

EC-ILO Joint Seminar
on Employment, Social Protection and Decent Work in ACP Countries
Brussels, 22-25 June 2009
- Outcome (ILO perspective)

1. General Observations

- The ILO Regional Office for Africa would like to express its gratitude to EC Europe Aid and ILO Brussels for having taken the initiative to organize this seminar;
- Both ILO offices and EC Delegations recognize the mutual interest of the regional seminar and see the benefit of strengthening the ILO/EC strategic partnership in particular policy and technical dialogue in the region, in subregions and at national level;
- The ILO and the EC share a common vision and values which are reflected in key EU and ILO texts. This shared vision is all the more relevant in the current global financial and economic crisis; in this context, both institutions note with satisfaction that their converging policy agendas are reflected in the “Global Jobs Pact” adopted by the 98th ILC, in the EC Communication of April 2009 aimed at “Supporting developing countries in coping with the crisis”, and in the CEB Toolkit on Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work..
- Against this background, the Seminar allowed better mutual understanding of internal mechanisms and processes of the two organizations. The ILO became acquainted with the programming cycle of the EC laid out in the country strategy papers and sector-wide approaches, whereas the EC gained a better understanding of ILO’s Decent Work Country Programmes. Both organizations recognized the necessity to collaborate in the design and review of these policy documents;
- The EC and the ILO recognized their complementarity; they should, to the extend possible, collaborate and share analysis, information, statistical data, and experience so as to avoid overlaps and to enhance synergies.
- The EC and the ILO recognize the special needs of the ACP region and agree to focus on the most vulnerable population groups, by paying special attention to gender mainstreaming in their programmes. They also acknowledge the preponderance of the informal sector in the ACP region and agree that upgrading working conditions in the informal economy must receive special attention.

2. Specific Observations

In light of the presentations and discussions in the various plenary sessions and group meeting during the seminar, the ILO believes that the following conclusions can be drawn:

- *Employment and Employability*
 - EC and ILO share the view that all ACP countries should develop comprehensive national employment policies;

- EC and ILO both support the employment-intensive approach to public and private investments in ACP countries; these schemes have proven particularly valuable in post-crisis situations;
 - EC and ILO agree that primary education must be complemented through technical and vocational training, including the upgrading of traditional apprenticeship systems;
 - The two institutions agree that more emphasis should be put on women's entrepreneurship, youth employment and gender mainstreaming in employment promotion programmes.
- *Social protection and social inclusion*
 - EC and ILO agree that employment and social protection are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. This is all the more important for ensuring financial sustainability. The design and funding of social protection systems should address the coverage in the informal economy.
 - EC and ILO share the view that social protection is the responsibility of the state, but that in view of the limited fiscal space available to most ACP countries, development partners should assist Governments in extending social protection to unprotected population groups;
 - EC and ILO believe that cash transfers are an efficient means to extend social protection; the modalities (conditional or not, in cash or in kind, etc.) must be decided on a case by case basis;
 - EC and ILO both recognize the potential of the social economy to generate employment and extend social protection, in particular with regard to the common goal of upgrading work in the informal economy;
 - *Tripartism and social dialogue*
 - EC and ILO share the view that tripartism and social dialogue are key to achieving social justice and economic progress;
 - Both institutions agree that Improved governance of the world of work is of crucial importance, and that measures should be taken to strengthen the agencies, organizations and authorities responsible for the governance of labour markets in ACP countries;
 - EC and ILO could cooperate to promote social dialogue, tripartite consultations and to strengthen capacity building of social partners (employers' and workers' organizations) and labour administrations; this should be done in collaboration with the ITC Turin.
 - *Labour standards*
 - EC and ILO agree that core labour standards must be respected in the implementation of their respective programmes and projects, as well as in procurement processes;

- Both institutions agree on the importance to promote the application of core labour standards in the informal economy.
- Both the EC and the ILO recognize the social dimension of international trade, and agree that the core labour standards must be incorporated into trade agreements such as the EPAs.

3. Recommendations: The way forward

- The outcome of the seminar should be shared with all EC delegations and ILO field offices located in ACP countries;
- EC EuropeAid and ILO ROAF should encourage these field offices to hold bilateral meetings at the country level, in order to exchange information and experience.
- The ILO would appreciate if its field offices in ACP countries would be invited to provide inputs in the mid-term review of the EC country strategy papers;
- EC would appreciate if ILO invites EC Delegations in ACP countries to provide inputs to the elaboration, implementation and review of Decent Work Country Programmes;
- EC and ILO should collaborate so as to jointly promote the principles of Decent Work in development frameworks such as PRSPs and joint assistance strategies; they should also ensure that Decent Work Indicators are included among the performance indicators governing general and sector budget support schemes;
- EC and ILO should encourage the formation of thematic working groups on employment and social protection in ACP countries, and actively take part in such groups; the CEB Toolkit on Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work could be of great value in this exercise.
- EC and ILO should envisage the organization of similar seminars at the subregional level in the ACP region, possibly in collaboration with Regional Economic Commissions in ACP countries, with the aim of jointly fostering regional integration. Joint conclusions should be drafted after those seminars with the aim of agreeing on a concrete programme of follow up actions. These seminars should be preceded by EC/ILO consultations at the field level so as to initiate dialogue and identify possible cooperation opportunities prior to the seminar.
- EC and ILO should invite each other to all meetings, conferences and similar events organized in the ACP region that are of mutual and common interest.