

16th Regional Seminar of Labour-Based Practitioners

Theme

"Facing the Challenges of Sustainable Development in the Context of Decentralization with Employment Intensive Investment Approaches"

26-30 October 2015, Cotonou, Benin

Ministerial Declaration

We, the Ministers responsible for Public Works, Transport, Decentralization, Environment, Labour, Employment and Social Security:

1. Meeting in the Ministerial session on 27 and 29 October 2015 at the Palais des Congrès in Cotonou, as part of the 16th Regional Seminar of Labour-based Practitioners under His Excellency Dr. Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin and under the chairmanship of Mr. Gustave Sonon, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Benin;
2. Recognizing that significant progress has been made since the last seminar in Yaoundé on the implementation of employment-intensive investment (EII) approaches especially in the realization of infrastructure investment programmes at the sectoral and decentralized levels;
3. Despite the significant economic growth in many African countries the pressure on natural resources and on the labour market, the insufficient infrastructure and socio-economic facilities, youth unemployment, weak coverage of social

protection and the flux of migration, all continue to be major concerns for African countries and call for urgent and concerted measures to help ensure social cohesion, food and income security;

4. Recognizing that the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda by improving working conditions, employability, strengthening social dialogue, public-private partnership are significant challenges in achieving infrastructure development and maintenance goals;

5. Noting the increasing awareness at the international level of the adverse effects of climate change, which have led countries to adopt modes of development that promote better preservation of the environment. These create job opportunities, particularly for youth and women;

6. Recognizing that 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, concerning all dimensions of sustainable development, notably decent work, economic growth and increased investments in infrastructure;

7. Noting that decentralization is a dynamic process which requires the effective transfer of responsibilities and adequate human and financial resources to enhance the competencies of decentralized authorities in the implementation of infrastructure works;

8. Observing that decentralization and the sustainable

development agenda offer conditions to generate more opportunities for decent employment, enhance local resources and expertise as well as strengthening the skills of local businesses;

9. Recognizing that efforts are still needed for policy makers to confirm the validity of the employment intensive investment approaches and for them to generate stable and regular budgets for the implementation of investment programs that value local resources.

We are committed to:

10. Institutionalize EII approaches through the establishment or strengthening of a national inter-sectoral coordination structure at high level, that could be consistent with the development plans and operationalization of interventions at the sectoral level;

11. Develop a sustainable funding mechanism through national investment budgets and complemented by the contribution of development partners;

12. Adopt and implement capacity building plans of local institutions and actors to offer expert skills building and management of local labour for better participatory management of local infrastructure, facilitating project ownership by the beneficiary communities, and helping to support the decentralization process;

13. Take steps to adopt guidelines and codes of conduct of labour-based programmes in consultation with the social partners; particularly with regard to working conditions, including respect of the minimum wage, minimum working age, equal pay, safety and health at work, and respect for gender equity;

14. Take steps to increase the participation of women in EII programmes, including those relating to decision-making; participation in design, planning, implementation and monitoring of labour-based programmes; also to provide day care arrangements and adequate sanitation facilities;

15. Implement decentralized and integrated labour-based infrastructure programmes and services focusing on (i) improvement of productive agriculture, providing food security, and access to markets; (ii) improvement of basic social services; (iii) adaptation to climate change; (iv) rural and urban development to encourage the creation of green and decent jobs and social and economic integration of disadvantaged groups

16. Collect and process data for the realization of employment impact studies assessing employment, environment and socio-economic indicators in order to support advocacy in favor of employment intensive investment approaches for policy makers;

17. Adapt procurement procedures and codes to incorporate community contracting to promote SMEs' access to public procurement with multi-annual to contracts;

18. Document and disseminate good practices and innovative experiences in the application of labour-based methods and promote the endogenous expertise through South-South cooperation.

Solicit that:

19. The ILO supports decent job creation initiatives included in the Decent Work Country Programmes and the Framework of UN Development Assistance Programme in view of achieving sustainable development objectives;

20. The ILO supports national debates on climate change adaptation by providing the evidence and examples of the contribution of labour-based approaches towards the realization of the SDGs and the implementation of the commitments from COP 21;

21. Countries, Regional Economic Communities, the African Union and Development Banks, such as the African Development Bank to support the financing of labour-based infrastructure investment projects retained within the framework of SDGs and resolutions pertaining to COP 21.

Appreciation

22. The States whose efforts are consistent in the implementation and development of labour-based approaches and urge them to continue these efforts by documenting experiences further to ensure their dissemination in other countries;

23. The ILO for the multifaceted support provided to countries for the promotion and supporting application of labour-based approaches and to monitor commitments arising from this edition of the Regional Seminar of Labour-based Practitioners;

24. The Government of Benin for the successful organization of the 16th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners and urge all participants of the Seminar to bring the contents of this Ministerial Declaration and the Declaration of the Participants to their respective Governments and work towards its implementation.

Vote of Thanks

25. The Head of State, His Excellency, Dr. Boni Yayi, in addition to the government and people of Benin for the facilitation and the warm welcoming offered for the execution of this 16th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners.

Cotonou, October 29, 2015