



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

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CHINA EMPLOYMENT FORUM CONCLUDES WITH FOCUS ON DECENT WORK FOR ALL

BEIJING (ILO News) - China and the International Labour Organization (ILO) today adopted a joint statement aimed at forging greater cooperation to create more and better jobs, describing "full and decent employment" as the key to continued development in the world's most populous country.

Co-hosted by China's Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MOLSS) and the ILO, a China Employment Forum examined issues related to the country's rapid economic growth - including rural unemployment, increasing rural-to-urban migration, and job loss resulting from the closing of some state-owned enterprises - as well as ideas for modernizing labour market governance and coping with the challenges of economic restructuring.

A "common understanding" that emerged at the Forum outlines the pressing need to maintain economic growth and improve labour markets in order to expand employment opportunities and enhance the quality of employment in China. It notes that respect for fundamental principles and rights at work is a foundation for economic development and social progress.

"Employment and the enjoyment of rights at work should be the first step in addressing poverty and social exclusion", the statement says (Note 1). "Promoting full employment through social dialogue should be the priority of economic and social policies, so that the labour force can engage in freely chosen productive employment and obtain secure and sustainable livelihoods."

With regard to promoting better wages and working conditions, the statement outlined seven key elements:

- Stimulating labour demand by creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and promoting the establishment and expansion of small enterprises, including self-employment.
- Strengthening tripartite social dialogue as an important mechanism for preventing and resolving conflicts, contributing to employment promotion and fostering social stability, as well as for enhancing enterprise performance.
- Upgrading knowledge and skills of workers to ensure their higher flexibility and employment security and prepare them for work in a knowledge-based economy.
- Expansion and refinement of labour market policies for smooth and efficient re-allocation of labour, gradual establishment of a unified labour market, and effective assistance to vulnerable groups.

- Encouraging sound enterprise restructuring and productivity upgrading in a smooth and socially acceptable way.
- Reform of the social security system and gradual extension of social protection to the groups of population currently excluded from the existing schemes, notably urban workers in flexible forms of employment and the vast rural population.
- Protection of safety and health of workers, as well as environmental protection should be an integral part of national policy for economic development and employment creation.

The statement also called on international organizations to actively support putting employment at the centre of their strategies and policies for reducing poverty. And it resolved to extend cooperation between China and the ILO around the Decent Work Agenda on a range of labour market and workplace issues.

"China is looking for the right balance of policies that yield economic change with social stability, and we are delighted that China sees the ILO as an institution with whom it can work in partnership along this road", said ILO Director-General Juan Somavia. "The ILO brings international experience that can be adapted and tested in the Chinese context, and we are ready to engage in deeper cooperation with China on promoting employment, improving workers' rights, enhancing social protection and encouraging social dialogue as, among other things, a way to deal with and prevent labour conflicts."

"Jobs and socio-economic security for women and men and their families are at the heart of people's concerns not only in China but in all countries", Mr. Somavia added. "People want to have the opportunities to work out of poverty."

In addition to Mr. Somavia, the Forum heard major addresses from China's Vice Premier, Mr. Huang Ju, and the country's Minister of Labour and Social Security, Mr. Zheng Silin. The Forum was built around nine interactive sessions on aspects of the employment challenges facing China, in which Chinese and experts from all over the world exchanged ideas.

The Forum was attended by more than 500 high-ranking officials and specialists from Chinese government agencies, worker and employer organizations, research institutions and academia. Also participating were more than two dozen ministers or vice-ministers of labour from around the world, as well as employment specialists from the ILO and a variety of other institutions and international agencies.