

**Welcoming Speech by Mr Gerry Finnegan, ILO Representative for
Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, on the launch of the ILO-EC TACKLE
Project, 13 October 2008**

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this launch of the project entitled **Tackling Child Labour through Education (TACKLE)**, and indeed to welcome you to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) offices for Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. In an agreement with the Committee of Ambassadors of the ACP Group of States, the ILO with financial support from the European Community is launching this project in partnership with host governments in eleven African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Indeed, I am aware that a similar launch is taking place today in Khartoum, Sudan.

The aim of this new TACKLE project is to help reduce poverty and thus contribute to MDG-1 on reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015. This will be done by providing greater access to basic education and skills training for disadvantaged children and young people. It will also strengthen the capacities of national and local authorities in formulating, implementing and enforcing policies to tackle child labour, in close cooperation with key national authorities, as well as in coordination with representative organizations of workers and employers in Zambia, and with civil society. Through this nationally-based partnership, this ILO/EC project will work with host governments to reduce poverty and to improve labour conditions, including eliminating child labour from the labour market, in developing countries. The ***ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008)*** states clearly that "the violation of fundamental principles and rights at work cannot be invoked or otherwise used as a legitimate comparative advantage" – be it between nations or between enterprises at the country level.

Child Labour is a developmental challenge in Zambia. It negatively impacts on individual children, families, communities and the entire nation. Child Labour is particularly damaging to the country's long-term development goals because as it erodes its human resource and ultimately lowers long-term productivity and industrialization prospects. The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) estimates globally that some 218 million children below the age of 18 are involved in child labour. Many of these children are out of school, and those that try to combine work with school are highly vulnerable to early drop-out, and they do not do well at school. In Zambia 3,166,310 (Ministry of Education,

Educational Statistical Bulletin 2007) children are enrolled in basic education, and there are 895,000 children engaged in child labour (CSO 2005 Child Labour Survey Report). There is a great and urgent need to step up the fight against Child Labour in Zambia. The school and classroom are the appropriate places for holistic, child-centered growth and development of children, and nurturing Zambia's human resources.

Under the TACKLE project, the ILO will work with and support key national partners such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Education to strengthen the vitally important role of education in the fight against child labour. By the end of the three-year implementation period, ILO hopes to have: (i) facilitated the withdrawal and prevention of many children from entering into child labour; (ii) strengthened the legal framework on child labour and education; (iii) strengthened institutional capacity to be able to formulate and implement appropriate strategies on eliminating child labour, and (iv) improved advocacy and dissemination of good practices to help us to understand what works well, and to reinforce national and district-level networks on child labour and education. The project will pay specific attention to needs of educationally disadvantaged and excluded children as well as young women and men who live in vulnerable communities. This is in line with ILO's Declaration on promoting social justice.

Tomorrow, ILO officials involved in the EU-funded TACKLE project will meet with key stakeholders to get down to the details of developing plans and prioritizing next steps in the implementation of the project.

According to ILO and UNESCO, education is one of the most critical responses and solutions to the elimination of child labour. Children need to have access to education as a fundamental right; a right that also augments their learning and cognitive development as children. Education is a key contributor to sustainable human development. It is essential for achieving international development targets, such as the MDGs. In addition, education is a crucial element in achieving sustainable wealth creation. Education and learning of all kinds are vitally important in enabling change to take place both at the level of individuals and of society in general. This in turn should lead to new linkages, new possibilities and new horizons.

The key role of schooling as a deterrent against child labour will apply best where compulsory education is taken up as the responsibility of

Government, and where Government is committed to ensuring the adequacy of all schools and the quality of education. This is what will motivate children to stay at school, and stimulate their parents to forgo opportunity costs of earnings from child labour in favour of full-time schooling, or limited part-time work along with full-time schooling.

The TACKLE project will be implemented on a solid set of foundations. The ILO has been implementing projects in Zambia on the Elimination of Child Labour since 1999. This project will build on and strengthen the work of the ILO's project on HIV & AIDS induced child labour, will make effective use of tools already developed by the ILO – including its SCREAM pack, and its training on Psychosocial needs for teachers, counselors and community groups. The project will add momentum to the ILO's Time Bound Programme, supported by the US Department of Labor, on eliminating child labour, and will hopefully act as a spur to Government to enable it to adopt the national Child Labour Policy.

This project will particularly strengthen the ILO's interventions in education and skills training. It will form part of the UN's combined and coordinated approaches in relation to improving the health and well-being of Zambia's children, where ILO is working with UNICEF, WFP and others. This project also takes the cooperation between the ILO and the EC in Zambia to a higher level. The project will effectively link to and build upon ongoing cooperation between the UN family in Zambia (mainly ILO, UNICEF and IOM) and the EC in relation to the trafficking of persons, particularly in mobilizing education professionals and students against the worst extremes of child labour, viz. the trafficking of children.

The TACKLE project will be implemented within the wider support interventions by the ILO in Zambia, particularly those of the **Zambia Decent Work Country Programme (Z-DWCP)**. You can see from the posters around us that the DWCP has three major priorities: (i) Promoting job creation for women, young people and persons with disabilities; (ii) Combatting HIV and AIDS in the workplace; and (iii) Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the European Commission for its financial support to enable the ILO to partner with and support Government (MLSS, MEd), workers' and employers' organizations and civil society, in implementing this project in Zambia. A special word of thanks to the EU Ambassador, Dr Derek Fee, for his support and encouragement for,

not only the ILO's work in Zambia, but for the work of the entire UN system in Zambia. I thank also tripartite partners and the Zambia Government for consistently guiding the design and implementation of ILO programmes, and ensuring their relevance and contribution to national priorities. I thank you for coming. This demonstrates commitment to the struggle against child labour in Zambia.