

# Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan National Dialogue on the Future of Work

October 25 & 26, 2016

## The future of work centenary initiative – an introduction

The world of work is changing. There are several forces transforming it, from the onward march of technology and the impact of climate change, to the changing character of production and employment. In order to understand and to respond effectively to these new challenges, ILO Director-General Guy Ryder has launched the "Future of Work" initiative.

The initiative will help the ILO and its constituents enhance their understanding of this transformation and decide how to best adapt policy tools to identify and capitalize on the opportunities arising from it.

## Overarching goals

The overarching goals of the initiatives are **to generate a shared understanding of the forces transforming the world of work** and what it means for governments, unions and employers; **to provide a constructive global forum** for the exchange of ideas and information between tripartite constituents; and **to articulate and promote policy alternatives** and good practices that can be replicated by governments, trade unions and employers' associations to better serve their members' needs in the future.

## National Dialogues on the Future of Work

In 2016, all ILO members States are invited to undertake national "future of work" dialogues, focusing on four major areas – work and society, decent jobs, the organization of work, and production and the governance of work.

### 2017-18

In 2017 a High Level Global Commission on the Future of Work will be established. Its purpose will be to examine the output from the national dialogues and other input it may consider necessary. The Commission will publish a report and recommendations in the course of 2018.

### 2019

In the first half of 2019, all member States will be invited to organize events to mark the ILO's centenary and to discuss the Commission's report. The culmination of the "Future of Work" initiative will be the 2019 International Labour Conference, with the possible adoption of a Centenary Declaration.

# The Jordan Context

The Jordan national dialogue on the Future of Work, which brings together tripartite and social partners, as well UN agencies, academic institutions, private sector and experts in respective fields, will focus on the following thematic areas:

## 1 Managing demographic transition

Around half of Jordan's population of more than 9 million is under the age of 19; and Jordan's unemployment rate stood at 13 per cent in 2015<sup>1</sup>, putting an increased focus on the need to provide jobs to a growing workforce. Of great concern is low labour force participation and high unemployment amongst women, which stand respectively at 37 per cent and 22.5 per cent.

To meet these huge challenges, the Jordanian government placed employment and Decent Work at the heart of its National Employment Strategy that was launched in 2011, while the Jordan Vision 2025 includes clear targets on reducing unemployment.

## 2 Maintaining social stability in the context of massive population displacement

By October 2016, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan had reached 656,400 - the majority of whom live in urban areas and outside refugee camps.<sup>2</sup>

This influx of refugees has put additional strain on Jordanian society, natural resources and economy, including the labour market. Increased competition over jobs is affecting livelihoods and social cohesion between Syrian refugees and members of Jordan's host communities.

The Jordanian government, through its Compact that was presented at the London Syria Conference in early 2016, agreed to accommodate a specific number of Syrians in the labour market, in return for improved access to the European market, increased investment and soft loans.

Jordan has an impressive track record when it come to integrating foreign populations in the past. What needs to be done to ensure the continued positive impact on the labour market and social stability?

## 3 Managing technological change for more and better jobs

The technology sector contributes around 12 per cent of Jordan's GDP and employs tens of thousands. But to realise the ambition of becoming a major regional technology hub that can offer good quality employment to the many young Jordanians entering the job market, investment needs to be made to absorb tertiary graduates and progress towards a knowledge economy.

## 4 Managing the employment impact of climate change

While in Jordan agriculture only makes up 4 per cent of the country's GDP, it is an important source of livelihood. However, Jordan is ranked among the world's poorest countries in terms of water availability. The scarcity of water greatly affects production and income, and threatens future jobs-specifically in agriculture.

One of Jordan's latest efforts to resolve the problem has been a project to build a desalination plant in the Gulf of Aqaba and a pipeline linking the Red Sea with the Dead Sea.

As part of efforts to reduce its reliance on expensive, polluting fossil fuel imports, Jordan also aims to generate 10 per cent of its power via wind and solar projects by 2020.<sup>3</sup> One of the important questions today is how can Jordan increase its reliance on renewable energy sources and clean technology in order to cut costs and create jobs?

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***The results and recommendations of the Jordan National Dialogue will feed into a regional conference, held in early 2017, to discuss the future of work in the Arab States and the next programming phase of the ILO in Jordan.***

<sup>1</sup> For the second quarter of 2016, Jordan's general unemployment stood at 14.7 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> Figure is based on UNHCR data: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>The government estimates that the total number of Syrians in Jordan is over 1.3 million.

<sup>3</sup> Jordan Times: "Kingdom 'on track' to meet 2020 green energy target" Visit:<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/kingdom-track'-meet-2020-green-energy-target>