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ILO-UNDP Consultation on Employment and Decent Work in the Context of the Post 2015 Debate in Jordan Amman, 13 March 2013

Concept Note

I. Background

As the 2015 target year of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approaches, the foremost responsibility of the world community is to continue to achieve progress against the MDGs. At the same time, discussions are underway on the goals and targets that could build on and succeed the MDGs. The 2011 Report of the UN Secretary-General recommended an open and inclusive consultation process, in order for the post-2015 agenda to have the best development impact. Member States have conveyed the same message in recent briefing sessions on post-2015 in the General Assembly and ECOSOC, calling for a Member State-led process that foster bottom-up, open, and inclusive consultations with early and broad participation by all stakeholders.

It is in this context that national level consultations are being organized with the active participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including Government representatives, NGOs, civil society, community-based organizations (CBOs), indigenous peoples, women's and social movements, youth and children, trade unions and the private sector, among others. The United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) are playing a key role in facilitating these multi-stakeholder inclusive consultations and informing these consultations with the relevant knowledge on development challenges, priorities, and solutions.

Jordan is one of sixty eight countries globally and nine countries in the Arab Region (Middle East and North Africa)¹ where post 2015 national consultations are currently being organized. Since August 2012, the Jordan UNCT under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator has been playing a key role in facilitating these discussions, while ensuring the widest level of engagement of stakeholders at the national and local levels. The discussions have so far focused on some of the key challenges facing Jordan in achieving the MDGs; as well some of the key considerations and priorities for Jordan in the new post 2015 development framework.

Based on their mandates and areas of expertise, different UN agencies have led the various thematic consultations in Jordan with governmental and non-governmental partners. For example, UNDP has led

¹ The other eight countries in the MENA region where post 2015 consultations are being organized include: Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Djibouti, and Sudan.

consultations with youth groups on issues related to their civil rights, with the private sector on their role on the Post 2015 framework, and with relevant government institution on climate change; UNFPA with youth groups and Y-peer networks on population and development issues; WFP on food security and poverty; UNESCO on education; and UN Women on gender related issues, amongst others.

One common priority that has emerged from all these consultations is employment and specifically “better job opportunities”. This is also very much in line with the global post 2015 debate and national consultations in other countries where there is clearly an increased recognition of the centrality of employment to any new development framework.

Against this backdrop, the ILO Regional Office for Arab States is planning a number of activities in Jordan to ensure that Decent Work is at the forefront of the national post 2015 consultations and that the tripartite constituents are fully engaged in the process. These activities are closely aligned with the Decent Work Country Programme 2012-2015 and are part of ILO’s efforts to mainstream DW in the work of the UN system in Jordan.

The first activity that the ILO is planning in Jordan in this context is a joint event with UNDP Jordan Country Office on 13th March 2013 with the aim to launch and foster national dialogue around the regional ILO/UNDP recently published Report “*Rethinking Economic Growth towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies*”, while focusing on the Jordanian context.

Through this open dialogue around the report and an overview of Jordan's progress and challenges with regards to the attainment of the employment and decent work targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the workshop aims to come out with some key recommendations for a new development path for Jordan beyond 2015 with "better jobs" at its center. As such, the event will constitute an important contribution by both agencies to the post 2015 debate in Jordan, particularly with regards to two key themes, namely: employment and growth, and inequalities.

II. Objectives and Scope of the National Consultation

This consultation workshop is one in a series of events that will be organized at the regional and national levels to launch and widely disseminate the regional ILO/UNDP report “*Rethinking Economic Growth towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies*”. It will contribute to the broader efforts of the two agencies to raise awareness among government, social partners, NGOs, and civil society of significant labour market related challenges and deficits in the Arab region that have been amongst the key factors leading to the latest wave of uprisings. Moreover, by addressing some of the major employment related challenges in Jordan, it will serve as an important contribution to the post 2015 national consultations, particularly with regards to the growth-employment-poverty nexus.

Building on the key messages from the report, the workshop will facilitate an open discussion on a number of issues related to growth and employment in Jordan with a focus on labour supply and demand and their impacts on employment; and the institutional framework that determines decent work, especially social dialogue.

More specifically, the consultation will cover two key themes and will aim to answer a number of questions under each one of them as follows:

Theme 1: Economic Growth, Employment, and Job Quality

“What came to be known as economic growth in the region... is now known to have given rise to feelings of inequality and also a sense of unfairness: under a series of reforms and economic adjustments, the move away from state owned enterprises towards a private sector-led model in many cases favoured investors who were willing to strike deals with the ruling elites. The booming real estate sector, construction and financial and banking sectors typically benefited only a tiny minority and left the middle classes behind “(p.106)

Guiding questions for discussion:

1. How has economic liberalization, investment and trade policies affected employment generation in Jordan? What kind of economic policies would be needed to improve growth and employment?
2. Economic activity rates as well as productivity rates are low in Jordan. To what degree is this a result of individual behaviour or the structure of the employment (labour demand).
3. Most Arab governments have invested in education and employment generation programmes, especially those that target youth and women, yet unemployment rates have remained high. What went wrong?

Theme 2: Transparent Labour Market Governance and Participatory Social Dialogue

“The Arab region combined the lowest per capita income growth with the lowest rates of voice and accountability. This meant that citizens had no say in policy making. Governments remained oblivious to the social impact of economic reforms and demands for accountable systems of governance (“p1 in highlights).

Guiding questions for discussion:

1. How would you evaluate labour market governance in Jordan? What has worked and what can be improved? To what degree do Labour unions and the private sector and other non- governmental stakeholders such as interest groups play a role in economic policy making. How can this be strengthened?
2. What are the mechanisms to improve and monitor government and private sector accountability

III. Format

The one-day consultation meeting will create a platform for an open discussion among relevant experts, government and social partners, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders on key employment challenges in Jordan and recommendations for the way forward within the framework of the larger post 2015 development agenda.

In order to ensure a maximum level of interaction amongst participants, the consultation will rely on quick presentations and moderated panel discussions focusing on the above-mentioned themes and questions,

while allowing sufficient time for questions and answers and open discussions in the plenary. Whilst the presentations and discussions will be based on the key messages of the regional ILO/UNDP report and policy recommendations presented therein, they will primarily focus on the Jordan-specific context both in terms of the analysis of achievements and failures and the proposed recommendations.

IV. Date and Venue

The one-day consultation will take place on 13th March 2013 in Amman, Jordan.

V. Participants

In addition to a number of experts who will serve as resource persons during the consultation, around 45 participants will be invited from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government, social partners, NGOs and selected youth groups, the private sector, as well as relevant UN agencies. Specifically, representatives from each of the following institutions/organizations will be invited:

1. Ministry of Labour
2. Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
3. Ministry of Industry and Trade
4. Ministry of Higher Education
5. Ministry of Social Development
6. Jordanian Federation of Trade Unions
7. Jordan Chamber of Industry
8. Jordan Chamber of Commerce
9. Amman Chamber of Commerce
10. Social Security Corporation
11. Economic and Social Council
12. NGOs
13. Civil society
14. Selected youth NGOs
15. UN Agencies
16. Relevant Donors
