

For immediate release

### **ECLT reaffirms commitment to finding collaborative solutions in the fight against child labour in agriculture**

Geneva, 9 October 2017 -- The Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation, welcomes the open letter from TOAWUM to the International Labour Organization (ILO) governing body. The points raised on the situation in the tobacco value chain are critical to the on-going conversation on human rights in Malawi. We further acknowledge the concerns raised on ILO public-private partnerships with the industry and strongly advocate that the ILO continues to pursue its lawful mandate to support the hundreds of thousands of farmers in Malawi in realising their fundamental principles and rights at work.

As a partner in the fight against child labour in Malawi, TOAWUM embodies an empowering, rights-based approach to improve the lives of children and farmers in Malawi's tobacco-growing communities. The ECLT Foundation finds value in this approach, and is committed to supporting all avenues of collaboration through tri-partite dialogues on child labour, which promise to deliver stronger national policies that benefit all children. ECLT's current work with the ILO to promote safer farming and to strengthen social dialogue advances the development of solutions against child labour in agriculture and fully aligns with TOAWUM's desire to work 'within and through the ILO to foster conditions of decent work' in Malawi.

Collective action, by the Malawi government, the trade unions, farmers, civil society organisations and employers alike, cannot be underestimated in bringing about sustainable change towards the eradication of child labour in tobacco agriculture. The situations faced by children and families in tobacco-growing communities in Malawi are extremely difficult and, indeed, endemic poverty among Malawi's farmers is factually widespread. The ECLT Foundation combats this through implementing area-based child labour interventions, which have reached over 420,000 children, farmers and family members in Malawi since 2011, and through an on-going commitment to support social dialogue among Malawi's stakeholders. Critical to the success of these actions, the ECLT Foundation acknowledges and promotes the full realisation of the ILO *Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, which is enshrined in [the ECLT Members' Pledge of Commitment](#).

Our commitment to the children and families of Malawi is unwavering. The assertion that the ECLT Foundation is a charity program focusing on the issues the industry has on its agenda, rather than on local farmers is unwarranted and factually incorrect. With 15 years of experience in combatting the root causes of child labour in Malawi and over \$20 million dollars invested to develop and strengthen Malawi's social infrastructure, the ECLT Foundation stands by our results. Our direct partnerships with the National Association of Smallholder Farmers of Malawi [NASFAM] and Tobacco Association of Malawi [TAMA] have enabled more than 30,000 farmers in Malawi to gain needed access to safety and health training since 2015. At the community level, [our partner-focused efforts \[since 2011\]](#) have meant that over 190,000 community members have gained awareness on child labour issues, resulting in over 80,000 children being removed from child labour and 14,000 households acquiring the resources they need to help keep their children out of fields and in school.

To multiply our impact, ECLT prioritises social dialogue as being critical to the long-term sustainability of our efforts in the field and reaffirms our commitment to work with government, social partners, and other agricultural sectors in Malawi to find collaborative solutions in the fight against child labour. In 2012, ECLT supported the Government of Malawi to lay a blueprint for success through the first tri-partite plus, multi-stakeholder [National Conference on Child Labour in Agriculture](#). The conference captured the collective will of the national stakeholders to eliminate child labour in agriculture and continues to provide a ‘living roadmap’ for realizing the rights of children in Malawi.

There is still significant work to be done to secure the rights of children and farmers in Malawi. It is our hope that the Governing Body will uphold the ILO’s lawful mandate to “advance opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work” and ensure that we continue to promote collective action to make a better life for children in tobacco-growing communities.

“As a committed stakeholder in the fight against child labour, in Malawi and globally, ECLT wants to engage with all actors working against child labour and promoting decent work,” said ECLT Executive Director, David Hammond. “In every country where ECLT operates, we must be accountable to the children and families making their living in tobacco agriculture. We will continue to collaborate in a transparent way so our work represents their interests.”

#### **For further information:**

Created in 2000, the **Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation** is a global leader in preventing child labour in tobacco agriculture, and improving the lives of children in tobacco-growing areas. The Foundation brings together the stakeholders of the tobacco supply chain, including its largest group, the growers, along with leaf suppliers and manufacturers, to leverage impact. With the adoption of the Pledge of Commitment and Minimum Requirements on combatting child labour by member companies in 2014, ECLT promotes and advances responsible business practices that are in line with international standards.

The ECLT Foundation strengthens communities, advocates for improved policies and advances research so that tobacco-growing communities can both benefit from agriculture and ensure health, education and safety for their children.



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