

**FOR DEBATE AND GUIDANCE**

SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Implementation of the Global
Employment Agenda: An update**

1. As agreed at the last ESP session the Global Employment Agenda (GEA) updates would report on the following: (i) review of country experiences including individual country presentations by policy-makers and the social partners along the modalities decided upon in its discussions in March 2006;¹ and (ii) regular reports on progress in the four priority areas identified in the “vision” document,² namely making employment central in economic and social policy-making, youth employment, the informal economy and meeting the special needs of Africa.
2. As these implementation updates rotate with country presentations, it would be helpful to present them in a format which allows the Committee to better monitor on a regular basis the progress being made as regards each of these items. The suggested format which is adopted in this paper is to divide the implementation report into four parts: the first on activities and experiences in making employment central in economic and social policy-making (global, regional and national level); the second on youth employment; the third on the informal economy; and the fourth on meeting the special needs of Africa.

**I. Making employment central in economic
and social policy-making****(a) Global****(i) *United Nations Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC) High-Level Segment Substantive
Session, July 2006***

3. The outcome of the ECOSOC high-level segment held in Geneva in July 2006 was a major step by the international community to commit themselves to making full and productive

¹ GB.295/ESP/1/3.

² GB.295/ESP/1/1.

employment and decent work a fundamental component of any development strategy. A separate report has been prepared by the Office on this meeting, its significance and follow-up within the ILO, and in the United Nations and multilateral system.³ The aim here is to bring out some of its implications for the implementation of the GEA, as the employment pillar of decent work.

4. It is important to mention that within the overall support provided by the ILO for this meeting, the work carried out by the ILO in developing the strategic framework of the GEA and lessons from country experiences in its implementation made an important contribution to the deliberations at both the preparatory meetings and the meetings and round tables held at the ECOSOC high level segment. At the preparatory meeting, the GEA framework (a one pager), its core elements and policy tools were presented and discussed.⁴ The session, which had on its panel the Secretary of Social Affairs, Brazil, and representatives of the IMF, the World Bank, ICFTU and the South Centre, and was chaired by the Executive Director of the Employment Sector, discussed the close link between poverty reduction and creation of productive and decent employment, and there was general agreement that economic growth which does not lead to employment generation and creation of decent work will not deliver on its own poverty reduction and development objectives.
5. At the high-level segment of ECOSOC, Ambassador Fernando, Permanent Representative of the Government of Sri Lanka (and Chairperson of the ESP Committee) described how the ILO is working to translate the decent work vision into concrete national employment strategies through decent work country programmes. She outlined the adoption of the Global Employment Agenda and the operational tools, checklist of key policy areas and specific instruments that have been developed as part of the GEA to prioritize employment concerns in policy-making. She hoped that with such policy tools in hand the deliberations in ECOSOC will result in mainstreaming the Decent Work Agenda throughout the international system.
6. Some of the important initiatives discussed during the meetings and conclusions adopted included:
 - making employment creation an explicit goal in macroeconomic and social policies and fully embedded in poverty reduction strategies (PRs) and other national development plans;
 - the need to invest more resources in developing labour market information systems;
 - the need to develop guidelines for conducting assessments of the formulation, implementation and impact of policies for generating decent employment;
 - adopt policies to increase productivity in the agricultural sector and upgrade the informal economy;
 - strengthening and empowering intermediary institutions for private sector development;

³ See GB.297/WP/SDG/1.

⁴ Background papers prepared for the preparatory meeting and high-level segment with ILO technical support can be accessed at the ECOSOC web site. The GEA and its framework are discussed in the issues note on “Growth and employment: Creating a national environment conducive to full employment and decent work” (see <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/hls2006>).

- recognizing that fair globalization requires fair rules, including full respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, for international trade and investment.
7. The ECOSOC high level segment and the Ministerial Declaration has built a very solid platform for ILO action within the United Nations system and the multilateral system as a whole. The work being conducted, including planned efforts to better operationalize and evaluate the implementation of the GEA, could be extremely relevant to give practical shape to these initiatives.

(ii) *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

8. A new international treaty – a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities – was agreed in New York on 25 August 2006, following several years of negotiations. While not creating new rights, the Convention prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life and requires States parties to ensure and promote the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons of disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disabilities. The Convention marks a fundamental shift in thinking about disability issues from an approach which treated disabled persons in segregation to an inclusive approach, emphasizing participation in all aspects and sectors of society. Several of the articles in the new Convention – in particular those dealing with work and employment, vocational training, social protection and international monitoring – are of specific relevance to the ILO. The Convention was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly at its session in September 2006.
9. The ILO was actively involved in the process of developing the Convention, with the collaboration, in particular, of the Skills and Employability Department within the Employment Sector, NORMES, Social Dialogue, Social Security and the Bureau of Statistics. The underlying principles of the new Convention are very much in line with those promoted by the ILO and the Convention will give new impetus to the advocacy of ILO Convention No. 159 concerning vocational training and employment of disabled persons. The Convention reinforces the ILO's Global Employment Agenda, and the broader ILO Decent Work Agenda, through its emphasis on ending discrimination against persons with disabilities in the labour market, and protecting their right to just and favourable conditions of work. The implementation of the new Convention at national level will be an important element of decent work country programmes. The ILO has been preparing the way for the rights-based approach to disability legislation through the support provided to constituents in developing and implementing effective laws and policies concerning the employability and employment of persons with disabilities.⁵ A United Nations inter-agency mechanism will be established in the coming months to coordinate collaboration between United Nations agencies in the implementation of the Convention and the development of a system-wide integrated strategy for mainstreaming a disability perspective in all aspects of the human rights and development agenda.

⁵ GB.295/ESP/2.

(b) Regional**(i) *The Bucharest process: Country reviews of employment policy (CREP)***

10. Within the framework of the Bucharest Declaration adopted at the South-East European (SEE) Ministerial Conference on Employment (Bucharest, 30-31 October 2003),⁶ the ILO together with the Council of Europe is providing strategic guidance to the Stability Pact (SP) countries of SEE and support to the regional cooperation effort to address the employment challenges faced by these countries. The ministers of labour of the SP countries approve and update the objectives of this cooperation and the activities are designed and supervised by a permanent high-level committee composed of the general directors of employment and representatives of national employment services.
11. The Office's engagement in the Bucharest process is an example of how the ILO is contributing to the implementation of the core elements of the GEA in an integrated manner. One of the core elements of the GEA relates to the contribution of labour market institutions and policies in ensuring successful labour market adjustment as the pace of globalization, technological change and competition accelerates. The country reviews of employment policy (CREP), which are prepared on the basis of the national reports produced by the relevant ministry of labour in cooperation with the national employment services, are the main outputs of this process.
12. The CREPs provide a thorough review of, and recommendations on, labour market structures, policies and institutions. These recommendations are then discussed and adopted at national tripartite conferences organized by the ILO, as the promotion of social dialogue is a crucial component of the process. The recommendations can be used for strengthening labour market institutions and making their employment and labour market policies more coherent and effective within the framework of an integrated policy approach. Particular emphasis is placed on gender equality issues, especially in developing strategies aimed at mainstreaming gender in employment policies. Other important activities such as capacity building, training and peer reviews have also been developed by the ILO.
13. The SP countries of SEE for which CREPs have been conducted are Albania, Croatia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are under review and Bosnia and Herzegovina is planned for 2007.⁷ Bulgaria and Romania have not submitted to a review of employment policy as they have already prepared joint assessment papers for the European Commission. Their experience is particularly helpful for the peer review and the two countries actively participate in the process.

⁶ The Bucharest Declaration. South-East European Ministerial Conference on Employment (SEE EC) Bucharest, 30-31 October 2003. Improving Employment in South Eastern Europe. http://www.stabilitypact.org/soc-cohesion/documents/055-bucharestdeclaration-forministers_000.doc.

⁷ See ILO-CoE (2006): "Employment policy review: Albania", Strasbourg, Council of Europe and ILO-CoE (2006): "Employment policy review: Croatia", Strasbourg, Council of Europe. For other countries the reports are forthcoming.

14. The experience of the Republic of Moldova⁸ illustrates how the system works. The Moldova CREP was presented at the fourth meeting of the permanent high-level committee in Budapest in September 2005. It was adopted by constituents at a National Tripartite Conference (NTC) that took place in Chisinau, Moldova, 20 March 2006.
15. The NTC included 60 participants from the Government, Confederation of Trade Unions, Confederation of Free Trade Unions “Solidaritate”, National Confederation of Employers Organizations as well as NGOs and international organizations. The NTC benefited from the presence and active participation of Mr. Sergiu Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Economy and Trade of the Republic of Moldova.
16. The recommendations of the NTC must be viewed as an important part of the national effort to create a coherent and integrated framework for employment policy development in line with the GEA, its principles especially social dialogue and ending discrimination in the labour market, and its core elements with special emphasis on core elements 6 and 7. Specific recommendations included: the importance of the economic framework to promote employment growth; the need to improve the vocational education system and the importance of involving both employers and workers; the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment; the importance of the recently adopted law on a tripartite commission which will improve the quality of social dialogue in the country; and the need to promote equality between women and men.
17. The Moldovan Government has expressed its interest in implementing the CREP recommendations and both the Council of Europe and the ILO have expressed their willingness to assist in the implementation process.
18. In addition, on 11-12 September 2006, the Office supported the Government of Turkey in organizing a meeting in Istanbul with 14 South-East European countries where the “Istanbul Declaration on Integrated and Coherent Employment Strategies” was adopted. This Declaration provides a comprehensive framework and a renewed political commitment in these countries to put employment and decent work at the centre of economic and social policies.

(ii) ILO Regional Meetings: Sixteenth American Regional Meeting, Brasilia, May 2006, and Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting, Busan, 29 August-1 September 2006

19. Separate reports are being presented to the Governing Body on ILO Regional Meetings for the Americas and Asia held earlier this year and are not discussed in this paper.⁹ It is important, however, to emphasize that the background reports, discussions and conclusions adopted at both these meetings brought into sharp focus the employment challenge facing both these regions and a strong commitment to undertake concerted efforts for the generation of decent work to overcome them.
20. The Americas Regional Meeting stressed the importance of the “five challenges” to decent work in the region identified in the report presented by the Director-General to the meeting which are at the heart of the GEA, namely: (i) ensuring that economic growth promotes decent work; (ii) ensuring effective application of fundamental principles and rights at

⁸ ILO-CoE (2006): “Employment policy review: Republic of Moldova”, Strasbourg, Council of Europe (forthcoming).

⁹ See GB.297/5 and GB.297/6.

work; (iii) building confidence in democracy and social dialogue; (iv) extending and strengthening systems for prevention and for social protection of workers; and (v) enhancing social and labour inclusion to reduce inequality. The meeting considered of special importance the policies proposed that encourage growth of enterprises and the generation of more and better jobs, especially for youth and women and the formalization of the informal economy. With the aim of promoting decent work and contributing to the reduction of poverty over the next ten years (2006-15) the meeting proposed that policies contained in the Director-General's Report should guide the development policies of countries in the region.

21. The Asian Regional Meeting resolved to ensure that Asia continues to provide global policy leadership in making decent work for all a central objective of its relevant national, regional and international policies as well as its national development strategies. It committed itself to an Asian Decent Work Decade for the period up to 2015 during which it will make a concerted and sustained effort to realize decent work in all countries in their diverse continent. The priorities identified for national action for realizing full and productive employment and decent work covered the core elements of the GEA. The meeting also explicitly asked for ILO assistance in the development of national policies based on the GEA.

(c) National: Learning from country experiences

22. The focus of ILO support to the implementation of the GEA is concentrated at the national level where the most concrete results of its efforts as part of the ILO's decent work country programmes can be realized. In its report at the November 2005 session,¹⁰ the Office identified the countries (25) in which the GEA framework had been used since its adoption in March 2003 on developing or in the process of developing comprehensive employment strategies.
23. To achieve greater focus, learn from experience and demonstrate the validity of the ILO's integrated approaches to employment creation as the "vision" document pointed out, the next phase of implementation has started under a phased approach with a limited number of countries. Although this would not exclude working with other countries, it would mean that the intensity of work in focus countries will be higher, a critical mass in a number of interdependent issues would be achieved and progress will be more closely monitored and lessons explicitly drawn. The countries reported on below are focus countries.

Burkina Faso: Developing a national employment policy

24. Employment is a national priority and central to the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in Burkina Faso. The President placed it as a central element of his programme, its promotion is an explicit objective of the PRSP and of UNDAF, and a national action plan for the follow-up to the Ouagadougou Declaration has been formulated.
25. Burkina Faso is a landlocked country of about 12 million inhabitants with a narrow natural resource base and significant vulnerability to external shocks. Poverty headcount, using a national poverty line, was 46 per cent in 2003 with 95 per cent of the poor living in rural areas. The labour market is characterized by high labour force participation, high underemployment and low labour productivity. Agriculture is the dominant sector, which

¹⁰ GB.294/ESP/1.

provides employment to 85 per cent of the working-age population. The share of formal employment is less than 5 per cent and urban employment is mostly informal. The quality of human capital is poor, marked by low literacy and high morbidity rates. The issues of gender inequalities and child labour are also prominent.

26. Burkina Faso has achieved macroeconomic stability in recent years despite a volatile external environment. Tight fiscal and monetary policies have maintained a low level of inflation, anchored by the fixed exchange rate peg represented by the CFA franc. Economic growth has remained relatively robust, averaging a growth rate of 5.6 per cent since 1994. But the Government of Burkina Faso is concerned that the sustained economic growth of recent years has not resulted in sufficient poverty reduction. It has come to recognize the central role of employment as the key link between economic growth and poverty reduction and is therefore developing labour market policies and programmes that could lead to better-paid jobs and higher incomes.
27. It is in this context that the ILO worked closely with the Ministry of Youth and Employment and the social partners to revise the 2001 National Employment Policy (NEP). The revised policy will provide a vision and the framework for all national interventions in the field of employment. It has four strategic objectives:
 - create a link between the employment policy and other national policies; the point here is to clarify the linkages that the NEP must have with macroeconomic as well as sectoral policies and to show their potential contribution to employment creation and the improvement of job quality (GEA core elements 1 and 4);
 - reinforce the dynamics of employment creation; this concerns actions to increase job demand and is therefore targeted on specific levers that generate employment and improve job quality that must either be dynamized or promoted. Issues of the urban informal employment are discussed here, mainly through interventions targeted at micro-enterprises and self-employment (GEA core elements 5 and 7);
 - improve employability; this concerns actions on the demand for jobs that aims at improving through vocational and technical training, access to employment as well as productive capacities of those already employed in order to generate higher incomes and additional jobs (GEA core elements 2 and 6);
 - improve the organization and the functioning of the labour market; the rationale is to better master the labour market to make it play a more positive role in accessing employment and taking decent work into consideration (GEA core element 7).
28. The formulation of this new employment policy is participative with formal and informal consultations with technical ministries, employers' associations and trade unions. A final version of the NEP accompanied by an action plan for its implementation would be ready by the end of September 2006 on the basis of inputs from all actors. A tripartite validation seminar is scheduled for 26 October 2006. The Minister of Youth and Employment will then submit this policy document to the Government for approval on 15 November 2006 so as to start implementation as early as January 2007.
29. The ILO's objective in Burkina Faso is to improve the coherence of policy interventions in the employment field. Emphasis is therefore placed on policy coherence with the PRSP, the Ouagadougou action plan, the MDGs, the conclusions of the African Finance Ministers' Conference and the President's programme. Efforts are being made to integrate the strategy with the PRSP priority action plan (PAP) as this is the only way the strategy can be financed. The ILO has therefore encouraged collaboration between the Ministry of Youth and Employment, the Ministry of Economy and Development in charge of formulating the PAP and the Finance Ministry in charge of financing matters relating to

the PRSP, to further this objective. All parties are showing willingness to work together and are now well aware of the issues at stake.

30. The ILO is also working with the World Bank to ensure a comprehensive integration of employment into the PRSP PAP. It has provided inputs as well as extensive comments on the World Bank labour market review paper. While there remain important divergences on a number of issues and in the respective approaches of the ILO and the World Bank on labour market issues, collaboration is continuing to try to resolve these issues so as to come up with a coherent set of employment and labour market policies to operationalize the employment objective in the PRSP. The ILO also closely worked with UNDP to formulate the UNDAF for 2006-10, which has employment promotion as one of its objectives. A detailed project document was formulated by the ILO on employment and training policies and work is in progress for its implementation.
31. With the formulation of the NEP, employment should take a wider dimension in the next PRSP round in terms of objectives and intensity of interventions.

Liberia: Emergency Employment and Employment Action Programme

32. As Liberia is settling in its first democracy after 14 years of conflict, the creation of employment is seen as the most crucial building block in achieving social progress, economic growth and human security. From a pre-conflict middle-level income country, Liberia has become a post-conflict State in which 75 per cent lives below the poverty line of US\$1 a day with half the population living on less than US\$0.5 per day. Urgent job creation – especially for young people who make up the bulk of the unemployed and are often ex-combatants – is a central element of the recovery strategy. It is also at the centre of the ILO's decent work country programme which is expected to take full shape in the coming years with the active involvement of the Government and the social partners.
33. The Government, with the assistance of the ILO, has established an explicit strategy for employment, which draws upon the Strategic Policy Framework of the GEA as presented in the "vision" document.¹¹ The Government strategy, which was launched in July 2006, starts from the premise of a phased and integrated approach. It combines short-term measures to create immediate jobs with the establishment of an enabling economic environment, over the medium term, that generates both sustainable and productive employment. To this end, the strategy outlines – in an integrated manner – five key initiatives, respectively aimed at: (i) boosting employment in public works investments; (ii) improving the availability of training services especially for young women and men while addressing the systemic shortcomings of the vocational education and training system; (iii) facilitating the upgrading of the informal economy and boosting the small and medium enterprise sector and cooperatives; (iv) strengthening the matching of supply and demand in the labour market through employment services and setting up a labour market information system for analysing and monitoring labour market developments; and (v) promoting social dialogue and strengthening labour administration.
34. As a short-term measure towards the implementation of the strategy, the Government, with ILO support, is implementing the Liberia Emergency Employment Programme (LEEP). The ILO is further supporting the Government in putting together a national public works

¹¹ See Government of Liberia: Employment Strategy for Decent Work in Liberia: Liberia Emergency Employment Programme (LEEP) and Liberia Employment Action Programme, Monrovia, 2006. (Prepared with the assistance of the ILO and based on consultations held at workshop in Geneva and Monrovia in June 2006.)

programme for the next six to 12 months financed through domestic and donor funding. This programme which aims to create 70,000 jobs (of on average six months duration) will benefit in particular young people. In this context, a LEEP unit has also been established with the support of the ILO. The unit operates under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour but works in close coordination with other relevant ministries and has the responsibility to ensure coordination on job-creation measures, maximizing employment creation in infrastructure projects and other investment programmes, and to promote planning and integration of various employment-creation programmes. Local structures will be closely involved as the implementation of the strategy will take place primarily at local level.

35. The emergency and medium-term employment measures have been integrated into the interim-PRSP which has a separate chapter entitled “Working out of poverty” which was prepared by the ILO for the Government.¹² This chapter examines the employment situation within the existing macro and budgetary situation and recognizes that while in the medium term, the private sector must be the main engine of job creation, the public sector will need to play an important role in job generation in the immediate short-run. The integration of employment issues in the interim-PRSP will now ensure that donor assistance to employment creation will be an integral part of the poverty reduction strategy.

Pakistan: Employment and Skills Forum

36. The ILO has provided support over the past few years under the GEA implementation process to the Government and the social partners in developing an integrated employment strategy which has been reflected in the PRSPs and the Medium-Term Development Framework (2005-10).
37. The tripartite Pakistan Employment and Skills Forum jointly organized by the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis and the ILO in Islamabad in April 2006, must be seen as part of this process. The Forum addressed some of the emerging challenges the country faces with the economy generating high economic growth rates in the past three years. While economic growth has resulted in a decline in poverty and unemployment, there is growing concern on the quality of new jobs being created and emerging skills shortages which are constraining future growth especially in the manufacturing and export sector and reducing the country’s competitiveness in the global economy.
38. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Shaukat Aziz, in his inaugural address emphasized the importance of developing a highly skilled and competitive workforce to meet the challenges of globalization and that his Government was giving the highest priority to this area which had been neglected in the past. He asked for ILO support in this endeavour as part of the Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme especially for the newly set-up National Technical Education and Vocational Training Commission (NAVTEC). Mr. Ashraf Tabbani, President, Employers’ Federation of Pakistan, stressed that while recent employment and labour market trends indicated that unemployment has gone down, unemployment was still a pervasive issue and youth unemployment was particularly an area of concern. He said that his Federation was fully committed to all policies and programmes of the Government that seek to promote decent employment and develop technical skills and vocational education. Mr. Khurshid Ahmed, General Secretary, Pakistan Workers’ Federation, made an impassioned plea to the Prime Minister

¹² Republic of Liberia: “Interim poverty reduction strategy” (draft), 13 July 2006.

to protect wages of workers in the face of high inflation and provide improved working conditions and higher welfare benefits.¹³

39. The ILO had prepared a substantive and comprehensive background paper for the Forum based on the GEA strategic framework which analysed linkages between macro developments and sectoral policies with recent employment and labour market developments.¹⁴ The Forum which covered key employment, skills and labour market issues including gender mainstreaming and poverty reduction through skills development came up with a number of concrete recommendations. These were then translated into a plan of action jointly by the Ministry of Labour and the ILO.

40. The plan of action, which drew on a comprehensive and substantive background paper prepared by the ILO for the Forum using the GEA strategic framework, covers the following areas:

- Strengthening vocational and technical competence of the workforce: this includes support to the newly set-up National Vocational Education and Vocational Training Commission (NAVTEC) to develop a demand-driven national skills development strategy, establish skills standards, certification and accreditation and strengthening apprenticeship training including through upscaling the TREE methodology (GEA core element 6).
- Accelerating employment, income and productivity growth for creating decent work and poverty reduction: this includes measures to stimulate growth in high labour absorption sectors, establishing “growth triangles” through village clusters, analyse and establish growth, employment poverty linkages and strengthen capacity in the planning commission to monitor and analyse employment intensity of growth (GEA core elements 4 and 10).
- Employment and labour market monitoring, analysis and feedback: this includes analysis of the labour market to support the implementation of the employment strategy in the DWCP, Medium-Term Development Framework (2005-10) and PRSP II (GEA core element 7).
- Active labour market policies: includes measures for the productive reabsorption of workers displaced through restructuring and privatization of state-owned-enterprises, developing public employment services and support for women’s entrepreneurship development (GEA core elements 5 and 7).
- Setting up of an efficient, equitable and rights-based labour market regulatory framework: covers review of minimum wages and proposing extension to rural workers (GEA core element 7).

II. Youth employment

41. The work in this priority area will follow the strategic orientation defined in the ILC 2005 “Conclusions on promoting pathways to decent work for youth”. A particular focus will be

¹³ It should be mentioned here that the Government in the June 2006 annual budget announced a major increase in the minimum wages as well as a number of measures to enhance social welfare benefits for workers.

¹⁴ ILO (2006): “Pakistan – Employment strategies and labour market policies: Interlinkages with macro and sectoral policies”, ILO, Islamabad.

to support countries and constituents in the development and implementation of national action plans for youth employment and to continue ILO engagement in the Youth Employment Network.

42. A detailed report on youth employment is being separately presented to the Committee at this session which includes an update of activities.¹⁵ The activities are not elaborated here. However, future implementation reports would provide regular updates of ILO work on youth employment, including work as part of the Youth Employment Network.

III. Informal economy

43. Work in this area will follow up on the resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2002 and the work being undertaken under the Infocus Initiative on the Informal Economy in the current biennium is co-managed by the Employment and Social Protection Sectors and aims to bring together the work being conducted across the ILO technical and field units. A detailed report will be presented to the ESP Committee at its March 2007 session and therefore it is not being elaborated upon here. Future reports will include updates on progress.

IV. Meeting the special needs of Africa

Follow-up to the African Union Extraordinary Summit

44. In the ILO's work in Africa, particular priority is being given to the follow-up on the African Union Extraordinary Summit Plan of Action for Promotion of Employment and Poverty Alleviation, 2004. Close work between the field structure in Africa and headquarters has resulted in the preparation of an operational framework to link ILO-supported activities with each of the 11 areas of the AU Summit Action Plan. This plan will be regularly updated and used as the basis for reporting on the follow-up to the Summit.
45. In its last GEA implementation update, the Office provided details of the support being provided to the AU Action Plan as related to particular priority areas, namely: youth employment (priority area 1); women's entrepreneurship (priority area 3); improved labour market information system (priority area 5); and making employment central in policy-making (priority area 10). In this update, two priority areas are reported on, namely the promotion of the agricultural sector and rural development, sustainable management of the environment for food security and development of support infrastructure (priority area 2); and utilizing key sectors with high employment potential to generate jobs and to allocate adequate resources (priority area 7). Further elaboration on the support provided by the ILO to the implementation of the AU Action Plan will be done around the Director-General's Report to the African Regional Conference in 2007.
46. Given that the majority of the working population in Africa are employed in the rural areas, the need to increase both productivity and productive labour absorption in this sector is vital for poverty alleviation. A large part of the ILO's support programme for this sector is carried out through its cooperatives and employment-intensive investment programmes. The former includes promoting self-employment and group entrepreneurship through cooperatives in rural areas in Senegal, Mali and Mauritania (*Force/Lutte Contre la*

¹⁵ GB.297/ESP/4.

Pauvreté project) and through saving and credit cooperatives in Chad (funded by AfDB) and Burundi (UNDP). The latter covers Ethiopia and Lesotho (labour-based rural roads construction and maintenance), Somalia (multi-donor community-based employment-intensive infrastructure programme) and Zambia (capacity and institution building).

47. Identification of key sectors with high-employment potential and providing support to their development while ensuring their efficiency and competitiveness is now being increasingly recognized as a central component of an employment strategy not only in Africa but in most developing countries. The ILO's support for this is concentrated on the development of small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) and of increasing employment-intensity of the public sector infrastructure development plans. The former includes activities at the regional level for the Maghreb region, French-speaking Africa (SIYB), southern and eastern Africa (SIYB and EYB) and southern Africa (enterprise-based competitiveness development). At the national level this includes Burundi (microfinance), Somalia (public-private partnership for waste management entrepreneurship), Uganda (business information services), Burkina-Faso (microassurance for micro entrepreneurs) and Zambia (business services and construction industry). The other major activities cover employment-intensive infrastructure investment programmes providing sectoral investment assessments and private sector capacity building (Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).¹⁶

Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

48. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development which was held in Ouagadougou, 10-15 May 2006, addressed the issue of meeting the employment challenge in Africa. The ILO participated and provided technical support to the ECA both at the experts' committee meeting which preceded the Conference and the ministerial conference as well as detailed comments on the background document prepared for the Conference.
49. The ministerial delegations reviewed initiatives since the Ouagadougou Summit and difficulties faced. While expressing concern that implementation had not so far been comprehensive and employment had still not adequately embedded in national development strategies, they recognized the major human, fiscal and institutional capacity constraints and made a number of proposals to further refine and accelerate implementation strategies at all levels.
50. These proposals outlined in the ministerial statement adopted by the Conference included the need to integrate the goal of decent employment in the design, implementation and monitoring of the second generation of PRSs, embedding employment criteria in investment promotion policies and recognizing the critical goal of government and the public sector on employment creation to improve the quality of public financial management, alongside the development of accurate statistical and information systems to monitor impact of policies. The ministerial statement also recognized the increased role and responsibility of the private sector in employment generation and the central role of the State in creating a conducive environment through measures covering infrastructure

¹⁶ For an in-depth analysis of the ILO's Employment-Intensive Investment Programme, see GB.297/PFA/2/2: "Independent evaluation of the ILO's strategy for employment-intensive investment".

improvement, elimination of costly regulations and public-private partnerships in skill development.

51. The statement also called for the establishment of a regional employment forum as a resource facility to assist developing capacity and facilitate sharing of country experiences. The forum is to be managed between ECA, ILO and other regional institutions, and this initiative would be an important contribution to meeting the special needs of Africa. The ILO has started discussions with the ECA on organizing the forum.

Strengthening ILO technical capacity in meeting the special needs of Africa

52. To strengthen the ILO's technical and managerial capacity to support efforts at the continental, regional and national level to meet the special needs of Africa, the Employment Sector has initiated a number of steps which included a workshop arranged jointly by the Employment Sector and the Africa Regional Office with the ILO employment specialists in Africa in Dakar, 27-28 June 2006.
53. A number of concrete steps were taken at this meeting. These included preparation of a matrix to strengthen the interface and linkages between the DWCPs, the AU Summit Plan of Action and the GEA implementation strategy as outlined in the "vision" document creating synergy and cohesiveness in technical support provided to manage increased demand and expectations within the limitations of human and financial resources through joint programming and implementation, strengthen the knowledge base and refine policy messages, jointly meet the resource mobilization challenge and strengthen working modalities with the social partners.

Conclusions

54. A major aim of the GEA, as the employment pillar of decent work, is to convert into concrete policies and actions the groundswell of commitments made in recent years at international forums and the national level, responding to harsh economic realities, to make full and productive employment and decent work central in economic and social policies and/or development strategy. The "vision" document which was received with considerable support at the ESP in March 2006 session serves as a strategic framework for the GEA to operationalize this objective.
55. Some of the key lessons which have emerged from this review and which would be built into or further reinforced in the GEA implementation strategy include the following:
- increasing realization at all levels (and strongly reflected at the ECOSOC high-level segment, July 2006, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, May 2006, and the ILO Regional Meetings for the Americas and Asia and the Pacific) of the need to take concrete steps and provide guidelines for the formulation, implementation and impact assessment of policies for generating employment growth and decent work;
 - learn and share experiences from the country reviews of employment policies (CREPs) being undertaken with ILO support and active participation of the social partners in south-east European countries to develop and implement a coherent and integrated employment strategy;

- increase efforts to mainstream disability issues following the adoption of an international treaty on ending discrimination against persons with disabilities and protecting their rights to just and favourable conditions of work;
- the GEA to give greater importance in its policy framework to increasing productivity and incomes in the agricultural sector where the vast majority of people work in the developing world;
- to undertake analytical work within the GEA framework to identify and stimulate growth of high labour absorbing sectors with the capacity to create productive, remunerative and competitive jobs;
- to continue to give high priority to work, given the large number of countries affected by or emerging from crisis situations, to embed employment and decent work goals in their recovery and reconstruction programmes.

56. Finally, as the country experiences presented in this update show there is considerable diversity in problems, constraints and challenges faced and hence in devising appropriate policies responses. The GEA operational framework has to be suitably adapted to each situation and thus serve as a key component in decent work country programmes. This requires amongst others a high degree of technical competence and judgement which the Office is continuously trying to build into the delivery of its services. In evaluating the implementation of the GEA and the “value added” it provides, this is the bar against which performance must be judged.

Geneva, 4 October 2006.

Submitted for debate and guidance.