

## SIGNING CEREMONY

### Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme 2023-27 4 May 2023

**Address by Mr Geir T. Tonstol  
Director, ILO's Country Office for Pakistan**

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- Mr Zulfiqar Haider, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development
- Mr Julien Harneis, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan
- Mr Fasih Karim Siddiqui, Vice-President of the Employers' Federation of Pakistan
- Mr Zahoor Awan, esteemed Worker Member of the ILO's Governing Body
- Excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps
- Representatives of the United Nations system in Pakistan
- Representatives of ILO's constituents, government and social partners
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen
- Dear colleagues

Allow me first of all to welcome you to this ceremony for the signing of the Fourth Decent Work Country Programme for Pakistan for the period 2023-27. And welcome to the ILO! It always gives me great pleasure to welcome constituents and partners to our office. The ILO building in Islamabad, which is built on land generously donated to us by the Government of Pakistan, is part of our tripartite legacy in the country.

Pakistan became a member of the ILO in 1947 and has ever since played a significant role in the governance of the organization. I congratulate the Government of Pakistan on the leadership exercised in their current capacity as member of the ILO's Governing Body.

Whilst my appointment as Director of the ILO Country Office in Pakistan is recent, I recognize that my predecessors have done an admirable job in fostering partnerships, nurturing trust and confidence, and laying the strong foundations upon which the ILO in Pakistan stands today.

#### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is testimony to Pakistan's commitment to lead by example, that the country was one of the very first countries, globally, to design a Decent Work Country Programme in 2005. Whilst Pakistan has faced tremendous challenges during the journey from 2005 until today, the country has not faltered in its commitment to the goal of decent work.

For more than six decades, the International Labour Organization has partnered with the Government of Pakistan, with Pakistani employers' and workers' organizations, and other stakeholders, to advance decent work and social justice.

Through three generations of Decent Work Country Programmes, we have together made significant progress in areas of critical importance for the world of work in Pakistan. Such as improved employability of workers through skills development, strengthened labour market institutions, enhanced compliance with International Labour Standards and dedicated action to fight unacceptable forms of work. I congratulate the ILO's tripartite constituents, the Government of Pakistan, employers' and workers' organizations, on these achievements. I also express sincere gratitude to our development partners for your steadfast commitment to promoting decent work and sustainable development in Pakistan.

Nonetheless, Pakistan continues to face decent work obstacles. Obstacles that have been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, floods and economic instability. Still, the majority of workers in Pakistan, who are in the informal economy, are excluded from social security coverage. Only about 9 percent of the population is covered by at least one kind of social protection benefit. The number of so-called NEETS, youth who are not in employment, education or training is on a dramatic rise. And occupational, safety and health remains a critical area of systemic decent work deficit in Pakistan.

The fourth generation Decent Work Country Programme has been designed to help address these challenges by focusing our work in four areas: Employment creation, particularly for youth; social protection for all, including workers in the informal economy; compliance with International Labour Standards; and occupational safety and health, particularly for women. At the core of the programme is a human-centred approach to build the resilience of both institutions and communities.

The Decent Work Country Programme is anchored in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Pakistan (2023-27). This is the main vehicle for the UN system in Pakistan to collectively support a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for Pakistan. I wish to express profound appreciation to the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for his support and guidance in the finalization of the Decent Work Country Programme.

I wish to recognize the considerable work carried out by our constituents to finalize the document.

Above all, the Country Programme that we are launching today is the outcome of a long and tripartite process that you have undertaken with motivation and conviction. Its conclusion demonstrates the will of the government and social partners to promote the Decent Work Agenda in Pakistan and place it at the heart of national development policy. This ceremony reaffirms your commitment to create opportunities for women and men in Pakistan to obtain productive and decent work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

I am confident that the Decent Work Country Programme, founded on tripartism and social dialogue, will pave the way towards more beneficial and inclusive growth for all, more peace, more equity and respect for rights.

Thank you very much for your attention.