

African Minister's of Labour and Public Works commit to greater investment in labour-intensive infrastructure delivery

PRESS RELEASE

Durban, South Africa. 09 October 2007. Ministers of Labour and Public Works from eleven African countries i.e. Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe attending a Ministerial meeting at the on-going 12th Regional Seminar for Labour-Intensive Practice committed to increasing investment in infrastructure with a high potential to create employment. In addition, they committed to supporting the creation of a conducive policy framework and appropriate institutional mechanisms and tools to ensure that the employment intensity of infrastructure investments is increased to their full potential. The Ministers also called for the development of employment impact assessment tools and methodologies to support investment policy decision making and resource allocation.

The statement followed a Ministerial meeting in which they critically analysed and discussed the potential of infrastructure and service delivery in creating decent productive employment opportunities for the unemployed, its impact in the reduction of poverty and contribution to social cohesion and political stability. This meeting took place after the Ministers participation in the deliberations of the Regional Seminar, which has attracted over 400 delegates from over 20 countries, as well as toured sites of the ambitious five year South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme targeting to create one million jobs.

The bi-annual Regional Seminar organized by the ILO and co-hosted by a different African host country, offers African and other developing countries a forum to focus on measures to address the dual developmental challenges of employment creation and infrastructure investment.

As stated by the host Minister of Public Works, Ms Thoka Didiza during her opening address "This 12th Regional Seminar is about the right to work, the right to life and to human dignity. The conference theme, "Prioritising employment creation in government policies, investments and infrastructure programmes" aptly captures the call of millions of jobless people for intensified action". The opening ceremony was also addressed Director ILO Pretoria Office, Ms Judica Amri-Makhetha.

Full Ministerial Statement attached.

Prioritizing Employment Creation in Government Policies and Investments in Infrastructure Programmes

Statement by Ministers of Public Works and Labour made during the Ministerial Roundtable at the 12th Regional Seminar on Labour Intensive Practice, 9 October 2007, Durban, South Africa

1. **WE**, the Ministers of Public Works and Labour meeting at the 12th Regional Seminar for Labour-Intensive Construction held on 08 – 12 October 2007 in Durban, South Africa;
2. **Reflecting**, on the recommendations from the 11th Regional Seminar held in Mombasa, Kenya, in October 2005;
3. **Recalling** the global commitment made under the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG 1) to half extreme poverty by 2015;
4. **Recalling** the commitments made by the African Heads of States and governments at their third Extra Ordinary Session on Employment and Poverty Alleviation held on 8-9 September, 2004 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso¹;
5. **Concerned** that unemployment and underemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa is the highest in the world and is threatening the development of our respective countries and the region in general;
6. **Acknowledging** the commitments we all made nationally in our respective national development plans, regionally and globally to reduce poverty through the creation of productive employment and the provision of essential infrastructure and service delivery;
7. **Noting** with appreciation the effort and achievements regionally in countries such as Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe in making infrastructure and service delivery employment friendly;

¹ Declaration on Poverty and Employment. Assembly of the Africa Union Third Extraordinary Session on Employment and Poverty Alleviation 8-9 September 2004, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

8. **Recognizing** that equal access to employment is a basic human right and gives dignity to individuals and communities, and that it is key to social cohesion, economic and political stability;
9. **Acknowledging** that public and private sector investments in infrastructure and service delivery in both rural and urban settings are on the increase;
10. **Having** deliberated on employment creation in government policies and investment in infrastructure programmes at the 12th Regional Seminar on Labour Intensive Practices in Durban, South Africa;
11. **Appreciating** the exchange of knowledge and experience on employment intensive approaches to infrastructure;
12. **Carefully analyzing** the achievements made by the South Africa government's national Expanded Public Works Programme and other similar programmes across the continent and beyond established to create employment opportunities and skills development through the provision of essential infrastructure and basic services;
13. **Recognising** the technical advisory support provided by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) towards placing employment at the centre of economic and social policies and towards operationalising these policies;
14. **HAVING UNDERTAKEN** a critical review and discussion of the potential of infrastructure and service delivery in creating decent productive employment opportunities for the unemployed, its impact in the reduction of poverty and contribution to social cohesion and political stability;

COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

1. **Develop** a policy framework that supports the increased and wider utilization of locally available resources in the delivery and maintenance of infrastructure and services;
2. **Promote** the multi-sectoral application of employment intensive approaches covering environment, social infrastructure, service delivery, tourism and all other sectors where it will be found appropriate and cost effective;

3. **Develop** tools and methodologies for employment impact assessments to support the allocation of resources in investment plans and budgets, including recurrent and capital budget, to interventions that have high potential for the creation of employment opportunities;
4. **Put in place** strategies that encourage government departments to create employment opportunities in different sectors for an efficient delivery without compromising quality or cost of the asset;
5. **Put in place** appropriate planning, designing and implementation tools and institutional mechanisms that favour the application of locally available resources where appropriate and competitive;
6. **Improve and encourage** the participation of emerging local entrepreneurs that promote the use of local resources through the provision of access to skills, resources and work;
7. **Empower** target groups through their participation in identification, planning designing and implementation of infrastructure and services that will have high impact on improving their lives;
8. **Put in place** monitoring mechanisms that measure, evaluate and document the achievements made in creating employment opportunities, skills development and business opportunities using investments made in infrastructure delivery, and;
9. **Reaffirm** the commitments made by the African Heads of States and governments at their third Extra Ordinary Session on Employment and Poverty Alleviation held on 8-9 September, 2004 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso;

Call upon the ILO to continue to provide technical advisory support on the harmonization of approaches on optimizing the employment potential of public investment in infrastructure and to strengthen knowledge management and sharing for increased and efficient application of employment-intensive approaches, and on linking up with the African Employment Forum and others.

09 October 2007
Durban, South Africa