MEDIA STATEMENT
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FAWU CONDEMNS ATTEMPTS TO SILENCE CHOCOCAM WORKERS IN CAMEROON: WORKERS MUST NOT BECOME CASUALTIES OF CORPORATE PROFITEERING AND CAPITAL RESTRUCTURING

The Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) expresses its strongest condemnation of the reported threats to dismiss six elected workers' representatives at Chocolaterie Confiserie Camerounaise (CHOCOCAM) in Cameroon, amid the proposed disposal of the controlling shareholding held by South African multinational Tiger Brands.

FAWU regards these developments as a serious attack on workers' democratic rights and an alarming escalation of the conflict surrounding the proposed sale of CHOCOCAM to Minkama Capital.

Reports indicate that six of the company's nine workers' representatives appeared before the Labour Inspectorate in Douala on 9 October 2026 following allegations of serious misconduct, which they have disputed.

We are particularly concerned that these disciplinary threats have emerged against the background of sustained efforts by workers' representatives to secure employment guarantees, protect retirement benefits and demand transparency over the future of the enterprise.

FAWU declares that defending workers' livelihoods is not misconduct. Demanding accountability is not insubordination. Representing workers is not a dismissible offence.

Where disciplinary proceedings are used to punish legitimate worker representation, they constitute an unacceptable attack on freedom of association and collective bargaining.

We reject any attempt to criminalise legitimate workplace struggles or intimidate workers into silence.

CORPORATE PROFITS CANNOT TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER WORKERS' LIVELIHOODS

The proposed disposal of Tiger Brands' 74.69% shareholding in CHOCOCAM, reportedly involving financing of approximately FCFA 46.7 billion, raises fundamental questions about the distribution of economic power and the rights of workers during corporate restructuring.

For multinational capital, the transaction may be presented as portfolio optimisation, investment restructuring or the realignment of shareholder interests.

For the working class, however, the consequences are far more immediate: the possibility of lost employment, weakened collective bargaining rights, diminished retirement benefits and the destruction of household economic security.

This contradiction exposes a fundamental injustice in the capitalist economic system: the people whose labour creates wealth are too often excluded from decisions about how that wealth is controlled, transferred and distributed.

Workers have spent years building CHOCOCAM into an important manufacturing enterprise. Their labour has sustained production, supported supply chains and contributed to the development of Cameroon's food-processing industry.

Yet when ownership changes hands, it is shareholders, investors and financial institutions who occupy the negotiating table, while workers are forced to struggle for guarantees concerning their own futures.

FAWU rejects an economic order in which capital enjoys extraordinary freedom to move across borders, while workers must fight to defend even their most basic rights.

Tiger Brands' own financial results underline why corporate accountability cannot be treated as an optional matter. For the financial year ended September 2025, the group reported R34.4 billion in revenue from continuing operations and declared a R4 billion special dividend to shareholders.

These group-wide figures are not CHOCOCAM's earnings. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the scale of financial resources being distributed to shareholders while serious questions remain about the protection of workers affected by the group's restructuring decisions.

There can be no moral or economic justification for prioritising shareholder returns while denying workers meaningful negotiations over their jobs, retirement security and acquired benefits.

AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT MUST BENEFIT AFRICAN WORKERS

The developments at CHOCOCAM must also be understood within the broader political economy of the African continent.

Africa continues to confront a development model characterised by unequal participation in global value chains, dependence on commodity exports, unemployment, industrial vulnerability and the concentration of wealth in the hands of powerful economic interests.

Cameroon is an important cocoa-producing country. Its manufacturing and chocolate-processing industries are essential to increasing domestic value addition, supporting industrial employment and retaining more of the wealth generated through African agricultural production.

Such industrial development cannot be considered progressive if it is accompanied by the erosion of workers' rights.

FAWU supports industrialisation that creates decent work, strengthens domestic productive capacity, promotes skills development and improves the living conditions of the working class.

The proposed acquisition of CHOCOCAM must therefore be judged not merely by the financial returns accruing to investors, but also by its consequences for employment, wages, industrial production and the broader Cameroonian economy.

Where acquisitions are supported by substantial debt financing, workers must not be compelled to absorb the financial burden through retrenchments, wage suppression, reduced benefits or the diversion of resources intended for employee welfare.

Workers did not create the acquisition debt, and they must not be made to pay for it.

African economic transformation will remain hollow if it replaces one group of shareholders with another while leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation and economic insecurity.

Real economic liberation requires that the wealth produced by African workers contributes to decent livelihoods, industrial development and social progress.

TIGER BRANDS CANNOT ESCAPE ITS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

FAWU directs its demands squarely at Tiger Brands, CHOCOCAM management and the proposed acquiring interests.

Tiger Brands cannot invoke corporate restructuring as a justification for distancing itself from the legitimate concerns of workers in an enterprise in which it holds a controlling interest.

As a South African multinational operating on the African continent, Tiger Brands must be held accountable to the principles of decent work, fair labour practices, meaningful consultation and international working-class solidarity.

The company's publicly stated commitment to human rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining must be reflected in its conduct.

FAWU is particularly disturbed by reports that workers' representatives have sought meaningful engagement since September 2025, including the negotiation of a social agreement, without securing the guarantees they have requested.

The reported failure to establish the joint negotiating committee discussed during engagements with labour authorities in May 2026 raises further concerns about the seriousness with which workers' interests are being treated.

We reject a situation in which management can negotiate the future of an enterprise with investors and bankers while refusing workers an effective voice over their own employment conditions.

No corporate transaction should proceed at the expense of workers' dignity, employment security and established rights.

AN ATTACK ON WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES IS AN ATTACK ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

FAWU reminds the parties that freedom of association and collective bargaining are internationally recognised fundamental labour rights.

Cameroon has ratified International Labour Organization Conventions 87 and 98, which protect freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining.

Furthermore, Article 130 of Cameroon's Labour Code requires prior authorisation from the competent Labour Inspector before an elected workers' representative may be dismissed,

including an examination of whether the proposed dismissal is motivated by activities undertaken in the representative's official capacity.

These protections must be given practical effect.

FAWU calls upon the Cameroonian labour authorities to exercise their responsibilities independently and ensure that disciplinary proceedings are not used to undermine legitimate worker representation.

FAWU'S DEMANDS ARE CLEAR AND NON-NEGOTIABLE IN PRINCIPLE

1. WITHDRAW THE THREATENED DISMISSALS: CHOCOCAM management must withdraw disciplinary threats arising from legitimate representative activities and end any intimidation or victimisation. Any worker unlawfully dismissed for exercising protected rights must be reinstated.
2. NEGOTIATE A BINDING SOCIAL AGREEMENT: Tiger Brands, CHOCOCAM management and Minkama Capital must engage workers' representatives in meaningful negotiations before the ownership transaction is finalised, with the participation of the appropriate labour authorities.
3. GUARANTEE JOB SECURITY: The parties must negotiate enforceable employment-protection measures, including the workers' proposal for a 48-month period of job security and protection against dismissals arising from the ownership transition.
4. PROTECT ALL ACQUIRED BENEFITS: Retirement benefits, employer contributions, medical benefits, the mutual fund, solidarity fund and all other established employment entitlements must be fully protected. Any disputed fund management arrangements must be subjected to an independent and transparent accounting process.
5. NO TRANSFER OF ACQUISITION COSTS TO WORKERS: The financing of the transaction must not become a pretext for reducing wages, eliminating benefits, imposing unfair retrenchments or weakening conditions of employment.
6. FULL DISCLOSURE AND WORKER CONSULTATION: The parties must provide sufficient information on the transaction's employment consequences, financing implications and proposed industrial development plans to enable meaningful engagement with workers' representatives.

7. IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION: The Cameroonian Ministry of Labour and Social Security must ensure effective enforcement of labour protections. Relevant competition and regulatory authorities must consider the employment and public-interest implications of the proposed transaction.
8. ACCOUNTABILITY FROM TIGER BRANDS: FAWU demands direct engagement with Tiger Brands' executive leadership and Board of Directors concerning the treatment of CHOCOCAM workers and the guarantees required before its exit.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY MUST MOVE BEYOND STATEMENTS

FAWU believes that the struggle of CHOCOCAM workers is not an isolated industrial dispute.

It reflects broader struggles taking place across the African continent, where workers face retrenchments, factory closures, casualisation, attacks on trade union organisation and the erosion of hard-won employment benefits.

The African working class cannot remain fragmented along national borders while multinational corporations organise their economic interests internationally.

Capital is organised across borders. Labour must respond with organised international solidarity.

FAWU calls upon trade unions throughout Africa, the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), international trade union federations and progressive working-class organisations to express practical solidarity with CHOCOCAM workers.

We will seek coordinated engagement with the relevant trade union structures, labour authorities and corporate stakeholders, and consider lawful solidarity pickets, public campaigns and other collective measures should the threatened victimisation continue.

We also call upon the South African government to raise concerns regarding the protection of workers' rights in the overseas operations of South African multinational corporations.

Our message must be unmistakable: South African companies must not export exploitative labour practices to other African countries.

Our history of working-class struggle teaches us that solidarity is not charity. It is a weapon of collective resistance against exploitation.

The workers of Cameroon are our fellow workers. Their struggle for dignity, secure employment and democratic trade union rights is inseparable from our own.

FAWU will not remain silent while workers' representatives face threats for demanding accountability from powerful corporate interests.

The future of African industry cannot be determined exclusively by shareholders, investment funds and financial institutions.

The workers who produce the wealth must have a decisive voice in shaping that future.

FAWU DEMANDS AN END TO THE THREATENED DISMISSALS OF WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES AND CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY AGAINST THE ATTACK ON TRADE UNION RIGHTS.

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