



## Arab Employment Forum

*A Jobs Pact for Recovery and Growth*

Guidelines for Thematic Working Sessions, 20 October 2009

### **Panel 4 Strengthening Respect for International Labour Standards and Workers' Rights**

**Time:** 12:30-14:30

**Organizational Guidelines:** Each Panel will consist of a Chair, a Facilitator, and tripartite discussants representing the perspectives of governments, workers and employers. The Chair will designate one of the panelists to serve as Rapporteur, reporting back to Plenary on day 3 of the Forum. The Rapporteur will be assisted by a pre-assigned Forum note taker, who will provide the meeting minutes to the Rapporteur by end of session.

The duration of each panel is two hours. The second half of the session will be dedicated to open discussion, while the first part will be led by the panelists themselves as per the below running order of speakers:

- Chair (10 minutes): The Chair will preside over the meeting and moderate the Panel discussion. The Chair will take a few minutes to open the session and introduce panelists. The Chair will also summarize key interventions and provide a wrap-up statement at the end.
- Facilitator (10 minutes): The Facilitator (s) will present highlights of the respective background paper(s) prepared for each panel and key issues for debate. Where there are two facilitators, they will briefly address these same issues (5 minutes each).
- Tripartite constituents (10 minutes/constituent): A representative from each of the Tripartite constituents will highlight key issues of concern, bringing to the fore priorities and challenges from the perspectives of governments, workers and employers.
- Other discussants (10 minutes): Other discussants representing academia and civil society may present their own take on the issue, providing an overview of their own experiences and lessons learned.

The remaining time (approximately 1 hour) will be dedicated to an open exchange of views moderated by the Chair towards a set of Panel recommendations.

**Thematic Focus:** This Panel will address the international labour standard (ILS) dimension of the financial and economic crisis, providing a platform to identify and support recovery policies through respect for ILS and workers' rights. The paper submitted to the Panel provides the background material

for the realization of commitments made at the global and regional levels on decent work and the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact. It explains the role of ILS and workers' rights in the context of the current global economic and financial crisis. These cover fundamental aspects of decent work, such as full, productive and freely-chosen employment, tripartite consultations, the rights of employers and workers, the means of settling disputes between them freely through their representatives, the basic rights to non-discrimination and freedom from forced and child labour, and social protection. To underpin these measures, increased efforts are required to facilitate social dialogue at regional, national and sectoral levels and in public and private workplaces, as well as greater vigilance with respect to fundamental principles and rights at work during the recession and improved monitoring of labour markets and policy impacts.

The Arab countries expressed their commitments to the international labour standards and principles and rights through the dialogue between them and the ILO in the framework of the ILO supervisory system, as well as through their statements before the International Labour Conference particularly at the Session of June 2009 and during regional meetings. The objective is to enable Arab countries to keep these commitments, encouraging mutual understanding and common regional practice in the application of ILO standards, in order to facilitate the international cooperation to counteract the current crisis. Based on this discussion, the Panel will produce a set of concrete recommendations for international labour standards to be at the heart of recovery responses to the financial and economic crisis in the Arab region, in line with the Global Jobs Pact.

#### **Issues for Debate:**

1. How can the economic recovery in Arab countries, in particular the promotion of employment consistent with the Decent Work Agenda, be assisted by compliance with and adherence to the relevant ILO conventions and other instruments referred to in this Panel?
2. How can the strategic objective related to social dialogue be promoted, particularly by enhancing reliance on freedom of association and collective bargaining, tripartite consultation and related methods?
3. What measures can be taken by ILO members in the region, where appropriate with assistance from the International Labour Office, to enhance the protection of migrant workers in ways that are consistent with ILO standards and the ILO Multilateral Framework on labour migration?
4. The ILO Declaration of 2008 called on the ILO to provide effective assistance to its Members in their efforts to make progress on a tripartite basis towards all the strategic objectives. What kind of assistance related to international standards would be most useful and how can Arab States members make best use of this assistance?