

# CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

*(Mainstreaming Social Justice in Public Life)*

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## *Press Release*

### **Creating a Safe and Healthy Environment for Nigerian Workers**

As we join the rest of the world to celebrate International Labor Day 2024, Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) recalls that the theme of the 2024 celebration focuses on ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate. It is a fundamental aphorism that motivated, well paid workers working in a safe and healthy environment are the best contributors to national development. Therefore, safeguarding the wellbeing of workers in Nigeria will enhance the level of productivity of the workforce and this in turn guarantees positive economic growth.

We note with deep regret that Nigerian workers have over the years been subjected to various levels of deprivation. Some of such notable deprivation that have affected the wellbeing of the Nigerian workforce include poor remuneration evidenced by a minimum wage that is one of the poorest in the world, very low pensions that are not paid and, in most states, have fallen into arrears. Others include challenges of affordable housing and access to quality health care. Ironically, the Federal Government had set up policies and programs to cater for the aforementioned schemes but it has failed to demonstrate the political will to implement these policies for the full benefit of Nigerian workers.

For instance, in the housing sector, despite the existence of the National Housing Fund, where Nigerian workers make a co-payment contribution to attain a mortgage facility, workers still struggle to get an accommodation of their own. This same scenario applies in the health and wellbeing of Nigerian Workers. Nigerian workers have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of services received through the National Health Insurance Scheme, despite their co-contribution to the scheme. Most health care services are also not covered under the scheme, subjecting workers to pay out of pocket if they must access such services. It is also alarming to note that most states of the federation have a reputation of owing retired workers their pensionable benefits. There are reported cases where pensioners have died while awaiting their pensions, some of which were diverted for other purposes or simply mismanaged.

In light of the above, we call on the governments to use this occasion to reflect on life saving measures that would put smiles on the faces of Nigerian workers. Also, given the fact that some government policies such as the removal of fuel subsidy, increased tariff on electricity and flotation of the Naira have added to the cost of living in Nigeria, the Federal and State governments should pay more focus on programs and policies that would alleviate the suffering experienced by workers.

Against the background of the foregoing, CSJ proffers the following recommendations:

- Government should take concrete and targeted steps to mainstream a safe and healthy environment for all Nigerian workers irrespective of their cadre.
- To fast track the negotiations for a minimum wage and ensure that Nigerian workers get a living wage indexed on the cost of maintaining an adequate standard of living and the promotion of human dignity.
- The government at all levels should ensure that the health and safety of all Nigerian workers becomes their top-most priority by upgrading the services offered under health insurance schemes and fully implement the compulsory health insurance regime provided in the National Health Insurance Authority Act. This will include introducing greater transparency and value for money under the Basic Health Care Provision Fund.
- The FGN should revive the National Housing Scheme, and ensure that it delivers on the promise of affordable housing for workers.
- FGN and the states should fight corruption to a standstill to ensure that resources are available to guarantee safety and a conducive environment for Nigerians workers.

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