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For immediate release

Arab Spring demands new development model, say workers, employers and the UN

Social justice tops agenda of regional meeting of UN agencies and Arab workers' and employers' organizations

Beirut (ILO News) – Unemployment, inequality and glaring social dialogue deficits must be tackled through a coordinated and coherent response by all development players, according to some 60 representatives of five UN agencies and employers' and workers' organizations from over eight Arab countries gathering in Beirut from 13-14 December.

Organized by the ILO, the regional bipartite workshop explores the strategic role of the UN in a changing Arab region; the links between freedom of association and social justice; collaborative experiences of the UN and social partners; UN country programming in support of national priorities; mainstreaming Decent Work; and grasping new opportunities for collaboration.

The meeting aims to engage workers' and employers' organizations in a collective regional response and in the establishment of national development frameworks that promote equity and social justice.

“The UN system has a crucial role to play in fostering collaboration between development actors to support Arab countries at this very critical juncture,” says Nada al-Nashif, ILO Regional Director for the Arab States. “We need a new development paradigm that is inclusive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Arab citizens. The ILO, with its tripartite structure, is in a unique position to ensure that this new approach reflects the core values of equity and social justice.”

Keynote speakers include Robert Watkins, Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon and UN Resident Coordinator, Maxwell Gaylard, United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mona Hammam, Senior Advisor of Policy and Strategy at the World Food Program, Fateh Azzam, OHCHR Regional Representative for the Middle East, Khalid Abu Ismail, UNDP Regional Poverty and Macroeconomic Advisor, and Maurizio Bussi, ILO Deputy Regional Director for the Arab States.

For the full agenda visit:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/arpro/beirut/what/events/unreform2011/index.htm>

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