

Parliament should pass minimum wage Bill to protect workers

In December, 2015, Workers MP Arinaitwe Rwakajara tabled the Minimum Wage Bill in Parliament to protect workers from exploitation. Platform for Labour Action (PLA), on behalf of Ugandan workers, would like to appreciate the Workers representative for his contribution towards improving the condition of workers.

In the same spirit, PLA appeals to all policy makers, MPs and all concerned ministries as well as the President to collectively treat this matter with urgency. If the Bill is passed into law, it will go a long way in curbing gross abuse and exploitation of workers in the private sector as it takes into account the uniqueness of each sector of the economy.

This Bill provides an opportunity for

both employers and employees to be represented in the establishment of the minimum wage and prescribes heavy penalties for non compliance. It also provides for the establishment of a representative board of minimum wages, which determines the minimum wage in the different sectors of the economy.

The Bill further provides for two minimum wage determination mechanisms – the public and private. Public is determined by the board and applies to a given sector while private is where both parties, employers and employees agree contractually to a minimum wage and is applicable for as long as the wage is reviewed in two years period and not lower than the minimum wage determined for the sector.

Contrary to the notion that a mini-

mum wage will discourage investors, it instead attracts foreign investors because it's recognised as a high labour standard of social responsibility. When the minimum wage has had effect on making sectors such as agriculture more attractive than they currently are, Uganda will experience decreased rural-urban and trans-national migration.

The minimum wage law prohibits employers from hiring employees for less than a given minimum wage. It the lowest monetary value which may be paid to a worker. The Bill is, therefore, instrumental in transforming positively the situation of workers in Uganda.

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With Stephen Otago

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