



International Labour Organization
Regional Office for Arab States

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For immediate release

Combating HIV/AIDS in the workplace in Syria

ILO raises awareness on HIV/AIDS and the world of work in Syria

Beirut (ILO News) – Syria is striving to combat HIV/AIDS through the workplace this year, with the launch of an awareness campaign for decision-makers in employers' organizations, trade unions, and government institutions.

The International Labour Organization is organizing four seminars in Damascus (March 1), Lattakia (March 3), Aleppo (March 9) and Homs (March 10) to explore the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Participating institutions include the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Federation of Chambers of Industry, and the General Federation of Trade Unions. More than seventy employers' and seventy workers' representatives are set to benefit.

"It is important to address HIV/AIDS in the workplace due to its far-reaching impacts on the economic and social fabric of society," said Dr. Hussein Ahmed Secretary of Health Affairs of the General Federation of Trade Unions. "HIV/AIDS can negatively impact productivity, skills development, and fundamental rights at work, especially when associated with stigmatization and discrimination."

The ILO is working with its tripartite partners to integrate work-related HIV/AIDS concerns into Syria's National Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS 2011-2015, developed by the Ministry of Health's Directorate of Chronic and Communicable Diseases. The Action Plan also aims to facilitate the implementation of the ILO Recommendation Concerning HIV/AIDS and the World Work (No. 200), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2010.

"Employers should contribute to the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace," said Faisal al-Ghazi, a board member of the Damascus Chamber of Industry. "In partnership with government institutions and trade unions, we must put in place measures to stop discriminatory practices and to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS on enterprises and local communities."

The new international labour standard emphasizes the role of the world of work in universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and contains provisions on potentially life-saving prevention programmes and anti-discrimination measures at the national and workplace levels. Moreover it highlights the significance of employment and income-generating activities for workers and people living with HIV.

"This is an important step in addressing HIV/AIDS workplace issues in Syria and the region," said ILO Regional Director for the Arab States Nada al-Nashif. "By

applying international labour standards to the National Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS, Syria can more effectively prevent the spread of the epidemic, expand prevention strategies, mitigate its impacts and protect the rights of those affected.”

Syria has ratified a total of 50 ILO Conventions, including all eight fundamental Conventions. The ILO is working with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and social partners to implement the Decent Work Country Programme for Syria – launched in 2008.

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