

ILO Directors and Specialists Meeting

Dakar, 15-16 October 2009

“The Decent Work Movement in Africa – Accelerating the Pace “

Keynote Address

by Mr Charles Dan

ILO Regional Director

Dear François,

Dear Patricia,

Dear Mohamed Ali,

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends for so many years,

Fighting for a cause

Thank you so much François for your kind words. Really happy to be welcomed by you and your Team. Congratulations for your leadership. And thanks for your friendship.

And welcome to Patricia. Really proud to have the Executive Director with us today in Dakar.

And welcome back to Mohamed Ali, Senior Adviser for Africa and the Arab States. So pleased to see you back home.

And welcome to all of you to the 1st ILO Africa Management and Specialists' Team Meeting.

Why are we gathered here today?

To perform together - and better - for decent work and social justice.

Decent work - a universal aspiration –

Social justice - a mandate to change the world –

Not a simple affair - But a great cause for all of us. A personal commitment beyond the professional duty. A collective fight / endeavour beyond the technical functions.

Striving for an African revalidation

Decent work is at the heart of the development agenda. And for this reason it is a political agenda. No elections without employment promises.

Decent work is at the heart of peoples' real lives and even more so in Africa where we are witnessing decent work deficits of great magnitude.

In Africa, each person who has a decent work is de facto a mini social security. This is our traditions – This is our culture – These are our solidarity values. And these are our realities.

This is a reason why we all need more decent work in Africa.

And this is the reason why Decent Work is a collective African revalidation. And has been endorsed as such at the highest political level:

- December 1999 – Abidjan – the 9th ILO African Regional Meeting
- ... 2003 – Addis Ababa - the 10th ILO African Regional Meeting
- September 2004 – Ouagadougou – the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa.
- April 2007 – Addis Ababa – the 11th ILO African Regional Meeting and the Decent Work Agenda for Africa -2007/2015.

Why such an endorsement? Why such a commitment at the tripartite level?

An unfair globalization process

If there is a continent which knows that we have been going through an unfair globalization process, this is Africa.

An unfair globalization which has been denounced for long by the ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia

And which has been denounced by the 2004 Report of the World Commission.

15 September 2008 – Lehman Brothers collapses. And the beginning of the global crisis.

But if there is a continent which also knows that there was a crisis before the crisis, it is Africa : food crisis - fuel crisis - decent work deficits accros the board: massive unemployment and underemployment - poverty - child labour – HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria - floods - droughts - and climate change.

The severe impact of the global crisis in Africa

Contrary to what was said at the beginning, in the ILO we knew from day one that Africa would be severely hit by the global crisis. And that is why we organized the ILO Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the implications of the global crisis on Africa's population last February in Addis Ababa – which adopted a Decent Work Crisis Portfolio. And we also supported a series of Pan-African meetings organized by our social partners in Nairobi for the Employers, in Cairo and Lome for the workers. Without mentioning our numerous contributions at the national level that you know so well.

Africa may not be connected to a global financial artificial and virtual architecture.

But Africa's real economy is directly connected to the global real economy:

1. Export revenues (ADB figures: Africa should loose 251 Billion US Dollars in export revenues in 2009 and 277 US Billion Dollars in 2010).
2. Foreign Direct Investment

3. Tourism
4. Remittances
5. ODA.

What the impact of this global crisis reveals is an over-dependent growth pattern in Africa. And a need to look for new development paradigms more grounded in Africa's realities.

This means more localization of African economies. This means more regional integration.

This calls for new strategies based on ILO powerful instruments.

ILO powerful instruments for Africa

To cope with an unfair globalization process: a short and long term instrument aimed at helping to improve our management and make the ILO more relevant than ever - the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice and a Fair Globalization – a structural instrument.

Grateful to Patricia O'Donovan who is leading, at the Director-General's request, the change management agenda in the Office. Thank you so much for coming Patricia. We will be listening to you tomorrow with great attention and all our passion to always move ahead and ahead.

To cope with and recover together from the crisis: a short and medium term instrument – the Global Jobs Pact – a conjunctural instrument.

Because from the beginning, we have criticized the negative dimensions of the current globalization process, we are well equipped today to confront a critical situation.

But to succeed today, business as usual cannot work anymore.

What is expected from us in Africa is not only to be good managers and good specialists. It is to accelerate the launching of a strong Decent Work Movement in Africa – together with our tripartite constituents in the driving seat – and helped by the powerful instruments: the 2008 Declaration and the Global Jobs Pact.

When I look around this room, I am so proud. What I see is an extraordinary talented and gifted team of extremely competent and committed colleagues – hard working – dedicated to the importance of their own personal contribution to our collective commitment to achieve decent work for all.

I thank you for that. And I congratulate you so much. And you have all contributed so much to make the celebrations of our 90th Anniversary in Africa, an unforgettable moment. I was so honored to report back your efforts and achievements to the plenary session of the International Labour Conference last June in Geneva. Thank you for giving me and the entire African Group the opportunity to acknowledge our collective achievements with such pride.

Today, confronted in Africa with challenges of unprecedented magnitude, we need to go the extra-mile. We need more than being technically competent. We need militants. We need Decent work activists to support and accelerate the pace of the Decent Work Movement in Africa.

Because our agenda is grounded in the realities and daily lives of workers, families and communities, it is a development agenda. And because it is a development agenda, it is a political agenda-. So we have both a technical and political agenda.

From the Global Jobs Pact to Decent Work Country Programmes

Today, the Global Jobs Pact offers us an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the pace of the Decent Work Movement in Africa.

Adopted at the global level - endorsed by the UN ECOSOC Resolution of 21 July 2009 - supported by the G20 Pittsburg Leaders Statement – backed in Africa by a recent Tripartite and Ministerial Declaration of the African Union Labour and Social Affairs Commission (Addis Ababa, 2 October 2009).

Today, we need to better contextualize our Decent Work Country Programmes and to align them with the Global Jobs Pact Responses. But for this we still need to make a major effort. We need to accelerate the pace for negotiating and implementing our DWCPs given the decision taken by the 11th ILO African Regional Meeting (Addis Ababa, April 2007). And we need to be more ambitious. If Decent Work is a development agenda, then our DWCPs need to get the political endorsement at the highest political level. This is the Ouagadougou spirit and the Ouagadougou process.

During the last month, I met with the Presidents of the Republic of Togo, Benin, Senegal and the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso. And this has been my message and request. If employment is – as it is the case- at the heart of your political vision and agenda – then we need your personal leadership and involvement to move ahead with a Decent Work Country Programme officially endorsed and launched at the highest political level.

And I will continue to deliver the same political message, as I have been officially invited to visit countries like Mauritius, Angola, Malawi...

Today, we need to go more political. We need to go more and more technical. And we need to communicate better.

And in politics, you create the movement. And on the technical side, you create the example. And on the communication side, you go public. You don't shy away. We should never go negative on our achievements. Let us be more positive and focus on our success stories. This is all about Decent Work Success Africa.

Creating the movement

This is the reason why, the Regional Office for Africa has launched a series of unprecedented gatherings to mobilize energies and competences around cross-cutting decent work issues, around the Global Jobs Pact and around our four specific pillars in 2009 and 2010. And we expect this process to culminate in 2011 with the 12th ILO African Regional Meeting:

- 19-21 October 2009, Johannesburg: a Conference on Social Economy in Africa – seen as a learning bridge between the formal economy and the informal economy that we have dichotomized for too long.

- 27-29 October 2009, Cairo : a Women Entrepreneurship Forum organized by the ILO and the African Development Bank – given the critical importance of African women empowerment to development.

And we will organize in Ouagadougou at the invitation of the President of Burkina Faso and in cooperation with the African Union:

- A Social Partners Forum on Social Dialogue for the Global Jobs Pact on 30 November 2009.
- And a High-Level Symposium on the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact in Africa – gathering Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Labour and Finance, employers’ and workers’ representatives, development partners.

Then a follow-up, we intend to organize in 2010:

- A meeting on EIIP
- A meeting on social security,
- A meeting on international labour standards, and
- A meeting on negotiating for decent work.

Creating the example

It is important to organize meetings. And to create the movement. But not enough.

We also have to create the example.

Importance of technical cooperation. Concrete programmes. Pilot projects.

Importance of delivery – 100% Delivery across the lines.

For me it is also a question of respect: for the Director-General who has appointed me - for our tripartite constituents who trust us - for our populations who need us - for the donors because we should not take assistance for granted – And for ourselves.

And we are making progress.

But not enough. Here too we have to go the extra-mile.

Developping staff

That is the reason why the Director-General has decided that we will organize a series of strategic and systematic training on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation for our directors and specialists in Africa as from next year. And we are discussing with the Turin Centre to organize this major effort.

We will also have to develop a more collective approach and strategic use of our staff development fund. This issue has been part of our recent Directors' Retreat and we have listened with much attention to the message delivered for the Staff union by President Djibril Ndiaye.

But to succeed we have to align our structures to our ambitions and our strategies.

Working better together

Field review structure - A review – not a revolution.

Requested and decided by the Governing Body. But it is to be recorded that nobody defended the current three-tier-structure.

So we will be moving smoothly to a two-tier structure. Nothing new, already the case in Latin America and Europe, and that is why only Africa and Asia will undertake changes.

As from 1 January 2010, we will start implementing the review. Quietly. Not important to rush. Important to succeed.

Moving from 6 sub-regional offices to 4 Decent Work Technical Support Teams: a rationalization of our structures, not a revolution. And more technical critical mass. So much needed. And this I know because 15 years ago I was myself a Technical Specialist based here in Dakar.

1. Dakar for West Africa: merging Dakar and Abidjan to better cover ECOWAS regional integration process.
2. Pretoria for Eastern and Southern Africa: mostly the current Harare and Addis Ababa together to cover the forthcoming regional integration process decided on 22 October 2008 in Kampala by the Heads of State and Government to harmonize and merge the three RECs : SADC / COMESA / EAC.
3. Yaounde for Central Africa.
4. And Cairo for North Africa.

And 9 ILO Offices. No closing. Because there is no need for less ILO in Africa. But a need for a better ILO. 9 strategic positions based on our history and long-standing presence in Africa:

1. Abidjan, covering French-speaking countries in West Africa, with Côte d'Ivoire striving to recover from a difficult political period
2. Abuja, covering English-speaking countries in West Africa including Nigeria, the driving-force in this area
3. Addis Ababa, covering one of the biggest countries in Africa, Ethiopia, almost 80 million people in development and Somalia, a real challenge for us.
4. Algiers, where we experienced first-hand that despite our noble mission we are also exposed to terrible risks and where Maria Crisetti is re-opening our office together with our national colleagues with so much courage and abnegation.
5. Antananarivo and the Indian Ocean, such a beautiful but also challenged region, with Madagascar and the Comoros also recovering from political crises.
6. Dar-es-Salaam, where we have one of most beautiful office in the region
7. Harare, with Zimbabwe going through an important and sensitive political transition and reconciliation process

8. Kinshasa, an important region recovering from so many political crises
9. Lusaka covering a region experiencing first-hand the impacts of the global crisis around the copperbelt.

So we will have on one side a concentration of our technical expertise in the DWTSTs and, on the other side, a concentration of our financial resources in the ILO Offices in charge of the technical cooperation. Working together. And better.

And an efficient Regional Office equipped to serve and support you better in a two-tier structure. Acting as leader. And a broker.

With a transition period.