

African Ministers of Labour and Public Works commit to greater investment in labour-intensive infrastructure delivery

PRESS RELEASE

Durban, South Africa (ILO News) - Ministers of Labour and Public Works from twelve African countries i.e. Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe attended a Ministerial meeting during the 12th Regional Seminar for Labour-Intensive Practices, where they committed to increasing investment in infrastructure with a high potential to create decent work and productive employment. In addition, they committed to supporting the creation of a conducive policy framework and appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools to ensure that the employment intensity of infrastructure investments is increased to their full potential. The Ministers also called for the development of employment impact assessment tools and methodologies to support investment policy decision making and resource allocation and called upon the ILO to continue to provide technical advisory support on the harmonization of these approaches.

The Ministers held a parallel Ministerial Meeting which critically analyzed and discussed the potential of infrastructure and service delivery in creating decent work and productive employment opportunities for the unemployed, its impact in the reduction of poverty and contribution to social cohesion and political stability – key issues which had been presented to them in the ILO Paper “Making Infrastructure Employment Friendly”. This meeting took place on the second day of deliberations by the Ministers at the Regional Seminar, which attracted 450 delegates from 27 countries, and which included site visits of the ambitious five year South African Expanded Public Works Programme targeting to create one million job opportunities.

As stated by the host Minister of Public Works, Ms Thoka Didiza during her opening address “This 12th Regional Seminar is about the right to work, the right to life and to human dignity. The conference theme, “Prioritizing employment creation in government policies, investments and infrastructure programmes” aptly captures the call of millions of jobless people for intensified action”. The ILO Director of the Pretoria Office, Ms Judica Amri-Makhetha, stressed that “the twin challenges of employment and infrastructure have been recognized as the most pressing if the national and regional development goals set by ourselves and those we have agreed to, collectively, are to be met.” She added that “Employment-intensive investment approaches present an opportunity through which the two challenges can be addressed simultaneously.”

The bi-annual Regional Seminar initiated by the Employment Intensive Investment Programme of the ILO and co-hosted by a different African host country, offers African and other developing countries a forum to focus on measures to address the dual developmental challenges of employment creation and infrastructure investment. The next Regional Seminar will be hosted by Uganda in 2009.

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