



THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Preparations for the Global Employment Forum (GEF)

1. As was mentioned in November 2000,¹ the Global Employment Forum will be held on 1-3 November 2001. Preparations for this event have included consultations with representatives of workers and employers to discuss the selection of keynote speakers and to determine the structure of the Forum. Further meetings are planned. The main issues paper to be presented to the Forum will be a Comprehensive Employment Framework (CEF) pointing to a future Global Employment Agenda. It may be recalled that the ILO has been called upon both by the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (Geneva, 26-30 June 2000) and by the G15 to elaborate a coherent and coordinated international strategy on employment. Work in progress to elaborate the CEF will be presented to the policy sessions of the Forum to benefit from the views, innovative approaches, lessons from experience and best practices contributed by participants. Cooperation for the Forum preparations has been established with UN/DESA, World Bank, IMF, UNCTAD and WTO and other UN agencies.
2. It is planned that the Forum will bring together around 300-400 participants, representing policy-makers, employers, trade union leaders, heads of other multilateral organizations, academics, and representatives of civil society and NGOs. The objective of the Forum is to identify the favourable conditions and policy options at the national, regional and international levels to realize the potential of the 500 million new entrants to the global workforce over the next decade through new job creation, taking into account the need for long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability.
3. The Forum will begin with a number of forward-looking presentations on the employment challenge delivered by prominent persons from countries at different stages of development and in different regions. These sessions will be followed by smaller sessions on various thematic aspects of the employment issue, and a plenary session will be dedicated to the discussion of the CEF. These discussions will identify how, and with what benefits globally, employment can be placed at the centre of economic and social policy. It will contribute to building strategic alliances between the ILO, its constituents, and other multilateral partners, in order to promote policies at both the national and international levels that will result in the faster growth of productive and remunerative employment in ways consistent with ILO principles and standards. Its analysis will also contribute to the

¹ GB.279/ESP/5.

further development of the concept of decent work. A website for the Forum has been set up² and a media strategy is being formulated.

4. The CEF will raise important issues in the employment policy field demonstrating, based on an analysis of past experience, first, what initiatives are likely to contribute to creating more and more productive jobs, and, second, how sound overall economic and social policies, together with the implementation of ILO standards, can make such steps more sustainable. The analysis will be set in a regional context, given the differences in the employment situation and the gravity of employment problems in different parts of the world. Particular attention will be paid to the position of women in the labour market.
5. The CEF will reflect the international dimensions of employment and especially current imperatives of good global governance, beginning with the agreements reached on sustainable development. It will explain the relevance of ILO principles concerning employment and social policy to the action needed to restore the global environmental balance. The CEF will focus on such international dimensions of employment as the impact of new technology and trade on employment growth, reducing the risk of global financial instability, problems arising from the indebtedness of developing countries and further market liberalization for products of interest to Third World producers.
6. The CEF will set out a number of overarching objectives, which can be seen as underlying the ILO's policy approach to employment. These are the desirability of social dialogue and recognition of its contribution to policy development; achieving employability through the encouragement of skills development and the establishment of effective training systems; assuring minimum living standards, not just by targeted programmes, but by systematically overcoming discrimination and improving job opportunities; and raising productivity in low productivity sectors, especially the informal sector.
7. Important issues which will be discussed include the employment impact of policies in the areas of technology, trade, investment and development. The discussion of employment and technology will take as a starting point the *World Employment Report 2001*, and its review of the job-creating impact of new technology. The analysis of the employment effects of development policies will include lessons drawn from the ILO's Country Employment Policy Reviews and from the Jobs for Africa Programme. ILO experience with the promotion of SMEs and with reconstruction programmes will contribute substantially to the discussion of the employment effects of investment.
8. The CEF will analyse the importance of social and labour market policies in achieving more sustainable employment and in facilitating the structural changes needed for more rapid and efficient economic growth. It will include discussion on the operation of social protection systems and on the need to strengthen the links between these systems and employment. In this context, it will draw on many ILO activities undertaken with the tripartite partners in Western Europe and the countries in transition. The discussion on macroeconomic policy will demonstrate how different structural policies could be strengthened, promoting a better utilization of the growing labour force, and will illustrate the subsequent scope for more growth-oriented economic policies.
9. Following the contributions to the Forum, a brief report will be given to the Governing Body in November 2001; and the CEF, reviewed on the basis of the discussions in the Forum, will be submitted to the Governing Body in March 2002.

Geneva, 13 February 2001.

² <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/geforum/index.htm>.