

REMARKS DELIVERED BY
THE FEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS ZAMBIA
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - LYSON MANDO,
OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE ZAMBIA DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROFILE
31st JANUARY, 2013 - INTERCONTINENTALHOTEL, LUSAKA

- Distinguished guests
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to you all. It is my pleasure and my privilege to speak to you today on behalf of my fellow colleagues and members of the Federation of Free Trade Unions in Zambia. Promoting and defending decent work for the people of Zambia is at the heart of our organization's vision and mission. The launch of the Decent Work Country Profile we are witnessing today is an event of paramount importance not just for those of us who are active in the struggle to make decent work a reality, but for all the well-meaning people of this country as well.

Ladies and gentlemen

Although we wish it was not so, the Decent Work Country Profile we are launching today confirms many of the issues we have been emphasizing and which we will continue to emphasise as major obstacles to decent work for the majority of Zambians. First and foremost the casualization of employment must be checked. The men and women of this country continue to be denied their basic rights to security and stability of work and all the manifold benefits that come with an adequate and stable income. Men and women who earn wages that barely meet the basic needs of their families cannot educate themselves or their children, so how can the labour force of this country be prepared to meet the demands of the growing economy? Men and women who earn a bare minimum with no long-term security of work cannot access bank loans to build better homes for themselves and their families, so how can parents offer their children a better future above the poverty they themselves have suffered? Men and women, the people of this nation, who earn their income from the informal work they do simply to survive have no access to social security, pensions or medical aid schemes to support themselves and their families during their times of ill health or old age, placing those burdens on the very same generations of children they were unable to uplift out of poverty in the first place.

Ladies and gentlemen

This reality cannot be acceptable in a county that has seen economic prosperity such as Zambia has experienced over the last number of year. Such a reality cannot be acceptable in a society that understands that we are all interdependent and that we need each other –employers need employees to provide a valuable service to help their businesses prosper and the employees need the employers to maintain successful businesses and pay them for the work well enough so that they too can maintain their families successfully. Successful and prosperous families mean more disposable income and so more customers for those same businesses. If we can understand and accept that we **all** lose when we hold back families and the youth from living decent lives, we can turn the picture around, we can work together to create a new reality for both the employers and the employees and in the end, Zambia will win. We will **all** win.

This decent work country profile offers us the unique opportunity to look back over time and compare where we are today with where we were a decade or more ago. It gives us a picture of what we have and have not achieved and whether or not we charted a positive road towards empowering Zambians out of poverty. This picture is a very challenging one. 90 per cent of the working population in Zambia still works in the informal sector. 14 per cent of youths are unemployed. The working age population is expected to grow at twice the rate of the population growth rate.

We have a lot of work to do if we are going to meet these challenges and set a different course for the people of Zambia.

Ladies and gentlemen

Although we have many challenges ahead of us, we also have many opportunities. Not only can we look back at the last decade and evaluate where we have been and what we have done or not done, but we can now take this opportunity to once again look to the future and decide on what reality we want to create for the next 10 years and beyond. We can use this opportunity to take stock of what each and every one of us can do to be a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. We have a great opportunity but we also a grave responsibility to the future generations of this country to use what we know today to help create a better tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the International Labour Organization, the Zambia Federations of Employers, the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions and all the other partners and stakeholders who worked tirelessly to produce this country profile report. The cooperation and team spirit that has marked this process serves as a reminder to all us of that social dialogue, sharing of concerns and ideas and constructive criticism are vital components of the journey towards achieving decent work. The importance of independent and democratic unions that allow employees and employers alike to gather and unite behind their respective causes and agendas cannot be over emphasized. The right to collective bargaining and negotiation are fundamental cornerstones of a

democratic society and are rights that must be preserved and protected at all times. It is an invaluable tool that is there to serve us all as we work together towards our common goals.

Ladies and gentlemen

I thank you all once again for your time and attention.