

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF ROADS AND HIGHWAYS, HON. JOE GIDISU (MP) AT
THE OPENING OF THE 14TH ILO REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR LABOUR BASED
PRACTITIONERS AT THE ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
ON 5TH SEPTEMBER, 2011**

Mr. Chairman

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Hon. Ministers of State

Honourable Members of Parliament

Honourable Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives

Seminar Participants

Chief Directors/ Directors

Heads of Agencies/Departments

Distinguished Guest

Media Practitioners

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am singularly honoured to be offered the opportunity to address the opening of the 14th ILO Regional Seminar for Labour Based Practitioners today at the Accra International Conference Centre in Ghana. This Seminar could not have come at a more opportune time than this when Ghana is committed towards reducing poverty and improving the well-being of her citizens through the better Ghana Agenda.

The International Labour Organisation organises regional seminars for labour-based practitioners every two years. These seminars bring together practitioners in labour-based works, policy makers, researchers and academicians from all over the world to discuss and share ideas and experiences on labour based technologies and employment intensive policies and practices. This is aimed at promoting widespread and cost-effective use of employment-intensive approaches to infrastructure development. These result in sustainable assets and optimise creation of employment opportunities.

The past thirteen Regional Seminars have been held in various Sub-Saharan Countries. Ghana first hosted the regional seminars in 1996 under the theme labour based contracting.

During the 13th Regional Seminar in Kampala in 2009, Ghana agreed to host the 14th Regional Seminar in Accra in 2011. Subsequently in 2010, the Government of Ghana represented by the Ministry of Roads and Highways (MRH) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Labour Organization for the organization of the seminar. The Ministry of Roads and Highways is collaborating with the Ministries of Local Government and Rural Development as well as Employment and Social Welfare under the theme *'Public Works for Decent Jobs and Poverty Reduction: Policies and Practices'*.

Mr. Chairman

The Department of Feeder Roads under the Ministry of Roads and Highways in 1986 and ILO with support from the World Bank and UNDP implemented a labour based road construction programme for the rehabilitation of roads between 1986 and 2000. The use of labour-based methods in Ghana produced gravel roads of quality comparable to those produced using equipment-based methods and generated rural employment in a cost-effective manner.

In implementing the programme, Ghana was the first country to adopt the use of small scale contractors. After about 15 years of LBT practice, about 5,400 km of very poor rural roads had been rehabilitated. An estimated amount of Thirty Million (US\$30 million) US Dollars was injected into the rural economy as wages and a total of 13 million person-days of employment through productive work was generated.

Mr. Chairman

With each contractor employing up to 120 underemployed and unemployed youth per day in the rural areas, documented impact assessment of the pilot phase showed tremendous change in lives for the better. Inherent self-targeting mechanism of LBT showed a consistent 30% - 70% female to male ratio in the

works. Human capital developed under this programme are currently being utilized in other sister African countries for rural employment creation and poverty reduction programmes.

Apart from the road sector, the provision of basic school infrastructure, small water harvesting systems for irrigation and creation of water reservoirs for livestock among others can be provided using labour-based technology to create employment in the rural communities.

The Government is considering the adoption of the public works development concept whereby sector programmes will include components that will be implemented by labour based methods. This will guarantee sustainable labour-based work for the vulnerable in society and also for poverty reduction.

The Government looks forward to recommendations from this seminar and will do its best to create an enabling environment to realise the objectives for the promotion of labour based works in Ghana.

Mr. Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the seminar organisers for the efforts so far made towards the realization of the seminar. I also wish to thank all of you for your presence at this opening.

Thank You and May God bless us all.