

ILO Regional Conference

“The Social Economy – Africa’s Response to the Global Crisis”

Johannesburg, 19-21 October 2009

**PLAN OF ACTION**  
**FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTERPRISES AND**  
**ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA**

## PREAMBLE

**We, the participants at the Conference on “The Social Economy: Africa’s response to the Global Crisis” (Johannesburg, 19-21 October 2009)**

1. **Having agreed** on the following definition of the social economy:  
“the social economy is a concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity”;
2. **Recognizing** the importance of the role of the social economy and its enterprises and organizations in African society, as well as their role in responding to the multifaceted crisis affecting African countries and their people, including those working in the informal economy and in rural areas;
3. **Further recognizing** the extraordinary diversity of the social economy and the specificity of each of its components, namely cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises;
4. **Recalling** the efforts of many African governments and regional bodies to create a favourable environment for social economy enterprises and organizations, as well as the aims of the Declaration and Plan of action adopted by the African Union Extra-Ordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 3-9 September 2004);
5. **Acknowledging** the congruence of the aims of the social economy in Africa with the relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and documents, namely:
  - Recovering from the crisis – A Global Jobs Pact (International Labour Conference, 2009);
  - the African Decent Work Crisis Portfolio adopted by the Preparatory Meeting of Experts on the 1<sup>st</sup> African Decent Work Symposium (Addis Ababa, February 2009);
  - the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008);
  - the Decent Work Agenda for Africa: 2007-2015;
  - ILO Recommendation 193 concerning the Promotion of Cooperatives (2002)
  - the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work (2001);
  - the outcomes and conclusions of recent general discussions at the International Labour Conference (ILC) on the informal economy<sup>1</sup>, sustainable enterprises<sup>2</sup>, youth employment<sup>3</sup>, rural employment<sup>4</sup>, social protection<sup>5</sup> and gender equality<sup>6</sup>;
  - the ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work (1998).

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution concerning decent work and the informal economy (90<sup>th</sup> ILC Session, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises (96<sup>th</sup> ILC Session, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Resolution concerning youth employment (93<sup>rd</sup> ILC Session, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Resolution concerning the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction (97<sup>th</sup> ILC Session, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Committee on Social Security (89<sup>th</sup> ILC Session, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Committee on Gender Equality (98<sup>th</sup> ILC Session, 2009).

6. **Convinced** that the social economy provides complementary paths to development that coherently bring together the concerns of economic sustainability, social justice, ecological balance, political stability, conflict resolution and gender equality;
7. **Aware** of the need to address the following issues in a coherent and integrated manner: the promotion of cooperatives and other social economy enterprises and organizations as well as access to decent work and its four pillars, namely, labour standards - including the fundamental principles and rights at work -, decent employment creation for women and men, social protection for all, and tripartism and social dialogue;
8. **Observing** the resilience of many social economy enterprises and organizations in times of crisis in general, and more specifically in the context of the current global economic, financial, social and employment crisis;
9. **Acknowledging** the contribution of social economy enterprises and organizations in meeting women's and men's needs and aspirations, contributing to the decent work agenda, addressing the food crisis, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and environmental challenges, and enhancing voice and representation;
10. **Recognizing** the need to build and develop linkages between the social economy actors and other private and public actors, as well as with employers' and workers' organizations;
11. **Stressing** that the promotion of social economy enterprises and organizations should not release governments from their responsibility to provide for basic needs;
12. **Noting** the special status of cooperatives and their global representative body, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), under the ILO Constitution, which has been reaffirmed by ILO Recommendation 193 and the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the ILO and the ICA in 2003

**have adopted the following Plan of Action for the promotion of social economy enterprises and organizations in Africa and call for its implementation and periodic reviewal.**

# **PLAN OF ACTION**

## **FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTERPRISES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA**

### **1. Strategic objective n°1: At the global level**

*To enhance the recognition of social economy enterprises and organizations and increase the number of partnerships with them*

#### 1.1. Areas of work for the International Labour Office

- 1.1.1. Suggesting for consideration by the Governing Body (GB) that a discussion be held at the International Labour Conference on the contribution of social economy enterprises and organizations to the Decent Work Agenda;
- 1.1.2. Increasing the capacity of the International Labour Office to promote social economy enterprises and organizations and provide adequate services for its constituents;
- 1.1.3. Promoting the role of social economy enterprises and organizations during major International Labour Organization (ILO) international and regional events (symposia on decent work, tripartite workshops, regional conferences, etc.).

#### 1.2. Areas of work for other the social economy stakeholders

- 1.2.1. Building partnerships between social economy stakeholders in the North and South, as well as South-South partnerships;
- 1.2.2. Connecting African social economy networks with those in other regions.

### **2. Strategic objective n°2: At the regional level**

*To enhance knowledge relating to promoting social economy enterprises and organizations and reinforcing African social economy networks*

Areas of work:

- 2.1. Increasing the capacity of ILO constituents and other key stakeholders to promote social economy enterprises and organizations;

2.2. Mobilizing resources in order to establish a social economy programme for Africa. This may include inter alia:

- i. establishing a regional observatory which would be dedicated to promoting social economy enterprises and organizations in Africa and would include statistics, a database of experts, relevant legislation, policies, tools, research, networks, good practices, etc. using national and sub-regional platforms;
- ii. facilitating the exchange of experiences and practices in Africa and beyond between ILO constituents, social economy stakeholders, policymakers and development partners;
- iii. supporting the creation or strengthening of existing pan-African networks of social economy promoters, relying on national platforms of coordination, advocacy and dialogue and other existing national networks, particularly through regular regional conferences;
- iv. identifying the main social economy actors and promoters in Africa and creating a network of expertise on the promotion of social economy enterprises and organizations. This network would be designed for social economy actors, promoters and policymakers and would aim to gather and share experience and good practices throughout the region and beyond.

### **3. Strategic objective n°3: At the national level**

*To establish an enabling legal, institutional and policy environment for social economy enterprises and organizations and to strengthen and promote social economy structures at the national level*

Areas of work:

- 3.1. Supporting the development of national platforms of coordination, advocacy and dialogue among ILO constituents, social economy enterprises and organizations, promoters and policymakers;
- 3.2. Establishing detailed country-specific action plans that are designed on the basis of dialogue – through the national platforms – and in accordance with institutional and policy frameworks and existing social economy initiatives in the various countries;
- 3.3. Wherever needed, supporting the vertical and horizontal integration of social economy enterprises and organizations at the national level, relying on existing networks;
- 3.4. Building the capacities of constituents and other stakeholders regarding social economy monitoring systems and systems for measuring social economy performance (in the economic, social and environmental field) by using the expertise and tools available throughout the world and adapting them to the regional context;
- 3.5. Strengthening the capacities of social economy enterprises and organizations by developing appropriate curricula in training institutions and universities;

- 3.6. Developing collaboration between United Nations agencies and development partners with a view to strengthening social economy enterprises and organizations.

#### **4. Strategic objective n°4: At the micro and meso levels**

**To enhance the efficiency of social economy enterprises and organizations so that they become more effective and contribute to meeting people's needs in terms of income creation, social protection, employment promotion, rights at work, food security, environmental protection, the fight against HIV/AIDS, the elimination of child labour and the mitigation of the impact of the crisis.**

Areas of work:

- 4.1. Increasing the capacities of social economy enterprises and organizations by linking social economy business support institutions and training institutions in Africa with cooperatives, mutual benefit organizations, associations and social enterprises;
- 4.2. Supporting local authorities and other stakeholders with a view to integrating social economy dynamics into social and economic development plans and initiatives through dialogue processes in order to ensure that those plans and initiatives are sustainable and environment-friendly;
- 4.3. Using and mobilizing the ILO's and other development partners' knowledge and expertise in building capacities (through technical units and regional/national cooperation programmes) in order to facilitate and support capacity-building and tools development for apex bodies of cooperatives, mutual benefit organizations and associations;
- 4.4. Improving and sustaining access to finance, business services, social services, etc. for the most vulnerable population groups (more specifically women, young people, elderly citizens, people with disabilities, child labourers, and people affected with HIV) by promoting their participation in cooperatives, associations, mutual benefit organizations, foundations and social enterprises, thereby relying on grassroots initiatives and local traditions.