues related to pass credit, issues related to the unification of pensions, inequality in pension benefits, the lack of access to pension among informal economy

workers; and the limited number of contingencies covered by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT); and

Mindful of the adverse effects on the COVID-19 pandemic on workers;

- i. *We call on government to work with social partners to address the challenges in the implementation of the three-tier pension scheme to ensure improved retirement income for all workers.*
- ii. *We shall continue to collaborate with government towards the establishment of the proposed National Unemployment Insurance Scheme as part of measures to support workers who are lose their jobs.*

RESOLUTION 3

FUNDING OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILS OF LABOUR (DCLS) AND REGIONAL COUNCILS OF LABOUR (RCLS)

Mindful of the fact that the District Councils of Labour (DCLs) and Regional Councils of Labour (RCLs) constitute an important building blocks for the work of the TUC and its affiliate unions and that the forums of the DCLs and RCLs provide an avenue for receiving feedback and ideas from the rank-and-file union members across the country;

Concerned about the weakness of the DCLs and RCLs as a result of lack of dedicated funding towards its activities;

TUC and all its affiliates shall establish and contribute into a Special Fund which will be used purposely for funding activities of DCLs and RCLs.

RESOLUTION 4

IMPROVING WAGES

Noting that we still have the majority of Ghanaian workers earning below the National Minimum Wage, which is currently just about US\$2 per day or US\$54 per month;

Noting further that the initial gains in real wage following the implementation of the Single Spine Salary Structure for public sector workers has been wiped out as a result of several years of real wage stagnation;

TUC and its affiliates will work with friendly organised labour groups to continue our campaign for improved earnings for both public and private sector workers by intensifying our efforts towards the adoption and implementation of a living wage policy in Ghana.

RESOLUTION 5

ESTABLISHMENT OF LABOUR BANK FOR HOUSING

Knowing that the majority of workers do not own houses and that the housing situation remains dire after many failed attempts by government to provide affordable houses;

Alarmed by the fact that in today's housing market, there is a drastic increase in rents and rent advances and that low-income workers are having to dedicate a large percentage of their income to rents;

- i. TUC and its affiliates shall work together towards the establishment of Ghana Labour Bank based on the philosophy of social financing with the ultimate objective of providing easily accessible and flexible credit facilities for workers to finance the construction of their own houses at any preferred location in Ghana.*
- ii. We will work with government and other social partners to establish rent-to-own housing schemes for workers in all regions.*

RESOLUTION 6

GENDER EQUALITY

Fully aware of the importance of the participation of women in all societies, in the labour market, and in the trade union movement;

Noting that despite some modest achievements in the trade union movement towards gender equity, particularly women's representation in decision-making bodies of the union, gender imbalance still persists in favour of males.

- i. We reaffirm our commitment towards ensuring gender equality at all levels in the trade union especially at the level of trade union leadership.*
- ii. We shall continue to campaign for the ratification of some key ILO Conventions in particular Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.*

RESOLUTION 7

ORGANISING

Conscious of the declining membership of trade unions and its potential effects on their finances and legitimacy;

Aware of the doubts in the minds of young workers and new labour market entrants about the relevance of trade unions; and

Acknowledging the proliferation of enterprise-based unions and welfare associations at various workplaces instead of joining national unions in the TUC Family;

- i. We shall continue to make organizing the centrepiece of our work in this quadrennial and prioritize the unionization and protection of the most vulnerable groups in the labour force including women, young people, informal economy workers, workers with disability, and domestic workers;*
- ii. We shall strengthen the Organizing Department of TUC and the network of union organizers for effective delivery of their mandate.*
- iii. We shall lead organized labour in the national efforts to reform the Labour Act, Act 651 to offer stronger protection to workers and make it easier for them to form or join unions of their choice.*

RESOLUTION 8

PRIVATIZATION OF ELECTRICITY COMPANY OF GHANA (ECG)

Noting that the challenges confronting ECG is largely due to political interference in the affairs of the company;

Taking into account the failed PDS concession which should not have taken place in the manner in which it was executed;

- i. We urge government to desist from such concessionary arrangement in the quest to privatize the state-owned electricity company.*
- ii. We further urge government to consider better options such as:*
 - a. appointing a Managing Director and other Senior Executives of ECG under specific period of contract and specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including loss reduction and improvement in customer service delivery, and*
 - b. listing ECG on the Ghana Stock Exchange if it is still committed to ensuring private sector participation in the electricity sector*

RESOLUTION 9

NEXT QUADRENNIAL DELEGATES CONGRESS

Whereas the advent of COVID-19 distorted the activities of the TUC and its affiliates which led to the postponement of delegates' conferences of most affiliates from 2020 to 2021 as well as the postponement of the 11th Quadrennial Delegates Congress of TUC from August, 2020 to March, 2021;

Recognizing the need to return to the long-standing calendar of the pre-COVID era; and

Barring the occurrence of another *force majeure* on a similar scale like the COVID-19 pandemic during the quadrennial;

We hereby resolve that the 12th Quadrennial Delegates Congress of TUC shall be held in August, 2024.