

20th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners

Participants' Declaration

Preamble

The 20th edition of the Regional Seminar was conducted in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia from 19th to 23rd May 2025 under the theme " **Resilient communities and Healthy Environment: the EIIP approach**". The 20th ILO Regional Conference for Labour-Based Practitioners commenced with a high-level opening session attended by ministers, dignitaries, and stakeholders from across Africa and elsewhere. The event was co-hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the African Union Commission and the World Bank. The Seminar attracted a record number of participants. Over 2,000 participants, 40 dignitaries including 30 Ministers coming from 50 countries attended the five-day event. In total, about 25 high-level papers were presented divided into four sub-themes including:

- Investing in sustainability in a context of fragility
- Striking the balance between the use of labour, technology and Sustainability to drive decent jobs
- Creating more resilient urban infrastructure and communities
- Maximizing the social impact of infrastructure development

The opening session for this pivotal event was chaired by Hon Chaltu Sani, Minister of Urban & Infrastructure, Federal Republic of Ethiopia. The occasion was enhanced by the speeches delivered by several other senior members dignitaries including: Hon Christian Nkuli Kianka, Minister of Public Services and Labour, Republic of Rwanda; Mr. Gilbert Hounbo, Director-General, ILO (virtual); Dr. Sabelo Mbokazi, Head Labour, Employment & Migration at the African Union Commission; Mr. Dawit Moges, representative of Confederation of IGAD Employers (CIE); Mr. Zerihun Gezahegn, representative of Horn of Africa Confederation of Trade Unions (ACTU).

We would like to thank all these personalities.

A parallel Ministerial meeting was held from 19th – 20th May 2025 and reflected on the commitments and the progress made since the 19th Regional Seminar held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 15th – 19th May 2023. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the encouraging effort made in most participating countries and issued a Statement that reaffirmed their commitment to promoting skills development and the use of labour-based approaches that contribute to the 2019 Abidjan Declaration and the AU Agenda 2063.

In addition to the opening ceremony, ministerial statements, and closing ceremony, five sessions were held. These sessions discussed various angles to maximize the EIIP within current ever-changing environments, covering topics from resilient communities, green infrastructure, and technology to the social impacts of infrastructure development.

The delegates visited four routes: Route 1 "Green Spaces for Livelihoods & Wellbeing"; Route 2 "Infrastructure for Inclusion & Environmental Transformation"; Route 3 "Industry, Innovation & Public Infrastructure"; Route 4 "Skills for Resilience & the Future of Work".

The field visits have once again convinced us that labour-based approach and its components - green initiatives and nature-based solutions, livelihood support, crisis response, skills and business development, forms a comprehensive instrument of inclusive and sustainable development that allows citizens to build the basic infrastructure they need and develop their communities by themselves. The visits also affirmed the immense possibilities of mutual learning and south-south collaboration.

We the delegates at the 20th Regional Seminar:

Appreciating the support of the ILO Director General, Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo for putting the seminar and the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) within the context of global employment action through the statement delivered via video during the opening ceremony.

Acknowledging that the inadequate and unequal productive employment opportunities, particularly for young women and men, coupled with a dominant informal economy, remain a major labour market challenge in Africa.

Noting the importance of aligning our efforts with the African Union Agenda 2063, which calls for agency and purpose in driving inclusive development across the continent.

Recognizing the 2019 Abidjan Declaration on advancing social justice and its plan of action which were adopted at the 14th ILO Africa Regional Meeting, which is premised on a human-centred approach and committed to “promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development and growth, full and productive freely chosen employment and decent work for all”.

Affirming that the EIIP approach is a practical tool to advance this vision by creating decent jobs, mobilizing local resources, and empowering communities through participatory governance. By strengthening social capital and building resilience, EIIP contributes meaningfully to long-term development, environmental sustainability and inclusive economic transformation across Africa.

Recognizing public-private partnerships (PPPs) present innovative and collaborative opportunities to pool resources, expertise, and networks, addressing the TVET financing gap effectively.

Recognizing that training in construction is essential for improving the employability and productivity of workers, including through sharing experiences and promoting professional skills and certification through onsite learning, industrial workplace learning approaches, such as industrial-based training, apprenticeships and recognition of prior learning in construction and other pro-employment sectors.

Acknowledging the rapid, unprecedented and unpredictable changes happening in the contemporary world of work due to the increasing ever advancing digital technologies, and digital divide, which are creating both new opportunities for, and threats to job creation and job quality.

Acknowledging that infrastructure development serves as a significant pathway for inclusive growth, especially in ensuring that construction activities benefit the youth, men and women, and persons with disabilities.

Recognizing that African countries continue to be faced with the unprecedented challenges including, increasing food and water insecurity, increasing risk of natural disasters, the effects of climate change and protracted conflicts and violence, compounded by sluggish economic

growth, inflationary pressures, the debt crisis, tariffs, fiscal constraints, high informality, political instability, and technological disruption.

Noting that the creation of decent jobs through the integration of appropriate technologies and circularity (Employment Intensive Works) fosters a localized, human-centred approach and promotes the transition to formality, digital, and green economies.

Recognizing the role of inclusive public procurement and tendering in enforcing decent work and developing communities, fostering micro and small enterprises, and supporting targeted employment of designated groups.

Acknowledging that protecting and restoring natural ecosystems through nature-based solutions offers significant job creation potential and promotes just transition, and that applying the employment-intensive investment approaches to implement these solutions offers valuable opportunities.

Noting the importance of urban infrastructure development and its potential for creating green and inclusive jobs, sustainability, and climate solutions.

Recognizing the vital role of infrastructure in supporting the education, health, and social sectors, and its direct contribution to human well-being, as well as the potential of employment-intensive investments to promote decent work within the care economy.

Acknowledging the expanded role of EIIP approach in fragility and crisis contexts, contributing to state-building, supporting displaced persons, strengthening peaceful co-existence between displaced persons and host communities, linking humanitarian response to sustainable development and creating peace dividends.

Recognizing the importance of ensuring transparency and fairness in employment programmes, addressing abuse, and ensuring that opportunities reach intended beneficiaries to build social value and credibility.

Therefore, we pledge to:

Align our national employment programmes with subregional and regional orientations like the African Union Agenda 2063 and national development priorities, ensuring a coordinated and synergistic approach to drive structural transformation and create decent jobs for all African youth.

Integrate and enhance the EIIP approach within our national strategies, policies and multi-sectoral employment programmes in line with our respective development and sectoral priorities.

Strengthen the capabilities of national, local actors and institutions to design, implement, monitor and evaluate infrastructure and employment-intensive investment programmes.

Promote policy consistency and inclusiveness, and foster collaboration among various implementation and governance structures.

Develop and adopt inclusive public procurement policies and procedures that encourage the involvement of women, youth, SMEs and community-based organizations.

Integrate skilling, reskilling, upskilling and certification and recognition of prior learning into EIIP and labour-based development projects.

Expand employment intensive green works, and nature-based solutions in areas such as soil and water conservation, land restoration, reforestation, irrigation to increase agricultural and livestock productivity, halt environmental degradation and increase resilience to the effects of climate change and reduce environmental pressures which are an increasingly important source of conflict on the continent.

Encourage entrepreneurship and support small-scale initiatives that can lead to the creation of more productive and decent jobs, particularly for the youth, women and crisis affected populations.

Improve mechanisms for social dialogue and public participation in policymaking and implementation processes, ensuring policies are responsive to the needs and expectations of target groups.

Integrate gender-sensitive policies in EIIP and development projects, including measures to support workers with care responsibilities, to promote equal opportunities and reduce gender disparity in the labour market.

Foster an environment that encourages creativity, innovation, circularity and facilitating the adoption of digital tools and technologies to improve efficiency and productivity in the labour market.

Enhance resilience to economic shocks and crises, including those related to health crises, displacement and climate change, by promoting employment diversification and income security.

Collaborate and share knowledge and best practices with other participating countries to enrich our collective understanding and effectiveness in promoting employment-intensive works.

Regularly evaluate and update our strategies and policies to ensure they remain effective and relevant in the face of changing world of work.

We request that:

Governments ensure the transparency and fairness in the implementation of public employment programmes, actively addressing and demonstrating zero tolerance for abuse, corruption, and political patronage to ensure opportunities reach the most deserving participants and the programmes deliver intended social value.

Governments address the unique challenges of fragile states and populations impacted by conflict and displacement, ensuring that employment-intensive investment approaches contribute to state-building, social cohesion, peacebuilding and support for displaced persons.

Governments advocate for stronger South-South cooperation as a cornerstone for sustainable development, fostering green jobs and resilient communities to future-proof the labour market.

Governments and social partners continue to promote policy coherence and enhance collaboration among implementation and governance structures to ensure the effective implementation strategies of adopted policies. This includes supporting the development of employment policies and councils at state and local government levels.

Governments, social partners, development partners, and international and regional development banks continue to finance decent jobs, skills, and infrastructure development activities in line with the Abidjan Declaration and the AU Agenda 2063.

Governments maximize the social impact of infrastructure development by ensuring projects are designed and executed in consultation with communities to meet local needs, foster social cohesion, and enhance ownership of development outcomes.

Governments enact policies that promote a business-friendly environment, encouraging private sector growth and job creation and address growing informality in our region.

Governments stress the importance of digital skills access, noting that the growing digital economy excludes many displaced and marginalized youth due to infrastructure, training, and opportunity gaps.

Governments develop, strengthen and explore innovative approaches and strategies to transition from informal to formal jobs and to better empower EIIP beneficiaries to enter into long-term employment, embark on lifelong learning and establish sustainable career paths for a better common future.

Governments, social partners, development partners, and international and regional development banks institutionalize Employment Impact Assessment (EmplA) in their programmes to promote the selection of projects with the greatest employment potentials.

Governments, Social partners and training institutions engage effectively in the discussion on job creation, skills and other employment related interventions to make the world of work more inclusive and protected.

Development partners increase their financial commitments to support programmes and initiatives focused on creating productive decent employment opportunities and enhancing skills development and employability.

International and regional financial institutions incorporate strong employment outcomes, labour conditions and social dimensions into their financing and lending portfolios.

Non-governmental organizations, civil society, and community-based organizations contribute to the implementation and monitoring of employment-intensive programmes, leveraging their unique reach and understanding of local contexts.

Education and training institutions align their curricula with labour market needs, ensuring that graduates have the skills required by employers, and fostering employment opportunities during the implementation of infrastructure projects.

The private sector invests in skills development and provides decent working conditions, recognizing their crucial role in creating quality jobs and promoting economic growth.

National statistical agencies enhance their data collection capabilities to provide reliable and timely labour market information, aiding in the design and evaluation of the impact of policies.

Media outlets raise awareness about the importance of decent work, skills development, and lifelong learning, helping to build a society that values these principles.

International bodies such as the African Union and the United Nations continue to prioritize employment and skills development in their agendas and support countries in achieving related goals.

We call upon the ILO to:

Extend its capabilities and capacities to provide EILP technical support to countries requiring assistance in implementing this Declaration.

Take an active role in facilitating South-South cooperation at the regional and continental level through exchanges, sharing of experiences on good practices including **informal-to-formal transition strategies and sector-specific skills development**.

Advocate with the World Bank, the IMF, the African Development Bank, other international and regional financial institutions, and other development partners, to develop job markers and integrate stronger employment outcomes and social dimensions into their portfolios.

Continue playing a vital role not only in job creation but also in building community capacities, the implementation of international labour standards and promoting fair wages, safe working conditions, and social dialogue.

Assist in creating effective social dialogue mechanisms to ensure the voices of workers and employers are considered in policymaking processes.

Provide technical assistance and guidance on the strategic integration of technology and AI in employment programmes and in shaping the future of work, while considering their potential impact on job creation and destruction.

Support governments in developing and implementing inclusive labour market policies that cater to the needs of vulnerable groups such as the youth, women, persons with disabilities, and those in informal employment.

Work closely with governments, social partners and humanitarian and development partners in designing and implementing effective Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) strategies to mitigate the adverse impacts of economic shocks, displacement crises, natural disasters, and health pandemics on employment and skills development.

Advocate for stronger employment outcomes and social dimensions in the lending portfolios of international financial institutions.

Facilitate the development and implementation of digital solutions in TVET programmes, job creation initiatives, and labour inspection mechanisms to improve accessibility, affordability, and the quality of employment across the region.

Enhance knowledge sharing and capacity building on sustainable enterprise development and entrepreneurship as effective means of job creation.

Monitor the implementation of the commitments in this Declaration and report on progress of their implementation at the 21st Regional Seminar for Labour-based practitioners.

Vote of thanks:

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the people of Ethiopia, the Government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, and the Ministry of Urban & Infrastructure, Federal Republic of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality and successful execution of this 20th Regional Seminar for Labour-based Practitioners.

Addis-Abeba, Ethiopia, May 23rd, 2023.