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International Labour Organization

YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN NORTH AFRICA (YENA) CONFERENCE

26/27 SEPTEMBER 2017, GENEVA

INFORMATION NOTE

The ILO is convening in Geneva, on 26 & 27 September 2017, the high-level representatives of Governments, Workers and Employers Organizations from North Africa, as well as of the development partners, to discuss the subject of youth and employment.

The social and political upheavals in some countries in North Africa at the turn of the 2000s were the expression of a youthful population demanding a greater role in society and in the economy. Since then, *development agendas across the region have re-centred around employment and decent work*. Significant progress has been achieved on the economic and social fronts, as well as for the advancement of fundamental rights and freedoms at work.

A lot still needs to be done, and North African governments and social partners are aware of the challenges. The youth unemployment rate in North Africa remains the highest globally. This was already true at the turn of the 2000s and despite a decade of relatively high growth (approx. 5%). Since then, youth have taken the brunt of the economic slump that followed the global financial crisis and transitions in some North African countries. Today youth unemployment in the region is about five points above 2011 levels. One third of active young persons are unemployed, and another third is underemployed or in highly precarious employment as jobs that are created are often in informal, low-value-added activities. The economic participation of women in the region continues to be the lowest in the world. Such a job crisis has all too clear implications on socio-political stability or irregular migration flows.

With the (notable) exception of Libya, Governments in North Africa have however been able to move past emergency and short-term responses, and a window of opportunity has opened for substantial reforms in favour of more inclusive and job-rich growth.

Purpose

The event will allow Governments, social partners, key technical and financial partners and the ILO to:

- Assess achievements and progress made for decent work in North Africa
- Review the context, current and prospective challenges and opportunities;
- Learn from the youth themselves: success stories, priorities and challenges;
- Ascertain strategic directions for development cooperation and technical assistance; and
- Adopt a Roadmap for Youth Employment in North Africa.

The Conference will review the situation of youth in North Africa from the different facets of employment, social protection, participation and rights. Governments will present the key results they've achieved, and reflect in a tripartite context on the key priorities for the future. Since 2011, the ILO has accompanied efforts in North Africa by delivering high-end technical assistance, testing new intervention models, and building institutional capacities. The Conference will be an opportunity for the ILO to account for all the work done, including with generous development partner support and look ahead strategically.

The Conference will be called upon to adopt a Roadmap for Youth Employment in North Africa for the coming 5 years. This initiative ties in with global efforts, including as part of the implementation of SDG 8, the Global Initiative for Action on Decent Jobs for Youth, the African Development Banks' "Jobs for Youth in Africa" initiative, the National Employment Dialogue in Tunisia, or the National Youth Employment Programme in Egypt.

A roadshow to selected development partner capitals will be organized following the event for selected representatives from Governments, as well as of workers and employers from North Africa. It will allow to follow-up on the Roadmap and further expand partnerships.

In the lead-up to the Conference, ILO focal points have been designated to extend any assistance as may be required; do not hesitate to get in touch for more information and other requests.

ILO Focal Points	
Algeria	Roland Sarton, sarton@ilo.org
Egypt	Lobna Kassim, kassim@ilo.org
Morocco	Samia Ouzgane, ouzgane@ilo.org
Tunisia	Nawel Marzouki, marzouki@ilo.org
Mauritania	Federico Barroeta, barroeta@ilo.org
Sudan	Dereje Alemu, alemu@ilo.org