

Decent Work Country Programme in Syria 2008-2010

The International Labour Organization (ILO) through its Regional Office for Arab States is launching Decent Work Country Programme for Syria through an official ceremony and the participation of the tripartite organizations – Government, Workers and Employers on Wednesday 13 February 2008.

This ceremony will take place under the patronage H.E Mr. Mohammed Naji Otari, Syrian Prime Minister, and in the presence H.E. Dr. Diala El Haj Aaref, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour in Syria, and Ms. Nada Al Nashif Regional Director, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, and Mr. Imad Ghraywati, President Chamber of Industry of Damascus and its Suburbs, and Mr. Mohamed Shaaban El Azzouz, President General Federation for Trade Union, and Ms. Lina Mousa, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria.

This ceremony will take place during the opening of the ILO work shop “Promote Social Dialogue and Tripartism in Syria” that is taking place from 13 to 14 February 2008.

The purpose of this Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) is to ensure a coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to reduce decent work deficits in Syria, based on a set of identified and agreed priorities between the ILO and its constituents. The DWCP is a strategic and operational framework for ILO's interventions and expresses the common commitment of the Government, Workers' and Employers' organization and the ILO to collaborate on specific objectives aimed at ensuring opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

The document defines the priorities based on an analysis of the labour issues and identifies results to be achieved and strategies for implementation during (2008 -2010) It has been developed within the context of a coherent United Nations support to complement the national efforts to achieve national development goals.

The DWCP was designed based on extensive tripartite consultations with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the social partners. Early in the planning process, the ILO acknowledged that the DWCP could only be valuable if it is based on broad consultation process – Ministries of Economy, Education, Higher Education, State Planning commission, Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, Central Bureau of Statistics - UN organizations, EU, GTZ, and NGO's – to make sure that their voices and expertise shape the ILO DWCP from 2008-2010. The ILO reviewed the status of pending key issues within the context of the on-going TC programme, and reflected the new priorities of the constituents and other line ministries' strategic plans.

The Syrian government presented the 10th Five-Year Plan for 2006-2010 as the blueprint for comprehensive economic and social reform and transition from a centrally planned to a 'social market economy'. According to the Plan, the Government is introducing a comprehensive set of measures to transform the country into one with an efficient, open market economy. The Government recognizes that, to be successful, reforms need to cover all areas of the economy, and in the short term not all segments of society will benefit equally. The Government intends to proceed vigorously with reforms that are needed in order to realize its vision for the future; it recognizes that such a fundamental transformation cannot be achieved in five years. In addition to the 20-year vision and the comprehensive strategy that will be prepared for each sector, the plan has medium targets of

10-15 years, aligned with the MDGs. The Ten Five-Year Plan introduce a focused commitment to the empowerment of private sector and civil society organizations in the national development Agenda as a means to achieving increased citizen' participation in socio-economic development, empowering communities and enhancing social responsibility.

Since Syria joined the ILO in 1961, it has ratified 49 conventions, especially the ILO eight core conventions and they are:

Convention No. 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138, and 182).

Based on several missions and discussions the ILO officials held with the constituents and other stakeholders to identify country programme priorities, the priority areas of ILO focus were identified to "Contribute to poverty alleviation through creation of decent work with a focus on young man and women". These constitute three important areas of development focus and are very well articulated in the 10th five year development plan and they are:

1. Improve the capacity of tripartite constituents to implement labour policies and legislation.

- Labour market governance and compliance with DECLARATION and ILS improved through strengthened labour administration.
- Policies and mechanisms for social dialogue improved and legal framework strengthened.

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3. Increase employment opportunities

- Strengthened capacities of national partners for the development, monitoring and evaluation of a national employment strategy.
- Conducive business environment targeting Syria youth and women fostered.

4. Enhance social protection

- Improved capacity of government and social partners to strengthen social security policy making and administration and to improve the access to adequate level of social protection to all workers and their families, including those in the informal economy.
- Increased capacity of government and social partners to address Worst forms of child labour, including girl child.

The DWCP components will be fully integrated in the national strategies and development plans, ensuring centrality of ILS, Gender, social protection, tripartism and social dialogue. The support and assistance to the Government and its social partners in the priority areas identified, and in achievement of the outcomes of this DWCP, will be through a coordinated multi-component approach, based on current national priorities and ILO comparative advantage. Progress towards decent work requires both in-depth work on each of its different dimensions and an integrated approach that brings these dimensions together in a coherent and consistent policy framework.