

Almaty Ministerial Declaration

8 December 2009

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for employment, labour market and social policies, as well as for agriculture development and food security of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine.

Meeting at the Regional Conference on Social Impacts of the Economic Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations system,

Having considered the varying depth and severity of impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the economies, labour markets and well-being of the populations of our countries, and in particular its continuing impact on women and men and vulnerable groups,

Having presented and exchanged views on national anti-crisis measures adopted in the fields of employment, social protection and food security as well as policies to stimulate economic and labour market recovery and long-term sustainable development, and taking stock of the first results achieved and lessons learned in response to the crisis so far,

Recognising that the social impact of the crisis will continue significantly after economic indicators begin to register recovery and that for responses to be effective there is a need for strongly coordinated strategies that include not only macro-economic and financial policies but also measures to address employment, social protection and food security,

Aware of the strong interrelationship between independent economies in the region, and hence the need for close collaboration in the region, to facilitate a strong and effective economic and labour market recovery,

Having considered the conclusions of the Eighth European Regional Meeting of the ILO, “Working out of crisis: Strategies for Decent Work in Europe and Central Asia”, adopted by national tripartite delegations from Europe and Central Asia in Lisbon in February 2009, and the Resolution on recovery from the crisis: ‘A Global Jobs Pact’, adopted by all the ILO member countries during the Summit held in Geneva in June 2009 on the Global Jobs Crisis and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2009,

Referring to the Declaration from the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in November 2009,

Taking note of the conference background papers “Promoting decent employment in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey”, “Preventing and reducing poverty in times of crisis – the role of non-contributory cash transfers” and “Impacts of the global economic and financial crisis on food security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey”,

Have adopted the following Declaration:

1. The economic crisis has had significant negative effects on employment, social protection and food security, in particular for vulnerable groups of the population in the region of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey. Even as economic indicators begin to recover, the social impact of the crisis continues and its lagged effects may threaten the livelihoods of large numbers of households and working women and men.
2. The crisis has interacted with and in some cases exacerbated structural imbalances and institutional weaknesses in national economies of our countries, highlighting the need for strengthened employment strategies; social protection systems that are able to respond quickly and effectively to existing and new vulnerabilities; and measures to address remaining food security issues affecting parts of the region.
3. Short-term anti-crisis measures therefore have to be carefully combined with policies addressing longer-term development goals both to achieve an early recovery and move towards a path of sustainable development that will benefit all categories of the population, including the most vulnerable.
4. Policies need to be formulated in social dialogue between the Government and the employers' and workers' organizations with the aim to promote inclusive job-rich growth, place employment goals in the core of economic policies and maximize the generation of productive employment performed under decent working conditions, with full respect to fundamental rights at work.
5. A number of timely employment retention and income support measures have mitigated the effects of the crisis. As we move towards economic and labour market recovery, we need to build a macroeconomic framework conducive to high levels of investment, sustainable enterprises and productive employment, also supported by sustained improvements in education and skills of the labour force and strong labour market institutions and policies. The Global Jobs Pact, relevant for all our countries, can usefully guide us in these actions.
6. A set of minimum social protection measures, which include but are not limited to adequate unemployment benefits, social assistance and child benefits, is needed in each country to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of economic downturn and to assist them to take advantage of recovery. Specific attention is needed to assess the net effect of taxes and benefits on families so that social transfers are effective in supporting families at different stages of the life cycle.
7. Measures to strengthen the productivity enhancing and income stabilizing functions of social protection, as well as cross-sectoral, integrated approaches that combine labour market policies with contributory and non-contributory benefits are needed to respond to new and existing vulnerability of families, to create a stronger ability to deal with future shocks and directly contribute to balanced and sustainable economic growth once the economic and labour market recovery is achieved.
8. Agricultural development needs to be boosted through increased investment in production and post-harvest technology, improved market functioning for integration into global commodity markets, mitigation of risks for farmers and establishment of sustainable management practices that positively contribute to the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change impacts and ecological balance. The key contributing factor to achieve food

security is making food accessible to the most vulnerable while simultaneously helping producers, especially smallholders, to raise their output and increase incomes.

9. Monitoring and assessment of the social impact of the crisis is critical. Systems that will allow governments to have early warning of increased vulnerability and track the evolution of crisis in real time are needed, including those proposed along the lines of the UN Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System and supported by other innovative initiatives. These can contribute to establishing an evidence base for effective policy responses in each of the three areas tackled by this conference.
10. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for employment, labour market and social policies, as well as for agriculture development and food security commit ourselves to building employment, social protection and food security policies that will ensure that every working woman and man has the opportunity to participate in the economy and contribute to an economic and labour market recovery with equity.
11. We also commit ourselves to continue the sharing of strategies that have been found to be successful, and maintain the dialogue across region that is needed to ensure a strong and effective economic and labour market recovery of the entire region, and to do this in close collaboration with the UN system, including the ILO, FAO, UNICEF and UNDP, as well as with the international and regional financial institutions and other international and regional partners.