



12th African Regional Meeting

Johannesburg, South Africa, 11–14 October 2011

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Report of the 12th African Regional Meeting

Introduction

1. The 12th African Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 11 to 14 October 2011.
2. The Meeting adopted its programme, appointed a Credentials Committee in accordance with the Rules for Regional Meetings, 2008, and established a Drafting Committee to consider conclusions for submission to the plenary.

Opening ceremony

3. The Meeting unanimously elected Ms Mildred Nelisiwe Oliphant, Minister of Labour of South Africa, as its Chairperson and Mr Enoch Teye Mensah, Minister of Employment and Social Welfare of Ghana, Mr Mthunzi Mdwaba (Employers' delegate, South Africa) and Mr Kasahun Follo (Workers' delegate, Ethiopia) as its Vice-Chairpersons.
4. In her opening statement, Ms Oliphant expressed thanks and appreciation for her election as the Chair of the Meeting. She began by reiterating that “conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperiled ...”. Economic growth needed to serve the well-being of men and women by creating jobs, fighting inequality and poverty. The Regional Meeting should present a message of hope.
5. She noted that various reports had pointed to the impact of the 2008–09 recession on youth unemployment. In South Africa, Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) figures showed that a high number of unemployed were between 15 and 34 years of age. The National Planning Commission, in a recent diagnostic report, found that if a young person did not get a job by age 24, they were unlikely to do so. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 400 million new jobs would be needed by 2020 to absorb newcomers into the jobs market. Africa's economic growth needed to translate into concrete opportunities in the labour market and youth employment needed to be at the centre of the global development agenda. Recovery would not be sufficient until there was employment recovery, otherwise not only the global economy, but also social cohesion, would be at risk.
6. She observed that the majority of the global population did not have even the most basic social security, which further compounded the employment situation. There had been insufficient investment in social security. Most governments had adequate resources to

mount programmes that could eventually meet social security needs. She noted that the major obstacles, in her view, were political and administrative, and not financial. She affirmed South Africa's commitment to a sustainable provision of social security for its people and called for the establishment of a social protection floor (SPF). In this regard, she advocated support for a Recommendation being drawn up by the ILO for adoption during the 2012 Conference.

7. Minister Oliphant noted the adoption of the HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200), and informed the Meeting that it had been cited by the South African Labour Court in favour of a worker who lost his job on the basis of HIV status. The South African Government had committed itself to a number of wide-ranging actions regarding the fight against HIV and AIDS.
8. She highlighted the situation wherein domestic workers had lacked recognition as workers and welcomed the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which brought these workers into the mainstream and ensured they enjoyed the same basic labour rights as other workers. She concluded by expressing South Africa's appreciation for the ILO Director-General's contribution and advocacy for Decent Work. Africa had greatly benefitted from his leadership and was on a firm footing to submit an African candidate to succeed him.
9. The Vice-Chairperson of the Employers' group expressed his group's appreciation of the role the Director-General had played in mainstreaming Decent Work in the development agenda. The launch of Business Africa on 10 October 2011 would ensure that Africa took its rightful place in global business, not as a passenger, but as a driver of its own vehicle. He noted the role that the Employers' group had played in the response to the economic crisis. The McKinsey Report, "Lions on the Move", showed that Africa was experiencing an economic turnaround. The challenge was how to sustain growth, diversify the economic structure and create employment opportunities for youth. Public-private dialogue was key to creating an enabling environment for enterprise creation and development. He noted the need to create linkages between large and small businesses and added that access to finance, business development services, and entrepreneurship training were crucial to lifting the productivity of the informal economy.
10. The General Secretary of the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) noted that Africa had been in crisis for many decades in terms of climate, energy, food and now the global economic and financial crisis. Conflict persisted in many countries. The crisis had heavily impacted Africa's women and youth and contributed to increasing informality and precariousness. There had been considerable job losses and rising unemployment as a result of closures and the cancellation of much-needed investment, all of which had impacted negatively on workers. He called on leadership to utilize the abundant natural and human resources to the benefit of the African people. He advocated for a new policy framework designed to facilitate structural transformation and industrialization in Africa. Such policies would achieve real social inclusion and development of value-added production and not merely trade in natural resources. Assistance was needed from the ILO in this regard. Trade unions would be an active partner in this process and he noted, in particular, the need to review Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) to address the priorities of labour and trade unions.
11. The Chairperson of the Governing Body, Mr Greg Vines, thanked the participants for their support during his election as Chairperson of the Governing Body in June 2011. Africa had made significant progress, as was evident by its economic and political importance on the world stage. Growth was projected to be 5.6 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa, rising to 6.5 per cent in 2012. However, this growth needed to be strong and inclusive. Events in North Africa had opened new hopes on the continent and showed the way for the rest of the world. In his view, the events were a reminder that a society which grows without

including all its segments or which curtails fundamental freedoms is bound to fail. He noted the role that the ILO played in the African region, providing policy guidance to the many challenges, including the financial and economic crisis, through the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization as well as of the Global Jobs Pact. In these difficult times, the world in general, and Africa in particular needed more ILO and not less. This Meeting provided a key opportunity to further define the development policy agenda and priorities

12. The Chairperson of the Bureau of the African Union (AU), Labour and Social Affairs Commission stated that Africa's main challenge was to achieve economic growth while also creating employment opportunities for youth and women. The reality of jobless growth was a major challenge. He appealed for dialogue between governments, employers and workers to confront these challenges. He reiterated that the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action (2004) was a credible template for Africa to confront the challenges it faced in creating employment. The AU Heads of State and Government Summit in Malabo in 2011 had reconfirmed commitment to the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action. Yet there was a need to build capacity to implement the Plan of Action. Employment needed to be at the centre of all national development policies. He informed the Meeting that member States had submitted reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action in 2006, 2008 and 2010. This showed the commitment of the African member States to combating unemployment. The time was right for the development of a comprehensive cooperation framework between the AU, the ILO and other international organizations, in line with the Paris Declaration. He reminded member States of the importance of ratifying the 1986 Amendment to the ILO Constitution so that Africa might have a stronger voice in the ILO Governing Body.
13. The Director-General of the ILO, Mr Juan Somavia, in his opening remarks, expressed his respect for what South Africa had achieved in the post-apartheid era. The country was showing that it was possible to build a multiracial and multicultural democracy in a time of uncertainty. He deeply appreciated the fact that Ms Sirleaf Ellen Johnson, President of Liberia, had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and considered it a testament to the tenacity of African women. He paid tribute to Africa for the self-assurance, energy, determination and commitment to tripartism it displayed. Africa had proven its resilience with impressive economic growth.
14. Africa's achievements occurred during a period of great uncertainty with growing decent work deficits, strong inequalities, persistent poverty, high levels of youth unemployment, and gender inequality. Yet there were also success stories. The current global growth model did not serve Africa or indeed the world. It was not efficient in generating sufficient, productive, formal, decent jobs and in reducing poverty. It was unfair, unbalanced and unsustainable. A change of course towards employment generation and inclusive growth was needed.
15. In 2004, the Special Session of Heads of State and Government in Ouagadougou took the lead in calling for a more balanced pattern of growth grounded in decent work for all. Timely actions, as called for in the ILO report on the social dimension of globalization, could very well have prevented the crisis currently confronting the global community. Recovery was faltering, and a recovery without jobs was no recovery at all.
16. The financial crisis had morphed into a sovereign debt crisis threatening further recession in the developed world. Africa's main trading partner, the Eurozone, faced a significant crisis. As a result, there was anxiety and anger in many parts of the world. These were the issues the Group of Twenty (G20) leaders would deal with in their forthcoming meeting in France. He thanked President Zuma for his leadership. He also congratulated Minister Oliphant for her strong participation in the recent G20 Labour Ministers' Meeting in Paris.

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17. The Director-General pointed out six key issues that needed to be addressed and would contribute to alleviating the current crisis: efficient job-intensive growth patterns; small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development as a driver of employment creation; investment in productive enterprises in the real economy; respect for and implementation of international labour standards; policies and programmes to protect the most vulnerable and poorest through an SPF; and promoting decent employment for youth as a global priority. In this respect, he suggested the possibility of transforming the forthcoming session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) into a youth employment summit. In his conclusion, he noted that ILO policies contributed to a world with fewer tensions, greater fairness and stronger security. These values and policies put the ILO on the right side of history. He paid special tribute to Nelson Mandela who was an inspiration for social justice. Lastly, he paid tribute to Africa, a continent he loved and respected and whose people had become a part of his extended international family.

**Special address by His Excellency Dr Jacob
Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, President of the
Republic of South Africa**

18. The President noted that the issues being discussed at the 12th African Regional Meeting were critical to the economies of the continent and the international community. They were also very important and pertinent issues taking into account the environment in which the Meeting was being held. In South Africa, decent work was a key national priority.
19. The idea of decent work in Africa might seem like a pipe dream to some, given the history of the continent. However, Africa should work to extricate itself from its painful legacy and chart a new path for development, which would not leave workers behind but ensure their rights were upheld. Workers in South Africa, through their contribution to the liberation of the country, had earned the right to have workers' rights included in the Constitution.
20. South Africa was working to achieve an inclusive growth path so that the country could create decent jobs. The prevailing environment was difficult due to the economic slowdown in Europe and the United States. There were also many internal challenges facing Africa, such as outflow of skilled labour, lack of capacity and expertise, low levels of manufacturing activities and widespread poverty. The share of the world's poor living in Africa had increased in the last two decades. The 2010 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) stated that 100 million productive jobs would need to be created in order to lessen poverty.
21. Promoting decent work would require a coordinated policy. The most effective tool for addressing South Africa's problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality was the creation of decent work. The country had set itself a target of 5 million jobs by 2020. To be able to achieve this, a number of elements would have to be put in place, including trade and industrial policy to create decent work on a large scale; strengthened competitiveness and raising productivity of SMEs and cooperatives; ensuring that the country kept up with technological trends; and the localization of procurement. In this regard, he noted that new preferential procurement regulations would come into effect in December 2011.
22. Most African countries were facing similar challenges; it was a question of the varying degrees of the problems. Economic growth alone could not empower Africa's people and create jobs. Supplementary measures were needed, including support for the informal sector to bridge the transition from the informal to the formal economy; skills development; and a focus on employment creation and social protection. It would also be

necessary to create a supportive environment through infrastructure development, including road and rail transport.

23. This should be coupled with intensive regional cooperation programmes. One such programme could be the integration of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) into a common market of 26 countries, with 600 million people and a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$624 billion. Governments needed to play a central role with social partners in moving from dialogue to partnership in tackling job creation. Strong international agencies were required to provide guidance and technical support. In this regard, he thanked the ILO for being a strong partner in promoting the Decent Work Agenda. He concluded by emphasizing that African countries would need to find new methods of cooperation. Working together was a prerequisite if African governments were to create decent jobs.

Tribute to the Director-General

24. The Chairperson of the Conference reminded the Meeting that the Director-General of the ILO, Juan Somavia, had announced his departure from the International Labour Office with effect from 30 September 2012. She invited the Meeting to join her in paying tribute to a truly exceptional figure.
25. The Employer spokesperson said that the Director-General of the ILO had been a true friend of Africa and a man of leadership and vision. The report on the Social Dimension of Globalization remained a landmark. The first event he attended as Director-General had been the AU Labour and Social Affairs Committee in Namibia. The Employers' group was grateful for the support that the Director-General had given to the Pan-African Employers' Organization, now called Business Africa. Under his leadership, social dialogue had been institutionalized in many countries and the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) had been established at the International Training Centre in Turin. The Director-General had been instrumental in putting employment and poverty reduction at the centre of macroeconomic policies. He had made the Organization able to contribute to international policies.
26. The Worker spokesperson applauded the Director-General for being the first person from the southern hemisphere to lead the Organization. He commended the Director-General's conceptualization of the Decent Work Agenda and for placing labour issues and employment at the heart of the global development debate. Under his leadership, the Organization had adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), the HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). It had adopted the Global Jobs Pact and steadfastly promoted fundamental principles and rights at work. The SPF and youth employment would be on the agenda of the forthcoming Conference. Mr Somavia had contributed to democracy, peace and social policy both in Chile and internationally. His insistence that governments and international organizations consider the impact of economic adjustment policies on the lives of human beings was inspirational. The Director-General had also recognized the contribution of African women to development. He thanked the Director-General for all that he had done to improve the living and working conditions of workers in Africa and worldwide.
27. The Government spokesperson was honoured to pay tribute to Mr Somavia on African soil. The Director-General had instilled values that could guide nations in Africa in their steps towards a better future. These values would be cherished by many countries after his departure. The Director-General had been appointed at a time when markets dictated what actions would be taken and human values were relegated to second place. He had been

courageous in opening a debate that placed social values at the centre of development, enabling discussion between governments, workers and employers. He had sounded the alarm and pointed to the deficits in global governance and growing social inequality that contributed to the economic crisis. On behalf of the Government group, he warmly thanked the Director-General in several languages of Africa.

28. The Chairperson paid tribute to the journey that the Director-General had taken, driven by a strong concern for social justice and a better world. The Director-General's professional career had been impressive, moving from academia to become Ambassador to the United Nations. Among his major achievements as Director-General were his conceptualization of decent work, now globally recognized as part of the development agenda; his efforts to put the SPF at the top of the political agenda; the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the 2009 Global Jobs Pact. The Director-General was a visionary, a freedom fighter, an outstanding intellectual, a great politician and a friend of Africa.
29. The Director-General thanked the Meeting for a moment that was both humbling and touching. All the achievements mentioned had been achieved together, in the spirit of tripartism, and with the support of the staff of the ILO. His words delivered in 1999 about Africa's importance to him were still valid, and he remained committed to the continent.

Discussion of the Report of the Director-General

30. The ILO Regional Director for Africa introduced the Director-General's Report, *Empowering Africa's peoples with decent work*. He noted that the Decent Work Agenda in Africa: 2007–15, adopted in Addis Ababa in April 2007, was an ambitious, forward-looking and concrete tripartite Agenda. It had identified 17 areas for policy interventions. The present report took stock of achievements in the realization of those policy targets and looked ahead at how best to accelerate their implementation.
31. Africa was a continent of economic opportunities. Yet recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya pointed to the potential political and social fall-out when African people were not provided with social opportunities to realize their decent work aspirations. Africa had experienced rapid growth, yet this had not translated into productive employment and decent work opportunities for all. Prior to the financial crisis, the conventional wisdom had been that deregulation would unleash growth and globalization would ensure prosperity for all. However, it was now clear that the continent's growth had been externally driven. The sectors responsible for economic growth were resource-extractive. Mainstreaming productive employment opportunities and decent work into such an externally driven growth process remained a challenge.
32. The report assessed performance towards achieving the 17 targets of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa. Significant progress had been made since 2007. To date, 31 countries were implementing DWCPs. An additional 22 countries were drafting their first or second phase DWCPs. Moreover, 48 countries had made progress in mainstreaming decent work into national development strategies. The tripartite partners had also launched an effective tripartite and collective response to the financial and economic crisis, grounded on the conclusions reached in a number of major continental events. He noted the significant progress towards the universal ratification of the eight fundamental Conventions. In the area of child labour, approximately two-thirds of member States were making progress towards eliminating the worst forms of child labour in Africa by 2015. More than 30 countries in Africa had made progress in adopting policies and programmes which promoted an SPF. These results were encouraging.

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- 33.** However, some decent work challenges persisted, such as the informal economy, HIV/AIDS and the protection of migrant workers. The magnitude of the challenge confirmed that efforts needed to be scaled up to accelerate the realization of the Agenda. The report proposed an integrated approach comprising: a framework for empowering Africa focused on accelerating the implementation of ratified international labour standards; the creation of job opportunities for youth; the economic empowerment of women and gender equality as key development goals; the establishment of an SPF for all women and men; the implementation of the ILO Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the world of work, 2010 (No. 200); the promotion of decent work in rural development; the realization of green jobs as a development strategy; the development of the social economy; the development of a sound and well-articulated system of wage and income policies; and the establishment of sound labour relations as a prerequisite for decent work through tripartite social dialogue.
- 34.** The Employer spokesperson appreciated the sound empirical basis of the report, which highlighted progress made and, in particular, good performance at the macroeconomic level as a result of appropriate policies, market-oriented reforms and private-sector-led growth. There was a need to accelerate the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda to sustain this momentum in the years ahead. Africa must respond to the challenges of globalization, the impact of the economic crisis and the growing expectations and aspirations of its people. The Meeting should note the events in North Africa, which showed that people should not only be at the centre of development but also at the centre of change. He highlighted the section in the report addressing the need for a framework ensuring coherence between growth, on the one hand, and productive employment and decent work, on the other. Such a framework would encourage and facilitate enterprise creation and entrepreneurial initiatives which would, in turn, lead to employment creation. He outlined the basis for such a framework premised on ten key elements.
- 35.** The Worker spokesperson noted that growth had been high, but it was unsustainable, depended on external factors and had not contributed to a reduction in unemployment and inequality. The share of wages in GDP had declined. Member States needed to pursue full, productive and freely chosen employment; focus on macroeconomic policies putting employment at the core of economic and social policies; provide good quality public services; prioritize an SPF; end discrimination; prioritize rural development and agricultural workers; promote industrial policies and build linkages between the agricultural and industrial sectors; create an enabling environment for the development of social economy initiatives; place international labour standards at the core of a new development model; facilitate the transition from informality to formality; ensure the participation of social partners through social dialogue on employment policies including those aimed at youth; fully implement the fundamental Conventions; and promote the priority Conventions and other Conventions that were key to sustainable development.
- 36.** The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Algeria noted that Africa had already been in a state of crisis prior the global economic crisis. Now, not only the international financial system, but States themselves were threatened with bankruptcy. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provided the roadmap for accelerating development and the Decent Work Agenda should be integrated into this framework. Algeria had made considerable progress in realizing the Agenda. For example, 90 per cent of the population now enjoyed social security coverage. A mechanism had been established to promote youth employment. The measures taken made it possible to reduce the unemployment rate from 30 per cent in 1990 to 10 per cent in 2010. These policies and programmes had been agreed through tripartite social dialogue. Countries should ratify the 1986 Amendment to the ILO Constitution to give greater voice to Africa.

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37. The Minister of Labour and Employment of the United Republic of Tanzania highlighted progress that had been made in implementing the Decent Work Agenda in the United Republic of Tanzania. Decent work had been mainstreamed into the 2010–15 National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty. A number of initiatives had been taken to invest in basic social protection. She was grateful for a joint ILO–US Department of Labor project on improving labour law compliance, which had helped build capacity of labour inspectors. She noted a partnership with the Brazilian Government in support of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour. The United Republic of Tanzania had also adopted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008), which prohibited human trafficking. Steps had been taken to tackle the HIV/AIDS crisis through workplace action. Improvements towards the realization of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa would require strong regional cooperation and the continued support of the ILO.
38. The Director-General of the Arab Labour Organization (ALO) noted that the report provided an overview of successful implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and proposed a number of policy options for accelerating it. He noted that the ALO had also set an agenda for employment promotion. He congratulated the ILO on attracting personalities that could support the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and expressed interest in deepening the partnership with the ILO.
39. A Government delegate from Mozambique noted the support received from the ILO on women’s entrepreneurship development, the promotion of gender equality, child labour, and the promotion of labour standards. International labour standards had been a point of reference in the development of national legislation and the adoption of a wide range of regulations on labour inspection and maritime and occupational safety and health (OSH). Support for rural development and initiatives aimed at empowering women and youth had become items of top priority on the national agenda. Efforts were being made to extend social protection. Progress had also been made in promoting tripartite social dialogue and harmonious industrial relations.
40. A Government delegate from Botswana reported that the Government had signed its DWCP in early 2011 and made progress in mainstreaming decent work into national development planning. A number of programmes were under way to address youth unemployment, promote women’s entrepreneurship and close the skills gap through the adoption of a human resources strategy. The labour market information system had been strengthened and Botswana was in the process of considering how to extend social protection. Consultations were under way to consider the ratification of the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81).
41. A Government delegate from Côte d’Ivoire welcomed the report and mid-term progress review. A number of challenges remained, including full coverage of countries by DWCPs, the informal economy, the need for data and the situation of migrant workers. Meeting these challenges would require the mobilization of further resources and the strengthening of partnerships.
42. A Government delegate from South Africa agreed on the need to prioritize youth employment, an issue recently highlighted at the G20 Labour Ministers’ Meeting in Paris and which should also be a priority for Africa. He was concerned by the lack of progress in respect of HIV/AIDS tripartite workplace policies and highlighted a court decision in South Africa that referred to Recommendation No. 200. He agreed that it was time for an African to head the ILO.
43. A Government delegate from Gabon said his Government had taken action to promote employment, including by prohibiting the export of unprocessed wood. It was hoped that the value added to this important export would contribute to a decline in unemployment

among rural youth. A number of actions had been taken to improve social protection and extend coverage.

44. The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Namibia reported that his Government had signed its DWCP in June 2010, which complemented pre-existing priorities in the areas of employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue. A new programme has been introduced to create 104,000 jobs over a three-year period, primarily through infrastructure development. For the longer term, a national institution had been established to strengthen the vocational training system and a 15-year human resources development plan was being prepared. Recently enacted legislation had introduced an integrated employment information system to register jobseekers and to match them with employment vacancies and education and training opportunities. Social protection included a system of universal old age and disability grants and a social security commission that provided maternity, sickness and death benefits. Plans were under way to establish a national pension fund and a national medical benefit fund under the auspices of the Social Security Commission. Significant programmes were being implemented to promote national practices in keeping with Recommendation No. 200 on HIV and AIDS in the world of work, to reach established goals for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and to work to bring national law and practice into line with the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).
45. A Government delegate from Zambia reported that his Government had signed its first DWCP in 2007, which had served as a vehicle for progress in areas such as HIV/AIDS, the improvement of labour market information and investment in social protection. A number of tripartite committees had been established including the Tripartite Consultative Labour Council. Challenges experienced in implementing the DWCP included a lack of resources and non-alignment to national development plans. A tripartite review of lessons learned would inform the second DWCP.
46. A Government delegate from Egypt highlighted the success of the labour and employment offices in providing support to jobseekers. These had also served to encourage young people to set up their own businesses. The Government had ratified 63 ILO Conventions and implemented these in labour law. Efforts were being undertaken to modernize the tripartite council.
47. A Government delegate from Mali said that his Government was implementing the Decent Work Agenda through national programmes. He highlighted a number of new and updated collective bargaining agreements, for example in the public sector and the banking sector, which had been signed. Mali had also adopted a national plan of action to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and put in place a plan to strengthen and extend social protection coverage.
48. The State Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia noted that his Government was implementing the second phase of its DWCP for the period 2009–12. It had prioritized education as a means of closing skills gaps. He reported on programmes and policies in this regard and noted that primary education enrolment had increased to 92 per cent in 2010 from 19 per cent in 1991. The focus of tertiary education was on engineering and science. Efforts were also being made to extend social protection for poverty reduction.
49. The representative of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions called on social partners to strengthen institutions for social dialogue and support all efforts to help workers in the informal sector to enjoy social protection. Employment promotion programmes should include deliberate efforts to focus on youth and women. It was critical to protect migrant workers and address the impact of human trafficking. He condemned the mistreatment of migrant workers in Libya and urged the ILO to work with the Libyan

authorities to protect the rights of these workers, emphasizing that migrant workers should be protected even in times of conflict.

50. A Government delegate from Senegal said that her Government had integrated decent work into national and regional development efforts. Considerable progress had been made in entrepreneurship development, giving particular attention to women entrepreneurs. The Government had also adopted policies to reduce youth unemployment. Steps had been taken to strengthen social dialogue and labour administration. The national committee for social dialogue had been established and measures taken to promote collective bargaining. Reporting on efforts to extend social protection, she noted that the number of beneficiaries of the current mutual social protection scheme had grown from 8,000 to 20,000.
51. The Minister of Labour of Malawi reported that the Government had launched its DWCP in August 2011. This had been linked to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II), which had incorporated labour and employment issues in sub-theme 7, labour and employment, of theme 1, sustainable economic growth, with a view to stimulating and ensuring productive and decent employment for better standards of living. A number of programmes had been undertaken to enhance the employability of young people through attachments and facilitate their involvement in income-generating activities.
52. Turning to the section of the report that looked to the future and what could be done to accelerate the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda, the Government delegate of Zambia said that the new Government would accelerate the implementation of the Agenda by: intensifying active employment policies; strengthening the tripartite consultative labour council; conducting a Labour Force Survey in 2012; reviewing the minimum wage for persons not covered by collective bargaining; ratifying all four governance Conventions; and finalizing national HIV/AIDS workplace policy in line with Recommendation No. 200.
53. The Workers' delegate from Benin noted with concern increasing violations of international standards in his country. He reported that the Government had adopted a law that deprived workers, especially custom workers, of the right to strike despite article 32 of the national constitution. Social dialogue was critical and he asked the ILO to encourage respect for the fundamental Conventions in Benin.
54. A Government delegate from Kenya highlighted the challenges faced by many African countries relating to youth unemployment, the food crisis and the impact of the global financial and economic crises. Measures should be taken to ensure that growth was employment-rich and inclusive. She called on governments to extend the SPF to alleviate poverty and was pleased that this was on the agenda of the 2012 ILC.
55. The State Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia noted that his Government had drawn up the national labour and social affairs sectoral programme, which became operational in 2010. The programme focused primarily on the following issues: social dialogue; OSH in the workplace; HIV and AIDS prevention; combating child labour; employment promotion services; migration; collection, analysis and dissemination of labour market information; and social protection for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable groups. Capacity building and resource mobilization were key to the realization of these targets. The Government had also formulated a growth and transformation plan for the 2010–15 period. The plan was in line with the Decent Work Agenda and would bring about practical quantitative and structural change through agricultural transformation, industrial development, and the promotion of education and training.

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56. The Minister of Civil Service and Labour of Niger paid tribute to the great work done by the Director-General of the ILO during his tenure. She noted that the Decent Work Agenda presented opportunities for African governments to achieve their development goals. Her Government was in the process of finalizing its DWCP and the Director-General's Report would assist in the process. Niger was prioritizing employment promotion and creation, social protection and food self-sufficiency. She called on other African governments to respond to the legitimate aspirations of their peoples.
57. The Minister for Civil Service, Labour and Modernization of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau emphasized that youth unemployment was a major challenge. Guinea-Bissau had devised a ten-year national strategy to alleviate poverty. A mid-term review of this strategy had been undertaken, examining ways of promoting the Decent Work Agenda. Steps toward improving conditions in the informal economy would be taken into consideration. Enhancing the role of government, developing a legal framework for better conditions of service for public servants, establishing a pension fund, enhancing adult literacy programmes, and supporting the private sector would be on the agenda. New laws regarding child labour were being formulated. His Government was developing a DWCP and had set up an employment observatory to track progress.
58. The Minister of Employment, Labour, Vocational Training and Women Entrepreneurship of the Comoros informed the Meeting that decent work was a major development policy of her Government and that combating poverty through the economic empowerment and autonomy of women and youth was of particular importance. In this regard, improving the youth employment rate and facilitating gender equality were major objectives. A tripartite labour council had been created by presidential decree. Efforts to promote entrepreneurship among rural and urban women were under way. She called for the establishment of an African or global fund to tackle the problem of youth unemployment.
59. The Minister of Labour and Civil Service of the Republic of Benin commended the Director-General for the quality of his report. Substantial efforts were needed to ensure effective ownership of the Decent Work Agenda. The national DWCP had been adopted and implementation was under way. The DWCP had three priorities: social dialogue, job creation and social protection. In the area of employment, the DWCP would also deal with issues such as creating a conducive environment for employment creation for women and youth, women's entrepreneurship development and the informal economy. The aim was also to operationalize universal health care and insurance and promote the ratification of Conventions Nos 102 and 183.
60. The Minister of Labour and Public Service of the Republic of Guinea focused her contribution on labour law, social protection and social dialogue. She informed the Meeting that the Labour Code in Guinea was being developed in collaboration with social partners. The code was anchored on international labour standards and would cover issues like social dialogue, social protection and vocational training. Social dialogue was the key tool for promoting decent work and a national consultative committee on labour and social laws had been established to facilitate national reconciliation. Existing social protection had largely been restricted to the formal sector. However, the Government considered social security as a fundamental human right, as well as important for poverty reduction, and was reviewing its social security legislation and policies. Poverty alleviation through employment creation had been placed at the heart of the national development strategy. The country's decent work initiatives included the promotion of employment opportunities for youth and women as well as small enterprise development.
61. The Minister of Labour and Productivity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria reiterated the importance of decent work and employment as a key component of development as noted in the Conclusions of the 2004 Ouagadougou Summit. Various interventions had been undertaken by Nigeria to foster decent work, including the approval of the National Action

Plan on Employment Creation (NAPEC), which set out that the terms and conditions of employment should be made explicit in all federal Government contracts; a review of the banking sector to foster support to the real productive sector; rural development for sustainable rural employment; reform of the national social security scheme; the establishment of a national minimum wage; and the amendment of the Constitution to strengthen dispute resolution. While appreciating the support received to date for the development of the second phase of the DWCP and the national jobs pact, he stated that the delivery of decent work outcomes in Nigeria could be further accelerated through ILO technical support interventions in the areas of labour market information systems, reporting on international labour standards, developing a policy on labour-based technology and infrastructure development; employment impact assessment and strengthening the National Labour Advisory Council.

62. A Government delegate from the Kingdom of Morocco highlighted the backdrop of prevailing financial, economic, social and political crises. He noted that the 12th African Regional Meeting provided an opportunity for member States to share and exchange ideas and good practices. There was a positive correlation between good policies and overall development which facilitated decent work. Morocco's national legislation was being amended to strengthen employment promotion especially for young persons. Decent work had been integrated into the Labour Code.
63. A Government delegate from the Republic of Angola noted that his country was in post-war reconstruction mode. He expressed satisfaction with the Report of the Director-General, and appreciation of the support received from the ILO. He highlighted developments in decent work interventions geared towards promoting employment for young women and men, primarily through the promulgation of the law on first employment. Social protection improvements, the implementation of international labour standards and the ongoing consultations on the domestic workers' bill were also under way.
64. A Government delegate from Tunisia informed the Meeting that the recent revolution had helped to put social justice at the heart of national development initiatives. In this regard, social dialogue was being institutionalized to promote decent work. He noted that tripartite consultations had resulted in an improvement of working conditions for workers in both the public and the private sectors.
65. The Workers' delegate from Morocco emphasized that the Arab Spring and other global youth-coordinated protests demonstrated that existing social and economic models were not effective for sustainable development. He informed the Meeting that decent work was a key development objective of Morocco. He noted, however, that graduate youth unemployment remained a challenge.

Special address by His Excellency Mr Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Togo

66. His Excellency Mr Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Togo, noted the support that the ILO had offered to help African countries promote sustainable development. He acknowledged Mr Somavia's sensitivity to the concerns of the least developed countries, particularly to those in Africa. He welcomed the role being played by the social partners in creating a stable and social Africa. He also welcomed the contribution to the African continent made by civil society and international organizations.
67. He called on the Meeting to consider proactive policies to address the common challenges of youth unemployment, poverty, famine and social injustice. With Africa at a crossroads, stability and security were important to stimulate development programmes. Africa needed

to consolidate governance and political stability, regenerate the markets, and foster wealth sharing. He called for the domestication of principles of justice, equality and dignity, and noted that decent work was a vehicle for delivering these values, which benefited individuals and society as a whole and prevented crises. It provided the basis of a new vision for a fair, just and equitable humanity. There was no question that a people-centred development process was the best way ahead.

68. His country sought to become a middle-income country in the medium term and believed that growth driven by speculation should not be considered an end in itself. His Government was committed instead to creating an inclusive process through social dialogue. His Government had shown its commitment to the Decent Work Agenda by signing the DWCP in 2010. Its programmes were already being implemented. A compulsory health insurance scheme had been introduced and would be extended to the agricultural sector and the informal economy. Capacity building at the grass-roots level was crucial. The Prime Minister concluded by stating that Africa should make decent work the main thrust of its development objectives.

Special debate

Efficient growth, employment and decent work in Africa: Time for a new vision

69. The Regional Meeting held a special debate on the theme of “Efficient growth, employment and decent work in Africa: Time for a new vision”. The panel was composed of Mr Aggrey Ambali, Director of the Policy Alignment and Programme Development Directorate of NEPAD; Mr Alfredo Cuevas, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Representative to South Africa; Mr Yusupha Crookes, Director, Regional Integration Office of the World Bank; Mr Lassina Traore, from Mali, the Employers’ representative; and Mr Hassan Sunmonu, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the Workers’ representative. The session was moderated by Mr Daniel Makokera.
70. Mr Jose-Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Director of the Employment Sector in the ILO introduced a report, entitled *Efficient growth, employment and decent work in Africa: Time for a new vision*.
71. The report was anchored on the growth and development debate in Africa. Mr Salazar-Xirinachs pointed out that the growth turnaround in Africa in the last ten years, together with the evidence that Africa had weathered the global recession moderately well, had engendered a new optimism regarding growth. While the report stressed that there was much to celebrate and be optimistic about, it also argued that the growth optimism must be put in a sobering perspective for two reasons.
72. The first reason was that the record of productive transformation, decent employment creation and poverty reduction had been disappointing. Productive capacity in manufacturing and agriculture remained limited. Many countries had experienced de-industrialization in the last 15 years. Exports were concentrated in a narrow range of products. Vulnerability to external shocks was high. The numbers of working poor were strikingly high. The majority of workers, especially women and youth, remained trapped in vulnerable forms of employment. The gaps in coverage of social security were abysmal in many countries. Although a number of countries had made significant progress; many African countries had not yet fully developed the governance structures and institutions necessary for promoting the rule of law and complying with international labour standards

and ILO Conventions ratified. Social dialogue institutions also remained weak in many countries.

73. Secondly, the growth optimism ignored the high growth record of the 1950s and 1960s. This exaggerated the extent of the recent growth take-off because such assessments started from the nadir of the mid-1990s when sub-Saharan Africa was struggling to emerge from 20 years of stagnation. While external factors, such as oil shocks and the ensuing debt crisis played a significant role, a number of policy mistakes and poor governance were also to blame. Critics maintained that the growth failures of sub-Saharan Africa prior to the mid-1990s coincided with the Bretton Woods-led structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s.
74. Based on the analysis, the report suggested a portfolio of policy guidelines and directions aiming to summarize the new vision for more balanced policies, seeking fundamentally not only to accelerate and sustain growth – which was important – but also to improve its quality and efficiency, in terms of a more diversified production structure and socially inclusive, job-rich pattern of growth. This was the new vision.
75. There were four key recommendations regarding the African growth and employment model: (1) African governments needed to make a renewed commitment to domestic resource mobilization to finance the attainment of the MDGs, national SPFs and much-needed infrastructure; (2) monitoring and better understanding the employment dimensions of growth was vital as the pattern of growth and what countries produced mattered; (3) a debate on the nature of structural transformation in Africa was greatly needed; “de-industrialization” was a worrying phenomenon and African countries needed to explore all possible routes to dynamic growth and job creation, including through manufacturing, agriculture and services; and (4) a focus on sectoral cluster and value chain interventions for sectors with high productivity and high employment generation potential was key to restructuring patterns of growth.
76. The chapter on macroeconomic policy, growth and employment argued that the prevailing macroeconomic framework, as it had evolved in Africa since the structural adjustment era of the 1980s and 1990s, had placed a premium on governments acting as guardians of stability. Macroeconomic policy managers needed also to act as agents of development. This implied significant modifications to the prevailing macroeconomic framework.
77. The following recommendations could encourage the development of an employment-friendly macroeconomic framework. First, central banks and financial authorities should aim for “reasonable price stability” with growth, rather than one-size-fits-all targets of low, single-digit inflation. They should also promote financial inclusion by enhancing access to finance for the private sector, in particular SMEs, and supporting microfinance institutions. Secondly, economic volatility could adversely affect long-term growth, hence, reducing the incidence of volatility by adopting counter-cyclical policies was an important role of macroeconomic policy managers. Thirdly, fiscal policy should not be viewed exclusively through the lens of debt sustainability. Instead, the emphasis should be on a sustainable resource mobilization strategy that could enable policy-makers to meet the financing needs of the nationally adapted MDGs, the SPF and infrastructure. Public investment in infrastructure should be raised to at least 7 per cent of GDP, from current rates of 2 to 3 per cent. Fourthly, evidence from many countries showed that real exchange rate stability was important for sustained export competitiveness.
78. On national employment policy and labour market institutions in Africa, Mr Salazar-Xirinachs argued that a new shift in development planning was emerging which prioritized employment generation, especially for youth. Many African countries had already formulated or were in the process of formulating national employment policies increasingly linked to poverty reduction strategies (PRSs). Prioritization of employment in

PRs and national policy frameworks in general should be associated with explicit and quantitative employment targets in order to move beyond non-quantitative references to the importance of productive employment and decent work to the introduction of firm and measurable commitments to achieve these goals. The chapter stressed the challenge of youth employment and analysed some key components for job creation such as youth entrepreneurship, skills development, sustainable micro-enterprise, SMEs or public employment programmes. It also addressed the issue of labour market institutions in Africa and how they interacted with employment policies.

79. With regard to “Promoting productive transformation: Sectoral strategies for job-rich growth”, it was noted that the employment challenge for African countries was rooted in their inability to diversify their economies and promote productive employment for a fast-growing labour force. As a consequence, there was a growing interest from African countries in pro-employment sectoral policies within integrated policy frameworks aimed at generating employment with more inclusive growth patterns. Productive structural transformations were crucial for sustainable development in Africa. While self-employment played a key short-term role in securing the livelihood of a vast number of workers, any long-term strategy to promote better living and working conditions should focus on the development of wage-employment. Sectoral targeting should go in tandem with employment targeting. The chapter stressed the key role of labour-intensive public investment in infrastructure as well as skills and human development to facilitate the process of productive transformation and accumulation of domestic capabilities. Moreover, skills-development policy should also consider non-formal vocational training systems and apprenticeship schemes within the informal economy to support some value chain development.
80. Agriculture had long been neglected in Africa. This had led to a fall in per capita food production, leading to endemic undernourishment. There were however certain cases of resurgence of pro-agricultural policies, including cut flowers in Ethiopia and specialty coffee in Rwanda. Regarding exports, economic diversification and employment creation, the general discourse on industrial development and structural change in Africa highlighted high dependence on primary commodities and insufficiently diversified production structures in many economies in the region. A key message was that economic diversification and sustainable growth were crucial strategies. In addition, regional integration and export diversification complemented each other.
81. Regarding the challenges facing conflict-affected countries, the report stressed the need in such countries to adopt an approach which was both context-specific and context-sensitive.
82. On “Social protection in Africa: Investing in people”, it was stressed that sustainable economic and social development in Africa required effective social protection policies as a key investment in human development and a contribution to growth, productive employment and decent work. Limited access to social protection mechanisms was one of the main policy challenges to achieving sustainable growth, productive employment and decent work in Africa. The ILO’s two-dimensional strategy for the extension of social security, which included the establishment of national SPFs, emphasized the importance of investing in people’s social protection in order to achieve substantial progress in poverty reduction and to realize the human right to social security for Africa’s people. Such investments would help African countries to develop the full productive potential of the population, contribute to the formalization of employment, support economic and social change, foster sustainable and equitable growth, reduce vulnerability and boost economic and social development.
83. On international labour standards, the report asserted that fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, social justice, security and non-discrimination were essential for sustainable economic and social development and efficiency. Freedom of association, the

right to collective bargaining, the right to equal treatment, the abolition of forced labour and child labour reflected not only fundamental human rights, but also essential conditions for stable and strong democracies and for sustainable social and economic development. The chapter highlighted that in Africa only 12 ratifications were needed (out of 424) to reach a full regional ratification of the eight fundamental Conventions. The major challenge for Africa was translating commitments into effective protection and guarantees, with real enforcement of the relevant provisions.

- 84.** Mr Gilles de Robien, Ambassador for the Promotion of Social Cohesion of France, noted that the theme of the African Regional Meeting was relevant for all countries, not only Africa. He underscored the critical role of growth in delivering decent work. Growth that did not generate quality employment would ultimately catalyse an economic and social crisis. Young people unable to find employment could cause social unrest in pursuit of social justice. It was therefore critical to promote economic growth that would generate employment.
- 85.** A strong link was required among growth, development and work; and between economic growth and decent work. Likewise, decent work and employment opportunities needed to contribute to growth. The G20 Labour Ministers believed that growth must go with quality employment. To mitigate the effects of the new crisis, new macroeconomic policies should be developed. The recommendations and resolutions taken at the September 2011 G20 Summit of Ministers of Labour and Employment in Paris would be transmitted to the G20 Summit in Cannes in November 2011.
- 86.** The SPF was important for Africa in the light of the development challenges and continuing poverty on the continent. The countries represented in the G20 were working together to further develop the concept of the SPF. He assured the Meeting that the G20 stressed the importance of rights and labour standards, and that the entire African continent would need to work together to ensure full ratification of the eight core Conventions.
- 87.** Finally, he assured the Meeting that G20 Heads of State were aware of the competency of the ILO in dealing with employment and social issues in conjunction with financial issues. France supported the continent of Africa and its social dialogue processes. The G20 agenda should include social issues, as opposed to the current focus on financial needs. Such a coherent approach would ensure that key development challenges in Africa were addressed.
- 88.** Mr Ibrahim Patel, Minister of Economic Development of South Africa, pointed out that the meltdown in the international financial systems, which transformed into a crisis in the real economy and a crisis for jobs, had started in September 2008. South Africa was adversely affected by the crisis that saw the loss of up to 1 million jobs. The crisis had forced South Africa, like all countries across the world, to rethink the old growth model. In South Africa, the New Growth Path was adopted to address the critical challenge of job creation and to establish a policy environment conducive to job-rich growth. The focus should be placed on jobs, with jobs as the goal of development and economic policy. South Africa had set an ambitious target of creating up to 5 million jobs by 2020. The New Growth Path put people at the heart of the development effort.
- 89.** African economies should transform from exporters of raw materials into value-added manufacturing. The Minister encouraged countries to focus on rural transformation and the creation of employment for young women and men. Asserting that infrastructure mattered for growth and development, he called for the construction of dams, road networks, railway lines, communication networks and energy infrastructure in order to maximize the employment creation effect of construction and building works, and the operation and maintenance of those assets.

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90. The Meeting should focus on training to develop the capacity of human resources, thus addressing the massive skills gap; SME development; and development of the green economy as a source of green jobs and, in the process, the challenge of climate change. Coherence in national policies and programmes; as well as economic integration, was equally important. Social dialogue was a strategic means of action, but freedom of association and political freedom were prerequisites for effective social dialogue.
91. Mr Lassina Traore, Employers' delegate from Mali, recalled the various events on the global financial and economic crisis organized by the Employers with the support of the ILO. A number of recommendations needed to be put in place to consolidate economic recovery in Africa after the global crisis and promote economic development. These included productivity improvement efforts at enterprise level; a more conducive policy environment for doing business, including coherent socio-economic policies that promoted job-rich growth, particularly for youth; the development of physical infrastructure; growth; an SPF; full compliance with labour law; investment in rural areas; economic diversification; a clear strategy for formalizing the informal economy; and tapping into diaspora finance/remittances to prop up domestic investment.
92. Speaking on behalf of organized labour, Mr Hassan Sunmonu (OATUU) asserted that current development models failed by not putting people, including women and young people, at the centre of attention. Ignoring young people increased political unrest and social instability.
93. The way forward was a paradigm shift that put people before profits. In order to achieve efficient growth, employment and decent work in Africa were needed. As part of the people-centred development framework, other related focus areas could be investment in agriculture to boost food security; investment in social infrastructure, including health and education systems; investment in physical infrastructure, railways, roads, ports and increased electricity generation; deepening regional trade; restructuring the banking system to give more support to domestic investment; reduction in dependency on foreign direct investment; and emphasis on social dialogue to foster closer partnerships between people and government.
94. A representative of the IMF commended African Governments for having pursued countercyclical fiscal and finance policies, such as boosting domestic demand through stimulus programmes. These measures partially explained why the continent had managed to escape the worst impact of the recession.
95. In the process, the IMF ensured that African Governments would have the fiscal space and the finance to act decisively. Thirty-two countries in sub-Saharan Africa had received debt relief, thus creating such fiscal space at a time of crisis. The IMF had doubled the size of its standard loans, renovated its toolkit of lending facilities, and tripled commitments to Africa. It had also eased access to finance through allocation of special drawing rights. Regarding the outcomes of the IMF–ILO Conference in Oslo in 2010, he assured the Meeting that the IMF was committed to working with the ILO, including on social protection.
96. Responding to a question by the moderator on what was new with South Africa's New Growth Path, Mr Patel explained that the strategy explicitly targeted jobs and therefore focused on those sectors of the economy that had particularly labour-absorbing capacities. The Government emphasized the social effect of a given investment, not only the economic effects. Ten sectors had been selected where significant added value could be created by increasing value added nationally instead of exporting raw material. Where there were skills gaps in supply chains, the Government invested to scale up value, output and job creation, a process referred to as "beneficiation". Jobs would be created in the short run, by using employment-intensive public works as a bridge between unemployment

and decent work for young persons. It was however easier to develop high-value chains in mature economies than in weak economies.

97. Mr Salazar-Xirinachs described an observed correlation between average number of years in school by the population and the degree of diversification of a country's economy. With more education, more people were employable and would be able to apply new technology. Education and skills development were fundamental for economic and social development.
98. Mr de Robien discussed the importance of taking measures to promote integration; education and jobs were paramount for enabling the integration of immigrants. Skills development should be matched with the labour market demand – not only today, but demand over the next 20–30 years.
99. A Government representative of Egypt noted that the report, and Mr Salazar-Xirinachs, recommended policy choices in favour of agriculture, whereas the South African Minister for Economic Development had emphasized manufacture. He therefore wished to know what policy recommendation would be most relevant. Mr Salazar-Xirinachs responded that the chosen policies must be country-specific and that they should strive for balance in the choice of sectors to nurture and promote. Agriculture, industry and services were all important. The basic recommendation was that in addition to general measures to improve the enabling environment for enterprises, certain sectors be targeted. The choice of sectors should be based on a number of criteria, some could be chosen for their potential for growth of productivity (which was important for higher wages and living standards), other for their potential for labour absorption. Another important lesson was also to start, not from scratch, but with clusters and sectors where there are already some production and entrepreneurial capabilities, and remove binding constraints to their growth. It was also important to have good institutions in terms of sectoral social dialogue, and transparency mechanisms to avoid distortions and abuses with sectoral incentives.
100. A Workers' delegate from Morocco noted that recent events in North Africa suggested that the issues behind the social unrest were more political than economic. Mr Patel was asked what kind of Government would be most able to instil stability and satisfaction for its population. He responded that his Government had made a concerted effort to respond to people's sentiments by revising the Constitution so that workers' rights were a fundamental element. Also the labour legislation had been substantially revised.
101. Mr Salazar-Xirinachs closed by reminding the panel about the potential of regional integration as a driver of growth. However, the different levels of development among African countries created challenges for Africa's integration. Priorities to promote regional integration included the reduction of intra-regional trade barriers and continental and subregional infrastructure for better physical and transport integration. Collaboration was also important in areas such as agriculture, education, health, and others.
102. The Regional Meeting held a special focus session on promoting employment and decent work for youth. The participating panel was composed of Ms Jandira Hopffer Almada, Minister of Youth, Employment and Human Resources Development of Cape Verde; Mr Mimoun Bentaleb, Secretary-General, Department of Employment, Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, Morocco; Mr Emmanuel Nnadozie, Director of the Economic Development and NEPAD Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); Mr Ibrahima Dia, Coordinator, AfDB–ECA–AUC Joint Secretariat Support Office, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); Mr Oumar Diop, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Social Affairs, African Union Commission; Mr Ben Duntoye, the President of the Pan-African Youth Union; Ms Yuma Mulumi, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Employers' representative; and Mr Robert

**Special focus session on promoting
employment and Decent Work for youth:
A joint AU–ECA–AfDB–ILO initiative**

103. Introducing the special focus theme, Ms Azita Berar Awad, Director, Employment Policy Department, ILO, noted that there was a renewed sense of urgency regarding the challenge of youth unemployment. The world's youth labour markets were in crisis. In developed economies, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, the youth unemployment rate had jumped up by 4 percentage points, reversing some steady decline in youth unemployment rates in periods prior to the crisis.
104. In developing countries, both in emerging economies and in LDCs, the youth employment crisis was associated much less with the global recession than with the structural deficits of job-poor growth and of decent work. The frustration of young people with regard to access to jobs – including quality jobs – to the labour market and social justice were among the causes of the Arab Spring, as well as of the protests of the *indignados* in Spain and elsewhere in Europe and North America.
105. In response to this sense of urgency, the Governing Body of the ILO ensured that the youth employment challenge would feature prominently on the agenda of the session 101 of the ILC in June 2012.
106. In the context of youth unemployment, she noted that Africa was the continent with the youngest population worldwide. While other regions were ageing, Africa was the only region in which the proportion of youth was set to grow fast up to 2035 before declining. While the young were an asset for creativity, innovation, development and growth, this benefit could only be reaped if they could realize their full potential and were productively employed.
107. In Africa, in spite of steady growth of 5 to 7 per cent over the last decade, and of significant progress in access to education, many countries had open unemployment rates of 10 to 25 per cent among young people. Typically, the youth unemployment rate was twice as high as the adult unemployment rate and, in some North African countries, three times the average rate.
108. The majority of young people were employed intermittently in insecure, low-paid informal jobs. Levels of “working poverty” were higher among youth than among adults. A new worrisome phenomenon was that of “discouraged” workers, mostly unemployed graduates who had withdrawn from actively seeking jobs. Youth in Africa were on the move, seeking better opportunities within and outside their countries of origin.
109. The mismatch of skills persisted, despite an increase in investment in education and vocational training. Another challenge was the limited dialogue and action to bring together employers in the private sector and providers of education, training and lifelong learning for preparing young people for current and future job opportunities.
110. Because past growth had not delivered the much needed employment opportunities, a quantum leap was necessary, different patterns of growth were needed to be inclusive of young people. Better management was required of the demand side, through macro-economic policies and sectoral strategies that targeted employment. She also recalled that

in many instances, skills were not the main bottleneck, but that investment in better conditions of work and pay could result in more employment generation.

- 111.** She reminded the Meeting that “youth” was not homogeneous, but comprised many subgroups, including discouraged workers, school drop-outs, rural dwellers, young entrepreneurs, those in conflict affected countries and those transiting from being child workers. Hence, mapping the different groups of youth in specific national contexts and providing multiple pathways for transitions to work, was crucial for targeting specific constraints and vulnerabilities.
- 112.** Nevertheless, she noted that countries had started focusing upon the youth unemployment challenge and some had taken certain measures to address it. A number of PRSs and NEPs were mainstreaming employment and decent work. Employment should be prioritized.
- 113.** Access to business services, finance and skills would be significant steps in addressing the youth employment challenge. At an institutional level, policy coherence and policy integration would be vital. That these policies were driven by ministries of finance and planning showed a qualitative shift in the development agenda.
- 114.** A representative of the African Development Bank introduced the joint AU–ECA–AfDB–ILO initiative on youth employment. She underscored that African countries had not paid sufficient attention to youth employment for a long time. The initiative was an outcome from the 17th Session of the African Union Summit (Malabo, June 2011), which had adopted a decision on youth employment and other measures to support the Summit’s theme “Youth empowerment for sustainable development”. The 2010 Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) had also considered the matter. The initiative would be endorsed by the AU Heads of States Meeting in January 2012, which would foster ownership by member States.
- 115.** She added that the ILO had the requisite expertise to help nations generate employment for African youth. On the other hand, UNECA would be instrumental in providing the much needed macroeconomic analysis. The AfDB was committed to youth employment. Its involvement in building the region’s rural infrastructure, promoting vocational training, harnessing microfinance in particular to empower women, supporting the reintegration of former youth soldiers were some of the tools used to empower young people.
- 116.** She singled out resource inadequacies as a major challenge to addressing youth unemployment. Inadequate political commitment by countries and policy-makers were other concerns. She called for a review of curricula in tertiary education; effective follow up to the 2004 Ouagadougou Summit commitments; improved conditions in the informal economy; and more effective political leadership.
- 117.** In the panel discussion, the Employers’ delegate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo stated that there was a need to democratize the debate on youth employment by way of social dialogue; to assign a pivotal role to the private sector in driving the youth employment promotion effort; to focus on sectors with high growth potential and high labour absorption capacity (such as agriculture); to highlight SMEs as an engine of employment creation, particularly for unskilled and semi-skilled jobseekers; to take account of the informal economy and opportunities to upgrade informal businesses; and to accelerate regional trade integration.
- 118.** The Workers’ delegate of Malawi pointed out that, while youth made up the majority of the population in African countries, they were often neglected in the policy dialogue about youth employment promotion. Young people were often reduced to the role of passive recipients of government support. He went on to stress that, since the last African Regional Meeting of the ILO, only five African countries had made progress in addressing the youth

employment challenge, among them South Africa and Senegal. Therefore, he welcomed the programme of action proposed by the ILO, AU, ECA and AfDB, and made a number of suggestions on how further to shape it, while stressing the ultimate goal of full and productive employment. It was necessary to focus on investments in physical and social infrastructure; to foster job quality; to support social dialogue; to focus on quality education; to build a people-centred framework; and to lay emphasis on labour market information collection that would inform the design of productive activities.

119. The representative of the Pan-African Union stressed that young people had always been a driving force for change in Africa, as mirrored in the role played by youth in the Tunisian revolution. In his view, youth were the victims of an exploitative and imperialist global economic system, and he called for young people to speak out against these structures, and to strive for political freedom. He protested at the exploitation of the continent's resources, and the jobless and inequitable growth resulting from these uneven investment patterns. He stressed that the Pan-African Union fought for economic freedom and called for the nationalization of key industries, and the equitable redistribution of wealth.
120. The Minister of Youth, Employment and Human Resources Development of Cape Verde highlighted the pillars of any effective initiative in support of youth employment, namely resources, planning and management capacities. The Minister went on to stress that, in Cape Verde, youth had been placed at the centre of the Government's broader economic development strategy, and that youth unemployment was set to fall to half of the regional average. She recommended other countries to follow Cape Verde's holistic approach to youth employment promotion, centred on skills development and built on a number of components, such as: a competitive edge; the development of the private sector; institutional capacity-building of all layers of government; enhanced access to social protection; good governance; and the assertion of the nation's identity. She concluded by reiterating the paramount importance of skills development and, in particular, the need to focus on the attainment of excellence at all levels of the education system, and to tailor skills to real market demand on the private sector labour market. She repeated her call for the involvement of the private sector as the driving force of employment creation, as well as for youth consultation.
121. The representative of UNECA stressed that, in a largely government-driven debate, key decision-making bodies such as ministries of finance and planning strongly shaped final policy outcomes and went on to examine the roles of such ministries in determining the macroeconomic policy framework, and described how these policies tended to focus on growth and price stability, at the expense of employment creation
122. The Government delegate of Morocco pointed out that youth employment in his country constituted a challenge, in particular in relation to unskilled and semi-skilled young workers and he made the connection between skills development and a successful school-to-work transition. He also stressed the link between employment creation and economic and political reform, including democratization. He stated that, in order to boost employment, the Government of Morocco was focusing on reforms in employment-rich and high growth-potential sectors, such as transport and agriculture, and foster the spirit of social dialogue. He emphasized that the Government had put tripartite structures into place in order to be able to assess the outcomes of its employment promotion efforts. These assessments had revealed that not enough emphasis had been laid in the past on the promotion of decent work for young people, or on their social protection. Furthermore, insufficient attention had been given to the development of entrepreneurial talent, business start-ups and growth support services. These omissions would be addressed. He concluded by highlighting another emerging aspect of the domestic debate on employment creation, namely the promotion of employment in the social economy.

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123. The Government Vice-Chairperson expressed his concern at the lack of an effective policy framework in many countries on the continent and that the private sector was not strong enough to drive youth employment creation. Likewise, current linkages between education institutions and the private sector were weak and, as a result, labour supply and demand were a mismatch. These bottlenecks should be addressed with urgency.
124. The representative of the Pan-African Union repeated that a paradigm shift was required to meet the youth employment challenge. He highlighted the following directions for action: stronger reliance on local advice and home-grown solutions, as well as a more interventionist role for the State. He requested governments to open up opportunities for young people to gain practical work experience, and called again for young people to be placed in charge of planning and implementing youth employment promotion policies and programmes.
125. The Chairperson spoke on the youth-specific wage subsidy programme run by the Government of South Africa, as a practical example of how governments could expose young women and men to the world of work and, consequently, successfully facilitate their school-to-work transition.
126. The Employers' delegate of Morocco expressed her concern that, for the purpose of boosting youth employment, immediate action was required that went beyond policy reform. In particular, focus should be given to the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market.
127. The Director of the Employment Policy Department of the ILO commented on this point, highlighting an initiative to enhance the competitive edge of the textile industry of Morocco (facilitated by CGM), as an example for such an action programme.
128. The representative of UNECA added that there were many examples on the continent of partnerships between education institutions and the private sector and that these would show how supply and demand on the labour market could be more effectively matched.
129. The Government delegate of the Democratic Republic of Congo recalled that employers had requested governments to consult more systematically with youth regarding employment promotion initiatives. She endorsed this notion, and stressed her support for setting up country-wide labour market information systems for young people.
130. The Employers' delegate of Zimbabwe called for youth employment programmes with an altogether broader vision.

Special focus session on achieving women's economic and social empowerment and gender equality

131. The second special focus session was on "Achieving women's economic and social empowerment and gender equality". The participating panel was composed of Ms Fatouma Zara Boubakar Zakaria Sabo, Minister of the Civil Service and Labour of Niger; Ms Elizabeth Thabethe, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry of South Africa; Ms Litha Nlusyimi-Ogana, Director, Woman, Gender and Development Directorate, African Union Commission; Ms Nomcebo Manyini, Regional Programme Director from the Subregional Office for Southern Africa, UN Women; Ms Zodwa Mabuza, from Swaziland, representing the Employers; and Ms Touria Lahrach, from Morocco, representing the Workers.

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- 132.** The Chairperson welcomed the participants to this important special focus session. She introduced the guest speaker, Dr Christine Mwelwa Kaseba-Sata, Zambia's First Lady, highlighting her work on maternal health and child mortality for advancing the cause of gender equality.
- 133.** The First Lady stressed that in today's world where inequality and discrimination abound, "women matter!" She noted that gender inequality emanated from discrimination at the levels of family, community and societal institutions. Cultural and religious norms perpetuated stereotypes, practices and beliefs that were detrimental to women. Despite the acknowledgement that women were at the heart of global economic growth, they continued to be denied access to productive resources and services. This resulted in women being over-represented among the poorest in society, especially in the developing world. The data was striking: over half a million women died as a result of pregnancy-related complications and over 4 million babies died in the first week of life annually. The majority of these deaths occurred in Africa. This was quite simply unacceptable.
- 134.** Decent employment was the vital missing link between poverty and empowerment of women. It was critical for creating an enabling environment by putting in place policies and legislation, strengthening institutional mechanisms and getting resources to produce results for women's and men's equality. She alluded to Mali and Morocco, the only countries in the region that had ratified the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), which safeguarded the rights, health and economic security of pregnant and nursing women workers. She underscored how women were discriminated against for fulfilling their biological imperatives of reproduction: pregnancy, child-bearing and nurturing the future generation of labour force participants; and this discrimination spilled over into their productive role. Investment in the health of women would have enormous economic and social dividends. Maternity protection was not only a health issue but also a social and an economic issue that deserved unconditional societal and national attention. Her plea and challenge to all States represented at this African Regional Meeting was to ratify and apply Convention No. 183.
- 135.** Ms Jane Hodges, Director of the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, commended the First Lady for her clear message of social and economic empowerment of women starting with maternity protection, which was the subject of one of the four ILO gender equality Conventions. Women's and men's equality of opportunity and treatment was a core value of the ILO dating back to 1919 and had garnered attention over the years culminating in the 2009 ILC resolution on gender equality; this very 2011 session of the ILC had seen the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Many studies demonstrated the direct relationship between gender equality and economic growth: it was estimated that gender inequality cost 1 per cent of Africa's GDP annually. The ILO's gender equality framework was mainstreamed across the four pillars of Decent Work: employment, social protection particularly through the SPF, social dialogue with more and more women leaders emerging, such as the ten Honourable Lady Ministers speaking out at this Meeting. And under the pillar of principles and rights at work, recognition of the rights of working women and men was rooted in the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) – both highly ratified in Africa – as well as the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), which deserved more attention as it advocated for sharing the burden of work and family. She proposed that the panellists share their views on three aspects of the current gender debate: did equality between women and men need to be taken into account in crisis responses so that recovery measures did not have sexist outcomes? If the business case for gender equality were better known in Africa, would women be able to claim their rightful place in the world of work? How can we ensure that gender equality be achieved in practice and recognized as integral to the campaign for social justice?

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- 136.** The Minister of the Civil Service and Labour of Niger agreed that the principle of achieving gender equality was almost unanimously accepted. Yet barriers persisted across the world. Sharing the gender situation in her country, she pointed out that Niger had a very young population comprised of over 50 per cent young women and men and that female labour market participation was vastly below that of men. She acknowledged that there were still serious gender disparities in her country, such as unequal access to education resulting in more women being illiterate; underpaid and over-represented in the poorly paid sectors of agriculture and animal husbandry. She added that, nonetheless, significant efforts had been made over recent years and the gap between the school attendance rates of girls and of boys continued to decrease. In her view, women's contributions to the economy were going unrecognized. Social and cultural factors had contributed to certain stereotypes which were detrimental to women. She concluded by stressing the importance of governments and social partners putting in place concrete measures that would improve the agency of women. At the same time the Minister was convinced of the importance of involving men in finding solutions to gender inequality.
- 137.** The Employer panellist focused on what could concretely help and what empowerment of women actually entailed in the world of work. For her, social and economic empowerment of women was important because it fostered changes in power relations beginning in the home and expanding to the broader community. Empowered women had the ability make choices and women enjoyed autonomy to make decisions. Women needed to empower themselves and other women. She shared her views on the benefits of empowering women. Top of her list was the benefit to the family in terms of earned income, higher consumption, more investment in the health and education of children, both girls and boys. This had been demonstrated in an OECD study which concluded that women spent 90 per cent of their income on the family as compared to men spending merely 60 per cent. She emphasized the importance of girls' education. When girls were educated they married later, had smaller families that they could provide for, and healthier and more educated children. In her opinion, policy options for the economic and social empowerment of women had to include: (1) closing the gender gap in education; (2) promoting wage employment for women; (3) adopting measures that would encourage women's participation in the mainstream economy as opposed to being over-represented in the informal economy; (4) increasing women in leadership positions, particularly increasing the number of women in national parliaments; and (5) using government procurement policies and procedures so as to incorporate affirmative action for women, thus ensuring women's economic empowerment.
- 138.** The Worker panellist emphasized that there was consensus and common ground when it came to the issue of workplace gender equality and that the economic situation of women was grim in many instances in the context of the current jobs crisis. She alluded to the preponderance of women in precarious employment, the risk of gender-based violence, and listed the decent work deficits of women working in the informal and textiles sector. She raised the situation of domestic workers, mainly female, who had no social protection, much less maternity protection. She was therefore delighted with the 2011 adoption of Convention No. 189 and Recommendation No. 201, and hoped they would be ratified soon. But ratification of Conventions was not enough; governments needed to invest in concrete efforts to implement them. She bemoaned the lack of women's leadership in the trade union movement and pointed out that in her view there could not be decent work without bolstering women in trade union decision- and policy-making positions.
- 139.** The Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry of South Africa, in answering the three questions posed, gave an in-depth explanation of her country's recovery packages that had been adopted for distressed companies and were well designed to avoid negative gender implications. These packages were designed for mitigating the crisis impacts on everyone, and did not have any gender specificity. In South Africa, the issue of gender equality and non-discrimination were enshrined in the 1996 Constitution. These fundamental principles

were echoed in the labour and employment equity legislation and working conditions policies. She referred to the usefulness of the Industrial Policy Action Plan and the Broader Basic Economic Empowerment (BBEE) measures. She gave examples of women-focused programmes such as those targeting women in business. As for the role that the ILO could play in terms of the business case for gender equality, her view was that the ILO should facilitate partnerships for gender equality.

140. The representative of the AUC addressed the question of what it meant to achieve economic empowerment. She elaborated on the importance of both access to and control of productive resources such as land, credit and technology. She emphasized the importance of control and ownership of land as a productive resource and pointed out that only 3 per cent of women in Africa owned land. The AUC had put into place a series of measures as a response to the economic and financial crisis: one of these was the decision to consecrate the African Women's Decade under which it was resolved to make women relevant. In addition, the AUC had set up the Fund for African Women. She was of the opinion that the G8 and G20 processes were not participatory and that women's voices and experiences were not being heard.
141. The representative of UN Women considered that many economic recovery packages were sexist because in her view they did not take account of the specific situation of women, nor the gender dynamics of the globalised world today. She too alluded to the lack of participation of women in leadership positions. Regarding the ILO's role in terms of the business case for gender equality, her view was that the ILO was not obliged to over-invest in making the business case for gender equality because gender equality was a question of basic human rights and was an overall objective on that basis alone. The ILO should instead concentrate on promoting work-life balance and changing the workplace culture which could be oppressive to women.
142. The ensuing debate showed that delegates wanted more use of ILO tools, such as Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality and the maternity protection policy advice, especially when governments found themselves faced with the crisis and no functioning social protection systems. Parity between women and men in leadership and in Meetings such as this could raise awareness of the crucial role of gender equality in contributing to the well accepted goal of decent work.

Parallel thematic discussion 1

Promoting national ownership of international labour standards

143. The Regional Meeting divided into a series of six parallel thematic discussions on topics of critical interest to the region. Thematic discussion 1 was on "Promoting national ownership of international labour standards". The participating panel was composed of Ms Memouna Kora Zaki Leadi, Minister of Labour and Public Services of Benin; Mr Enoch Teye Mensah, Minister of Employment and Social Welfare of Ghana; Mr Thabo Makeka, representing the Employers; and Mr Pascal Todjinou, of Benin, representing the Workers. A summary is given below.
144. Ms Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, Director of the ILO International Labour Standards Department, introduced the theme of the panel "Promoting national ownership of international labour standards". She indicated that both the Report of the Director General *Empowering Africa's peoples with decent work* as well the report on *Efficient growth, employment and decent work in Africa: Time for a new vision* reflected the progress made as well as the challenges and the way forward to promote the achievement of the Decent

Work Agenda. This discussion was situated within the context of the Arab Spring as well as the fallout of the economic, financial and social crises in many countries which should serve as a catalyst to further social progress through a better integration of international labour standards into national policies and laws.

- 145.** She reiterated the importance of international labour standards for the achievement of the decent work strategic objectives. As a core function of the ILO since its inception, international labour standards covered every working life aspect: “from the cradle to after the grave”. Ratification campaigns had been launched to foster the ratification of the fundamental Conventions and ILO governance Conventions as well as plans of action developed to support the ratification and implementation of OSH, MLC, 2006, the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). After highlighting the significant progress made in the ratification of international labour standards in Africa (an almost 100 per cent ratification of the fundamental Conventions), Ms Doumbia-Henry noted that the OSH, wages, working time and social security Conventions were “poorly ratified” in the region.
- 146.** Due to the visionary optic of the drafters of the Constitution, national ownership was anchored in article 19 of the ILO Constitution which stipulated the obligation of each of the member States to bring the Conventions adopted by the ILC to the attention of the competent authority and the enactment of legislation or other action taken to implement the Conventions. In addition, ILO instruments required that the preparation, adoption, ratification and implementation of international labour standards should be nationally owned. National ownership would be enhanced by promoting the right of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; especially for those in the informal economy, agriculture, export processing zone (EPZ) workers, etc. Other measures included owning the means of action as in the case of the multi-sectoral approach proposed for the child labour interventions in programmes and budgets and reducing the significant implementation gaps. This also entailed building the capacities of the tripartite constituents in a targeted manner, establishing and strengthening the necessary institutions and governance structures to promote the rule of law and domestication of the ratified Conventions.
- 147.** In sharing the experience of Benin, the Minister of Labour noted that national ownership of international labour standards required an appropriate institutional framework, national funding mechanism as well as effective coordination of all international labour standards activities from within and outside the ministries of labour. She indicated that Benin had ratified all the fundamental Conventions and set up services to promote the fundamental principles and rights at work and particularly elimination of the worst forms of child labour under the Department of Labour. In addition to the structures established, national budgetary resources were allocated to promote the implementation of these Conventions so as to consolidate the gains of earlier ILO supported projects. She also mentioned the new decree providing free primary education in Benin as well as a new law on the elimination of violence against women. The capacity-building initiatives for labour inspectors as well as efforts to extend social protection to the informal economy through the establishment of mutual funds for health insurance were highlighted. The Minister of Labour further informed the Meeting of a new law setting out general rules applicable to the armed forces, public security forces and similar workers, which provided for those concerned to unionize and organize but restrained their right to strike. As such, freedom of association was effective in Benin. Finally, she emphasized that international labour standards had been integrated into the Benin DWCP within its three priorities of enhanced social dialogue, youth employment promotion and social security extension.
- 148.** The Minister of Labour of Ghana outlined how his country had taken national ownership through its DWCP as well as the ratification of standards and the enactment of national laws. He emphasized the need for capacity building to support workers’ rights, tripartism

and enhanced social dialogue. He indicated the need for consultation and cooperation among different institutions of Government as well as the importance of national mechanisms to promote and protect workers' rights, in accordance with Conventions Nos 87 and 98. He also noted that the Declaration (DECL) and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) projects, were essential to support the implementation of fundamental Conventions. The Minister reiterated the need for capacity-building, sensitization and advocacy for an integrated labour inspectorate and referred to the setting up of a child trafficking unit, working with the police on human trafficking as well as with juvenile courts. He also noted the need to extend the reach of labour laws to the informal sector and keep Parliament informed and involved in social and economic issues including standards. He ended by emphasizing the importance of child labour projects in the country and their extension to other sectors including cocoa, agriculture, fishing and mining following on from ratification of Convention No. 138.

149. The Government representative of Nigeria emphasized the need for further support to be provided to help ministries of labour work with other ministries and agencies to enable better reporting of the implementation of standards as well as the sharing of best practices and examples of inter-ministerial coordination. While noting that the time allocated for the discussion of this very important item was not enough, she requested the ILO to organize a forum to enable countries to share best practices as well as learn how to overcome these implementation and reporting hurdles.
150. The Employer panel member considered that times had changed since the ILO was created and that it was now time that issues at the workplace be addressed differently. He stated that the ILO should now opt to adopt guidelines and stand alone Recommendations although he supported the implementation at the national level of the fundamental Conventions. He also argued for strengthening social dialogue to enhance national ownership, and for the reform of the supervisory bodies, in particular the Committee of Experts.
151. The Worker panel member stated that ILO assistance should be provided to implement international labour standards and to integrate them into DWCPs. While noting that Africa had a good record on ratifications of international labour standards, he was preoccupied by the state of social dialogue and freedom of association in his country and more broadly in Africa. There was a need to align national law and practice with international labour standards. He was concerned about precarious employment and the lack of trade unions of the informal economy.
152. The Government representative of Senegal proposed the consolidation of standards into a more coherent whole along the lines of the MLC, 2006.
153. A representative of the ITUC indicated that international labour standards were even more necessary today and could not be replaced by guidelines.

Parallel thematic discussion 2

Investing in skills and sustainable enterprises for Decent Work

154. Parallel thematic discussion 2 was on the subject of "Investing in skills and sustainable enterprises for Decent Work". The participating panel was composed of Ms Paurina Mpariwa, Minister of Labour and Social Services of Zimbabwe; Mr Alaphia Wright, Director, UNESCO Office in Windhoek, Namibia; Ms Jacqueline Mugo, of Kenya, representing the Employers, and Mr Dennis George, representing the Workers.

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- 155.** Mr Girma Agune, Senior Specialist, ILO Skills and Employability Department, introduced the topic, noting that Africa in general and sub-Saharan Africa in particular had experienced growth since the end of the 1990s. However, he acknowledged that this growth revival was not sufficient reason for optimism, given the high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Youth employment was a huge challenge for Africa, but training for new skills would promote employability, leading to better career paths, either within a company or in self employment, with consequent increases in productivity and decent work.
- 156.** The inclusive and holistic training strategy adopted by the ILC on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development (2008), also confirmed by the G20, rightly focused on the need to put in place partnerships between relevant international organizations through the development of a technical vocational education and training (TVET) policy to meet the changing skills needs of countries. Such an approach should help support implementation of the employment strategies necessary to foster economic growth and social development.
- 157.** Improving quality and levels of skills was critical to all African countries given the effect that this could have in strengthening competitiveness and social integration, increasing the ability to secure decent employment and combat poverty. Adequate skills development was among the tools recognized as essential for improving productivity and working conditions and also for promoting decent employment in the informal economy, still the primary job provider in Africa. Education and training could also contribute to the creation of small informal enterprises, to the development of income-generating activities, in particular in rural areas, to the reintegration of displaced workers and migrants and to the transition from school to the world of work, both for dropouts from the educational system and for graduates. It was therefore not surprising that “skills development” appeared in national development frameworks of the countries in the region.
- 158.** In 2008, the Conference recommended that more and better education and skills would support the “virtuous growth circle” involving: innovation and adoption of new technologies; investments and enterprise development; productivity and competitiveness in globalized markets as well as diversification of the economy; social and job mobility; employment growth; and social inclusion.
- 159.** Mr Agune concluded with possible questions for discussion including: (i) how to ensure greater consistency between basic education, TVET, lifelong learning, and national employment policy implementation; (ii) how to strengthen interaction in the region’s countries between skills development policy, TVET mechanisms and strategies implemented to strengthen sustainable employment generation growth.
- 160.** The Worker panellist stated that it was important, when discussing skills, to do so in the wider context of economic policies geared to expanding the demand side of the economy, as a means of creating the need for jobs that a skilled and educated workforce could fill. Skills should not be addressed in isolation but, as recognized by element 6 of the ILO Global Employment Agenda. Free, universal, quality public primary and secondary education should be made available to all children.
- 161.** He recalled that at the Second African Decent Work Symposium on “Building a social protection floor with the Global Jobs Pact” (Yaoundé, 2010) the “New vision for inclusive, job-rich growth for Africa” was adopted. Clear benchmarks that would guide the vision were identified.
- 162.** He reiterated the critical importance of skills development and lifelong learning and added that social dialogue and collective bargaining at the enterprise, sector and/or national levels were highly effective in creating incentives for investment in skills, lifelong learning and

knowledge. He indicated that sustainable enterprises were also enterprises that respected workers' rights.

- 163.** The Employer panellist stated that constantly rising numbers of young people reaching working age was one of Africa's biggest challenges. The skills development system was not relevant and responsive to the needs of industry.
- 164.** She indicated that the Government had a primary responsibility to ensure that young people leaving the education and training system acquired the skills to be employable. The following was required: (i) quality education and vocational training for all, by ensuring that education and training delivered core knowledge, employability skills and the capacity for on-the-job learning and lifelong skills' development; (ii) matching education and training to the needs of labour market with a systematic capacity to respond to change; (iii) providing young people with the best possible education and vocational training to facilitate successful entry into work, and encouraging lifelong learning and social acceptance of flexibility to maintain opportunities for labour market engagement. Lifelong learning policies and services should maximize employability and flexibility with a focus on developing relevant skills; and (iv) education and training policies should be subject to a rigorous process of continuous evaluation and system improvement.
- 165.** The Minister of Labour and Social Services of Zimbabwe focused on what she believed to be the background to the conversation on skills and sustainable enterprises for decent work. She questioned why Africa still remained poor while possessing abundant resources. While these could be said to contribute in significant proportions to the current state of African economies and societies, there were other drivers and other variables which were more often than not ignored in its development agenda. One such variable was skills development. Investing in education had become a priority. It was impossible to talk about developing skills or multi-skilling employees unless the right education was provided.
- 166.** Several skills development programmes were being implemented in many African countries with ILO assistance. Mostly these related to rural unemployed youths and those in the urban informal economy. While these were viewed as stop-gap measures aimed at alleviating poverty, Africa needed to move further and focus on fields such as engineering, mining technology, and mechanized agriculture. These were critical to the exploitation of the natural resources in order to create wealth and thus create employment opportunities. The ILO instruments on skills and training offered a good starting point for re-thinking skills development at both the national and enterprise levels. The political will was required to implement the principles enshrined in them.
- 167.** The Director of UNESCO, Windhoek, focused on the UNESCO strategy for TVET. He explained that it covered: (i) upstream policy advice and country level capacity development; (ii) concept clarification and improved monitoring of TVET; (iii) clearing house and coordination of the global TVET debate. He also outlined the implications of the new thinking, which included: (i) a strong need for inter-relationships between the issues and stakeholders if decent work was to become a reality; (ii) an examination of the inter-relationships between the various aspects and issues; (iii) tackling Decent Work questions through the examination of systems; and (iv) the rigorous calling into question of models to identify gaps and possible weak linkages.
- 168.** Ministers and representatives of governments and leaders of employers' and workers' organizations participating at the Meeting considered that most of the countries had a clear vision and had shown significant levels of development in their TVET systems over the past decade. This tendency was likely to continue.

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- 169.** It was highlighted that beyond the successes recorded with various country policies and pilot programmes, efforts should be scaled up. Successful pilot programmes and good practices should be replicated and institutionalized to provide greater impact.
- 170.** With regard to disadvantaged groups, the Meeting stressed the ongoing efforts by member States to restructure the Africa Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) towards skills development and providing better employment opportunities for disabled persons.
- 171.** The economic and financial crisis had aggravated the negative impact of skilled emigration from Africa. Such migration was a real concern, as it could have dire consequences for sustainable enterprises, retention of skilled workers and productivity. Local enterprises that invested in training young workers would not have any return on investments if these trained workers regularly left. The cumulative effect of the emigration of skilled people could make it very hard to create the critical mass of know-how required to boost productivity and competitiveness and for adapting imported technologies to local conditions. Moreover, the emigration of highly-skilled workers trained at public institutions meant that society was losing out on its investment in skills development.
- 172.** A number of delegates challenged the features of standard TVET programmes including: high entry barrier and limited supply capacity; long duration; cost efficiency; training methodology and text based learning materials; and rigidity in training delivery.
- 173.** In addition, delegates expressed apprehension about the relevance of standard skills training programmes. This concern related to a lack of labour market surveys to assess skills needs, vocational guidance and counselling to youth before training, and the relevance of skills to the specific target groups.
- 174.** Where education was unavailable, or education or training was of low quality, the working poor were trapped in low-skilled, low-productive, low-wage jobs; workers without the right skills were excluded from participating in economic growth; and investment in new technologies was discouraged.
- 175.** The ILO representative referred to a number of ILO instruments and tools that could be used by countries in developing skills development policies and programmes to address the problem of skills mismatch. These included the ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142); the Global Employment Agenda (2003); the ILO Recommendation on Human Resources Development; Conclusions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development, ILC (2009); and A skills workforce for strong, sustainable and balanced growth: G20 training strategy, ILO (2010).
- 176.** In conclusion, the key points raised during the debate were as follows: the role of government, including in the field of efficiency and coherence; the need for a system or mechanism for anticipating current and future labour market skills; the strong involvement of the social partners in the skills development system; improving the quality and relevance of training; ensuring and improving access to information; and ensuring sufficient funding for skills development programmes.

Parallel thematic discussion 3

Rural employment, industrial development and structural transformation as a path to decent work

- 177.** Parallel thematic discussion 3 was on the subject of “Rural employment, industrial development and structural transformation as a path to decent work”. The panel was composed of Mr Gugile Nkwinti, Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa; Mr Lucius Kanyumba, Minister of Labour of Malawi; Mr Peter Wobst, Senior Economist of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); Mr Alex Frimpong, Employers’ representative from Ghana; Mr Atoumane Diaw, Workers’ representative from Senegal.
- 178.** Mr Iyanatul Islam, Chief of the ILO Country Employment Policy, Employment Policy Department, introduced the subject to provide the context for discussion. He noted that to improve livelihoods in the rural sector there was a need to move to an agricultural diversification strategy entailing a shift to non-traditional, high value-added, exportable agricultural products. Examples included Ethiopian cut flowers and Rwandan speciality coffee. Cocoa producers had also added value by producing cocoa powder and chocolate.
- 179.** An efficient service sector, broadly interpreted to include infrastructure, education, health, transport networks, port and storage facilities, financial intermediation, public administration, inter alia, and was critical in acting as a catalyst for job creation in other parts of the economy. Furthermore, IT and mobile phone technology enhanced rural connectivity and created new work opportunities. Hence, diversification strategies in agriculture should be combined with efforts to tap the benefits of the service sector.
- 180.** The ILO had renewed its commitment to rural development based on the mandate of the 97th Session of the Conference (2008). The related report to the 310th Session of the Governing Body proposed a multi-pronged approach entailing rural enterprise development, employment-intensive work, skills development, social security coverage, OSH, Labour Market Information System (LMIS), labour standards and a special focus on child labour, youth and women. The ILO had developed a range of tools and techniques for identifying priority sectors for employment creation (e.g. Madagascar and Gabon) that cut across agriculture, industry and services. Country level work that included several African countries (Egypt, Malawi, Uganda and Nigeria) suggested that macroeconomic policy managers could use monetary, financial, fiscal exchange rate and capital account policies to promote structural transformation without forsaking their prudential obligations. The ILO could help constituents design employment friendly interventions that could improve labour and environmental standards as part of an agricultural diversification strategy.
- 181.** The Employer panellist proposed various policy interventions, including: greater public investment in the agricultural sector; subsidizing agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, machinery/equipment; improved technologies for greater productivity; and demand-driven research. He outlined the importance of access to finance, specifically reliable and affordable agriculture financing as well as a clear role for the banks and microfinance institutions in support of agriculture; targeting new markets and resisting protectionism; investing in rural infrastructure; respect for property rights; improved agri-chain development; social dialogue; tax incentives; apprenticeship and skills programmes and as well as development of cooperatives. A move towards agro-business away from subsistence agriculture was also recommended.
- 182.** The Worker panellist said that a balanced approach to development in rural as in urban areas remained a major challenge. Renewed emphasis was needed in this regard for value addition in the rural economy. Viable infrastructure was crucial for marketability of rural

produce. Price guarantee schemes should also be encouraged. He suggested that improving productivity and provision of decent work would curb rural–urban migration. He emphasized the importance of finance, especially access to credit for rural women. The ILO should support agricultural workers to enjoy freedom of association, upgrading occupational health and safety, and decent work generally.

- 183.** The Minister of Labour of Malawi agreed with the Director-General’s Report where the report suggested that the observed deviation of the growth paths of many African economies from the expected transformation path of agriculture to industries and thence to services, as espoused by conventional development theory, should not prevent African policy-makers from devising alternative development strategies that were best adapted to the unique context of their respective countries/economies.
- 184.** He pointed out that it was possible to move to high-value service products even before the conventional process was complete. An example was India, which was now considered an ITC centre. The Minister also observed that it might not be feasible for Africa to emulate the East African strategy based on a combination of foreign direct investment (FDI) and manufacturing export, owing to structural constraints of African economies and the volatility of FDI in the globalized world. He noted that the Malawi growth and development strategy had been multifaceted, focusing on agriculture and food security, environmental resource management, infrastructure development, alternative energy and programmes aimed at empowering youth to participate actively in the development initiatives mentioned above. He emphasized that Malawi had opted to move towards greater self-reliance in financing its domestic recurrent expenditure while seeking external support for its development and capital expenditure.
- 185.** The Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa pointed out that South Africa’s rural development strategy was an integral part of the Government’s New Growth Path Strategy, adopted in 2010. He pointed out that rural development strategy had moved towards agrarian transformation, inclusive of land reform, given the historical circumstances of the country. He observed that the current rural development strategy sought to revitalize rural towns and villages that had suffered serious neglect, resulting in poor infrastructure and degradation. He indicated that focus in this regard had been directed particularly to the former Bantustan settlements that had been characterized by overcrowding and squalor. He also pointed out that the development strategy sought to promote sustainable rural settlements, land reform to support smallholder schemes, efforts to inculcate a conducive legislative and policy environment for the protection of the rights of rural and agricultural workers.
- 186.** The FAO Senior Economist expressed appreciation that the Director-General’s Report proposed an integrated approach to rural development, with its focus on youth employment, gender equality, the need to ensure food security and the promotion of rural employment. He underscored the significance of productive rural employment for food security. In devising national development strategies, heterogeneity and country-specific circumstances should be considered as there was no universal developmental trajectory. He pointed out that the FAO supported interagency collaboration in the sphere of rural development which needed to be driven by governments and the social partners.
- 187.** A Government delegate from the Côte d’Ivoire expressed particular interest in the debate and concerns regarding the volatility of the prices of agricultural products. She indicated that farmers were often trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty arising from the volatility of prices of agricultural products. Hence, price support schemes were advocated. She also proposed cooperation between the ILO and the World Trade Organization regarding the level of wages in the context of policy coherence.

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- 188.** A delegate from Nigeria indicated her agreement with the Director-General's Report on the jobless growth trajectory that had characterized the majority of African countries. She also pointed out that some of the most glaring challenges of the rural economies in Africa had been the absence of appropriate technology; poor infrastructure; difficulties faced by farmers to access finance; and inadequate training programmes.
- 189.** A delegate from Morocco emphasized the importance of addressing the serious challenge that farmers faced in marketing their produce. She indicated that farmers often faced gross exploitation and suffered severe shocks along the value chain. She also stressed the serious problem of land speculation which she indicated had fuelled increase in land prices. She proposed that the problem of land speculation should be mitigated.
- 190.** A Workers' delegate from Morocco indicated that the panellists had not addressed the underlying cause for the exodus of the peasantry from the rural to urban areas. He pointed out that despite the richness in minerals of the rural sector, insufficient efforts were made towards tapping into the benefits that could be derived from them. He emphasized the need for rehabilitating rural areas and to focus on the broader development challenges of rural areas.
- 191.** A delegate from Ghana indicated that he supported the South African rural development strategy as outlined by the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa. He observed that a rural development strategy that sought to ensure provision of basic services and the upgrading of infrastructure in rural areas would normally attract young people back to rural communities. He also emphasized the need to strengthen the marketing of agricultural produce which had been a persistent challenge and a constraint on economic growth and employment generation. He indicated that farmers continued to face serious constraints to accessing credit.
- 192.** A delegate from South Africa asked the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa if aspects of the South African rural development strategy could be applied to urban areas. She indicated that urban areas within South Africa had come under severe pressure from the influx of internal and cross-border migrants.
- 193.** An Employers' delegate questioned the practical relevance of ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 within the context of the informal and rural sector. He noted that creating a climate of good governance would be conducive towards the promotion of sustainable enterprises and employment creation.
- 194.** A delegate from Nigeria expressed deep reservations regarding the negative attitude of young people towards agriculture, which was due to the dominance of the traditional manual labour approach adopted in agriculture. However, she suggested that the Government could increase the current level of advocacy by way of counselling and motivating young people through incentive packages, especially in the areas of simple mechanized approaches to agriculture, improved seed varieties, preservation, access to markets and labour market information.
- 195.** A Government delegate from Senegal noted that industrial development and structural transformation were presented as the best ways of providing access to decent work. While those were certainly relevant, it was first necessary to find better ways to incorporate agriculture as a major job creator, with a view to providing access to decent work. Indeed, decent work could be achieved in the rural sector through the sharing and application of best practices in agricultural and farm management, and the resolution of issues relating to the commercialization of agricultural products. With regard to industrial development and structural transformation, it was crucial to establish viable SME/SMIs. To achieve these goals, a unified national agricultural policy was needed, together with the steadfast support of development partners.

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196. Mr Islam concluded that the discussions revealed the consensus that agricultural diversification strategies combined with complementary investments in infrastructure were critical for durable employment creation in rural areas. Best practices could be drawn from the rural development strategies of various African countries which could be translated into policy prescriptions and adapted to country-specific circumstances. There was a need for an integrated approach to rural employment and development.

Parallel thematic discussion 4

Moving out of informality: The role of the social economy

197. Parallel thematic discussion 4 was on the subject of “Moving out of informality: The role of the social economy”. The participating panel was composed of Mr Octave Nicoué Broohm, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Togo; Mr Abdeljalil Cherkaoui, African Network of the Social and Solidarity Economy; Ms Karine Pfluger, Social Economy Europe; Mr Mahfoud Megateli, from Algeria, representing the Employers, and Mr George Nkiwane, of Zimbabwe, representing the Workers.
198. Mr Jürgen Schwettmann, ILO Director of the Department for Partnerships and Development Cooperation, divided his introductory presentation into three chapters: (i) the importance of the informal economy in sub-Saharan Africa for employment and domestic production, as well as the decent work deficits occurring in the informal economy and the target set in the Decent Work Agenda for Africa to gradually to reduce those deficits; (ii) the nature, values and principles of the social economy and its organizations and enterprises, as well as the nature and importance of the social economy in Africa; and (iii) the role of the social economy as a bridge between informality and the formal economy. He provided data and information about the share of the informal economy in employment and GDP in Africa, as well as about the contribution of the social economy to the global economy, and gave examples of how social economy organizations could raise productivity, enhance protection and create new job opportunities in the informal economy.
199. The Employer panellist gave an overview of the characteristics, magnitude and challenges of the informal economy in Africa. The main reason for the existence of the informal economy was the inability of the formal sector to create sufficient numbers of job opportunities for all jobseekers. He also highlighted the poor quality of jobs created in the informal economy. He called upon governments to reduce the level of informality in their countries by promoting the creation of enterprises and ensuring a fair and equitable treatment of enterprises in both the formal and the informal economies. He stressed that the problem of informality should be addressed in a holistic and comprehensive manner.
200. The Worker panellist recognized the scale and importance of the informal economy in Africa and deplored its manifold decent work deficits. He stated that the informal economy was acting as a buffer to absorb the effects of failed national economic and employment policies. To overcome the problems inherent in the informal economy a concerted action between governments, workers and businesses was required. He argued that the implementation of the SPF, as well as the provision of free education for all, were essential elements in addressing the challenges in the informal economy. He further acknowledged the essential role of the social economy in building a bridge between informality and the formal economy. In order for the social economy to play this role it was necessary to create an enabling environment based on the principle of freedom of association; fight all forms of discrimination in social economy organizations and enterprises; implement the ILO’s

Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), and apply the principles of the social economy to public policy.

- 201.** The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Togo, speaking on behalf of Governments, recognized the innovative and dynamic character of the informal economy in Africa while at the same time stating that it was not a “paradise of decent work”. He expressed the view that the size of the informal economy in Africa was largely due to the structural adjustment policies of the 1990s. He advocated a pragmatic approach to formalization; in this context, the social economy was an ideal instrument because of its collective and flexible nature. He called on governments to support the emergence and expansion of the social economy in Africa through measures such as a conducive legal and institutional environment, the establishment of institutions and mechanisms for consultation and exchange between social economy entities, an appropriate tax regime, capacity building, access to finance and an adequate system for monitoring and evaluation of social economy organizations and enterprises.
- 202.** The representative of the African Network of the Social and Solidarity Economy indicated that African civil society needed to re-think the issue of informal and social economies. In so doing, it was important to take into consideration African values such as the widespread culture of solidarity. He mentioned that acceptable solutions could only be found if all stakeholders, including those with contrary interests, were able to dialogue. He concluded by stating that building a culture of social economy required conviction and education; the values of the social economy, such as solidarity, democracy, cooperation, etc. needed to be communicated to society as a whole through comprehensive advocacy strategies. The African Network of the Social and Solidarity Economy, which he chaired, had already taken various initiatives in that direction, creating national networks for sharing views and experiences, and developing and using advocacy tools.
- 203.** The representative of Social Economy Europe provided an overview of the magnitude and importance of the social economy in Europe. She mentioned that in the European Union, about 10 per cent of all enterprises belonged to the social economy. She agreed with the ILO that the social economy had an important role to play in gradually formalizing the informal economy in Africa, and gave the example of coffee marketing associations in Burundi which did play this role. She noted that the European Commission and Parliament were now increasingly interested in the social economy, not only as a residual provider of jobs for marginal and disadvantaged population groups, but more and more as an attractive alternative solution for mainstream enterprises, society and citizens.
- 204.** The Chair then opened the floor for a general discussion. In the interest of time he limited the number of interventions to five.
- 205.** A representative of the AUC informed participants of the Commission’s work on the informal economy, in which the promotion of the social economy occupied a central role. A Government delegate from Egypt expressed the view that the informal economy should not be seen as an enemy, but rather as a subject for regulation and gradual formalization. A Workers’ delegate from Côte d’Ivoire asked the question whether cooperatives should be considered as non-state actors (a question answered in the affirmative by Minister Broohm). Other participants observed that informal entrepreneurs and actors of the social economy were interested in productivity growth and upward mobility in the value chain to ensure the long term competitiveness that fuelled economic growth. Such productivity gains could be shared among enterprises through cooperatives and similar organizations, but also with the workers through higher wages, shorter working hours, improved working conditions and investment in upgrading of skills. Delegates observed that there was a need to nurture positive attitudes towards the social economy and entrepreneurship among the youth, women and society as a whole, in both rural and urban areas.

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- 206.** In summary, Mr Schwettmann observed that the panel and the participants had recognized the importance of the informal economy in Africa, as well as its dynamic, flexible and innovative nature, while at the same time deploring that workers and operators in the informal economy were affected by severe decent work deficits in terms of rights, incomes and working conditions, protection and voice and representation. He further observed that the process of formalization should be gradual and progressive.
- 207.** Participants had expressed the view that because of their nature, values, principles and characteristics, social economy organizations and enterprises were well suited to build a bridge between the informal and formal economies, and to gradually reduce decent work deficits. In order to enable the social economy to play this role better, governments should take the following regulatory and promotional measures: (i) create a conducive legal and institutional environment; (ii) establish a framework for consultation and exchange of knowledge; (iii) build the capacity of social economy leaders, promoters and regulators; (iv) fight discrimination of any form in the social economy; and (v) apply the value and principle of the social economy.

Parallel thematic discussion 5

Social dialogue as a key governance mechanism to realize the Decent Work Agenda in Africa

- 208.** A parallel thematic discussion was held on “Social dialogue as a key governance mechanism to realize the Decent Work Agenda in Africa”. The participating panel was composed of Mr John Munyes, Minister of Labour of Kenya; Mr Octave Nicoué Broohm, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Togo; Mr Nicholas Mgaya, Workers’ delegate from the United Republic of Tanzania; Mr Ansoumane Savane, Employers’ delegate from Guinea; and Mr Patrick Venturini, Secretary-General, International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS).
- 209.** The Executive Director of the Social Dialogue Sector (OIC) introduced the theme explaining how good governance required the use of social dialogue. He reminded the Meeting that the concept of good governance had been put forward by the international financial institutions in the 1990s based on three pillars: accountability, transparency and participation. In respect of the third pillar, participation, this required social dialogue and the actors coming together to discuss a particular issue. He remarked that this notion of participation had always been part of the practice of the ILO and was contained in the ILO Constitution and Declaration of Philadelphia. Indeed the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization had underscored the link between good governance, social dialogue and tripartism.
- 210.** He noted that good governance could be discussed in terms of economic governance, political and social governance and enterprise governance. Good economic governance required participation in employment policies, training policies and social security policies. One of the reasons that the PRSPs had a negative impact during the 1990s was partly due to lack of social dialogue during implementation. PRSPs needed to take into account the concerns of critical partners: workers and employers.
- 211.** As regards good political governance, he noted that in countries that were committed to democratic processes, social dialogue reinforced democracy. This had to be based on the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98. Progress in respect of freedom of association in a number of countries had given birth to a growing number of trade unions. This raised issues concerning representativeness in order to consolidate social dialogue.

Good political governance also required the rule of law. For labour law to be effective, the reform process needed to be carried out through a process of social dialogue. As a result of the crisis the sad reality was that many reforms today, particularly in Europe, were being carried out without any consultation with the social partners. He noted the institutionalization of tripartite social dialogue and its contribution to smooth political transition in countries such as Algeria and South Africa.

- 212.** Good governance at the enterprise level required not only collective bargaining, but also consultation and ongoing social dialogue. While there had been significant progress across Africa in establishing mechanisms for social dialogue, a number of challenges remained, such as the representativeness of workers' and employers' organizations and the informal economy. He ended his remarks by posing a number of questions to the panellists. How could tripartite social dialogue be strengthened at the national and subregional levels? How could governments and the social partners promote sound industrial relations and collective bargaining? How could the role of the social partners in labour law reform be strengthened?
- 213.** The Employer panellist reminded the Meeting that social dialogue had long been part of the African tradition of resolving conflicts, with the elders facilitating discussions. In the world of work it was similarly a tool for resolving disputes. The ILO had taken a visionary step in making it one of the four strategic objectives of Decent Work. He thanked the ILO for its support in strengthening social dialogue in Africa. Social dialogue needed to be strengthened at the enterprise level between the social partners and at the national level with government. He encouraged the institutionalization of social dialogue so that it could play a role in preventing conflict. Social dialogue also needed to be good quality, which required the commitment and willingness of the social partners to engage. The ILO could contribute through the dissemination of good practice; promoting ILO Convention No. 144, building the capacity of the social partners and helping governments bring national legislation into conformity with international labour standards.
- 214.** The Worker panellist from the United Republic of Tanzania noted that while social dialogue was key to inclusive growth and development, the conditions for effective social dialogue were lacking in many countries. Some governments were unwilling to sit at the table with the social partners. Despite the high ratification of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 in the continent, the effective application of these Conventions remained a challenge. Governments should also ratify and implement Conventions Nos 144, 151 and 154. Efforts should also be made to give effect to the ILO MNE Tripartite Declaration that provided guidance to multinational companies on how to promote sound industrial relations based on principles of social dialogue. He reminded the Meeting that at the Ouagadougou Summit in 2004, the social partners had expressed willingness to promote social dialogue free from interference and on a democratic, independent and representative basis. He called on the ILO to help strengthen collective bargaining as a key means for determining wages and working conditions, to assist governments create an enabling environment for collective bargaining and to continue to build the capacity of the social partners.
- 215.** The Minister of Labour of Kenya noted that social dialogue was an extremely valuable tool for managing the process of change. This was especially the case in countries where tripartite social dialogue was institutionalized. However Ministries of Labour were often poorly funded and the role of social dialogue in policy formulation was not fully operational in many countries due to financing challenges. Tripartite social dialogue had been used in Kenya to facilitate a smooth political transition in 2007. It was used in the preparation of the mid-term expenditure frameworks and the budgetary allocations made to realize the Decent Work Agenda. Social dialogue was enshrined in Kenya's Bill of Rights. Industrial relations in Kenya had also benefited from enhanced social dialogue on minimum wages and mechanisms for productivity-linked wage setting. He noted that

collective bargaining could be strengthened through the development of national guidelines.

- 216.** The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Togo emphasized the need for political will if social dialogue was to be effective. Togo had established a National Council for Social Dialogue composed of ten Ministers, ten employers' and ten workers' representatives. The National Council was chaired by an independent chairperson, appointed by consensus. He noted that tripartite social dialogue was particularly important in countries that had emerged from a crisis, such as Togo, where expectations were high and the State's capacity to meet these was limited. There was a need for social dialogue to reach consensus on priorities. There was also a need to strengthen social dialogue at the local and at the subregional levels. He emphasized the importance of building the capacity of the social partners so that they would be able to design effective socio-economic policies.
- 217.** The Secretary-General of the AICESIS emphasized the importance of social dialogue in fostering social cohesion and reconciliation during difficult times, such as in the aftermath of the Second World War, a time of tremendous political and economic change. He noted the way in which the DWCPs were both an outcome of social dialogue and in turn strengthened social dialogue. He agreed with the previous speaker on the need for strong political will by the top leadership and a commitment to social dialogue. He cautioned that social dialogue was a process that required time to prepare positions and take decisions. The social partners also needed to be representative enough and have the power to make commitments on behalf of their constituencies. They should have the capacity to engage meaningfully and proposed the consideration of joint training activities. He reminded the Meeting of the principle of subsidiarity and dealing with issues at the most appropriate level. He called for further support to the Economic and Social Councils being established in different countries in Africa.
- 218.** A Government delegate from Algeria noted the rich history and experience of social dialogue in his country since 1990 when they had started to systematically promote social dialogue as a governance mechanism at the company and national level. There were a number of bipartite agreements and the National Social and Economic Council played an important role in social and economic policy. He reminded the Meeting of the peer review mechanism in NEPAD as a useful governance mechanism in the region.
- 219.** The Employers' delegate from Gabon noted the importance of training the social partners in order to build their capacity to engage in effective social dialogue. She stressed that patience was needed as effective social dialogue took time.
- 220.** The Workers' delegate from Burkina Faso said that moral and ethical governance was essential if social dialogue was to bear fruit. The Workers' delegate from Algeria added that the quality of social dialogue depended on the credibility of the social partners: government's democratic credibility, the ability of employers to make productive investments and the representativeness of workers' organizations. The Workers' delegate from Morocco questioned the role of multinational companies from democratic countries abroad, who did not respect freedom of association when operating in African countries.
- 221.** Summarizing the proceedings, the Executive Director of the Social Dialogue Sector (OIC) noted the unanimous agreement on the need for social dialogue. However a number of preconditions needed to be met. These included political will, the recognition of the legitimacy of the social partners, and a commitment to implement agreements reached. Social dialogue was a continuing process requiring a proactive approach. He reminded the Meeting of the ILO tripartite resolution that emphasized support to institutional mechanisms for social dialogue; an enabling legal and regulatory environment; and the

need to strengthen the capacity of the social partners. He concluded noting the challenge that had been identified in localizing social dialogue.

Parallel thematic discussion 6

Building a social protection floor in Africa: Follow-up to the Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration

- 222.** Parallel thematic discussion 6 was on the subject of “Building a social protection floor in Africa: Follow-up to the Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration: The role of the social economy”. The participating panel was composed of Mr David Ngove, Director, International Affairs, Ministry of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security, Angola; Mr Cornelius Williams, Regional Adviser, UNICEF; Mr Benjamin Nganda, Focal Point for Health Care Financing and Social Protection, WHO; Mr Timothy Parkhouse, from Namibia, representing the Employers, and Mr Harouna Yali, of Niger, representing the Workers.
- 223.** The subject was introduced by Mr Assane Diop, ILO Executive Director of the Social Protection Sector and Mr Michael Cichon, Director, ILO Social Security Department. Mr Diop reminded the delegates that in 2007 all African countries had committed themselves to developing comprehensive national social protection development plans till 2015. Now half-way there a number of countries had made substantial progress but there was still a long way to go to achieve universal coverage. However, an important conceptual innovation had emerged since the last Regional Conference: that of the SPF, defined for the first time in an international tripartite context by the Second Decent Work Symposium in Yaoundé in 2010. The present panel discussion was to discuss means and ways of implementing the concept.
- 224.** Mr Cichon provided an update on recent developments in the policy area of social protection and notably the SPF. He reported on the Social Protection Initiative of the UN Chief Executive Board, the outcome of the discussion on the recurrent item on social protection at the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference and the future follow-up discussion on a possible Recommendation on Social Protection Floors (SPF Recommendation), as well as the state of the follow-up to the Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration and the synergies between the three processes. He explained briefly the core elements of the comprehensive approach consisting of a horizontal dimension (SPF of basic guarantees) and a vertical dimension of higher levels of protection in line with the benefit standards of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102). He highlighted the need for strong cooperation with African constituents. He stressed the importance of constituents submitting the questionnaire on the SPF Recommendation before 1 November 2011. He also invited all delegates to comment on the draft plan of action for the implementation of the Yaoundé Declaration which was now available on the Department’s web platform for inputs till the end of the year.
- 225.** The Employer panellist supported the concept of the SPF. He defined the role of the SPF as an income safety net for people without income, which should be nationally defined. He identified as the key challenges for extending social protection to the hitherto uncovered parts of the population, observing that the coverage of persons employed in the formal sector was relatively easy, while reaching out to the people in the informal economy sector and the self-employed required more sophisticated solutions. The funding of these solutions was the key challenge. Progressive implementation, requiring the participation of all stakeholders, governments, employers and workers was consequently of great importance. Well managed existing social security arrangements should not be endangered by new systems. Extreme prudence should be exercised when investing social security

reserves, however, innovative resourcing of employment-generating SMEs might be considered after tripartite consultation. He also gave examples of initiatives which could help to expand social protection coverage.

- 226.** The Worker panellist noted that since the Yaoundé Declaration, although major progress had been made in many countries, more was needed. Social security was a human right and required the full cooperation of the tripartite partners to be implemented. One of the critical issues for the extension of coverage was the vast number of people in the informal sector, who did not benefit from current systems. Government must focus on unprotected groups. This might entail legal reforms. A review of existing legislation and coverage provisions in most of the countries was required. Awareness-raising campaigns on social security rights, aimed at persons thus far excluded from social security coverage, such as unemployed persons, was urgently needed. Social security should be made compulsory for all.
- 227.** The Government panellist said that in Angola, the Government had enacted a constitutional law providing medical health care for the elderly, for women in the form of maternity protection, and for persons unable to work. The law also foresaw protection in case of the loss of the breadwinner. This Act consisted of three parts: (a) basic social protection – based on national solidarity and funded from taxes targeting needy families (b) compulsory social protection – funded by workers’ and employers’ contributions; and (c) supplementary social protection, which was voluntary. After the Yaoundé Declaration, the Government of Angola had also approved, through Presidential Decree, an increase in maternity, funeral and child support. The ILO was commended for supporting the extension of social security in Angola.
- 228.** The representative of UNICEF stated that his Organization was fully committed to the concept of the SPF. He highlighted the impact of the basic SPF for the well-being of children, noting its rights-based character. The entire range of income guarantees and essential services under the SPF was needed to ensure a social environment for children that would enable them to grow up well educated and in good health. Thus they would have the opportunity to become productive members of society. Vulnerable groups should not be left by the wayside. He highlighted the positive potential of conditional cash transfers.
- 229.** The representative of the WHO underlined access to affordable health care as one of the core components of the SPF. He stressed that without social protection coverage the extent to which countries relied on out-of-pocket payments – a major obstacle to access to health care for low income earners – could not be reduced.
- 230.** The ensuing discussion saw interventions from delegates from Côte d’Ivoire and South Africa, a representative of the African Trade Union Congress, the Minister of Labour and Social Services of Zimbabwe, and the Minister of Labour and Public Service of Benin, which focused on the challenges of providing coverage to persons in the informal economy and of investing in processes that led to a successful formalization of the informal economy. The ILO was requested to assist in improving governance and in supporting the elaboration of national policies, using all its means of action, but in particular through intensified capacity-building programmes. Consideration should be given to approaching G20 donors, suggesting innovative funding of such programmes. The ILO should also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience through South–South and triangular processes.
- 231.** In their response, the representatives of the ILO stressed that the formalization of the informal economy was a gradual process that needed considerable investments in governance, but which could be greatly facilitated by strong capacity building. The ILO would continue to extend its capacity-building programmes and seek innovative funding for these programmes, notably from G20 countries.

Consideration and adoption of the conclusions of the Meeting

232. The Employer spokesperson endorsed the conclusions of the Meeting. He confirmed that the conclusions captured the outcome of the discussions.
233. The Worker spokesperson similarly endorsed the conclusions. He highlighted the need to implement these conclusions at the national level with particular concrete action as regards the promotion of youth employment. He asked that the heading preceding paragraph 31 be expanded to include "... and gender equality", as had been agreed.
234. The conclusions were adopted by the Meeting.

Consideration of the report of the Credentials Committee

235. The Meeting took note of the report of the Credentials Committee. Forty-one member countries had presented credentials. The decline in the number reflected the budgetary constraints facing many governments in the region. Twenty-six Labour Ministers had attended the event and 21.4 per cent of all delegates were women. The Committee had received and considered complaints and reservations, and made a number of recommendations reflected in the report of the Credentials Committee.

Consideration and adoption of the report of the Meeting

236. Several delegates submitted amendments which were incorporated into the final version of the report. The report of the Meeting was adopted.

Closing of the Meeting

237. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that, in promoting decent work, there was broad agreement in his group on the need to: establish an adequate legal and institutional framework for the promotion of labour standards; establish an SPF; address youth unemployment; find pathways to sustainable and productive job creation that do not conform to traditional models of industrial and structural transformation; develop the rural economy; build a bridge between the informal and formal economy; and establish well resourced tripartite institutions for social dialogue and mechanisms and processes that promote sound labour relations.
238. The Employer Vice-Chairperson called on the tripartite social partners to do more together to make things happen. This included stepping up efforts to: strengthen the private sector and support business organizations; work with the young to come up with policies to address their issues; improve infrastructure through joint efforts; let diversity be a source of strength; place jobs at the centre of all policies; drive industrialization; align education policies with industrial strategies; and instil entrepreneurship at an early foundational stage in schools; create a conducive and enabling environment for enterprises and private sector growth; strengthen labour inspection; ensure multinational enterprises played a constructive role; support national determination of social security schemes; and maintain an unambiguous rejection of labour standards as a tool for protectionism.

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- 239.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson reiterated concerns that the global economic crisis had exacerbated high unemployment, inequality, youth unemployment, precarious work and informality on the continent. Countries needed to develop strategies that placed decent work at the heart of economic and social policies. In addition, high priority should be given to creating decent jobs for youths. He reaffirmed his group's support for promoting decent work in rural areas and welcomed the proposal for the social economy to be advanced as a strategy to formalize the informal economy. He noted that conditions for effective social dialogue were still lacking in many countries. Attention needed to be given to the low coverage of collective bargaining in part due to the "informalization" of employment and growing precarious work. While welcoming the focus on an SPF, he noted that the report and conclusions did not make any reference to the importance of a minimum wage.
- 240.** In her closing remarks, the Chairperson pointed out that the conclusions of the African Regional Meeting signalled a new path for the continent, a path of commitment to growth and justice that gave Africa a message of hope. She underscored views expressed during the meeting regarding the need to invest in skills development and to match this effort to employment opportunities. She welcomed the exchange of good practices that had taken place on rural development and employment. Finally, she pointed out that the empowerment of women and gender equality were fundamental human rights and called on member States to ratify and implement ILO Conventions Nos 100 and 111.
- 241.** The Director-General, in closing the Meeting, expressed gratitude for all the support and appreciation he had received and continued to receive in promoting the Decent Work Agenda in Africa. He had been struck by the quality of the discussions and the conclusions, which presented innovative ideas, developed through a process of tripartism, and would be used to address development challenges. As an example, he highlighted paragraph 10 of the conclusions, which placed employment at the heart of development strategies. If presented by member States at the G20, this could result in a paradigm shift in efforts aimed at confronting fundamental development challenges. He indicated that the ILO would continue to play a leading role on issues such as youth employment and the SPF. He urged all delegates to ensure that the conclusions of the Regional Meeting were adapted to their national contexts and implemented accordingly.