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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

**AFRICA NEEDS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT FORCED LABOUR,
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY**

LUSAKA (ILO News) – With some 3.7 million men, women and children still trapped in forced labour - the second highest prevalence rate worldwide - , the African continent needs urgently innovative solutions to combat forced labour and human trafficking, stated high-level participants to the ILO Regional tripartite conference held in Lusaka, Zambia.

“Those who benefit from exploitation need to be swiftly punished; those who suffer abuse and coercion need to be empowered to raise their voice; strong preventive measures, including measures to strengthen labour law, to provide access to skills, information and training, in particular for women and girls are also needed,” said Hans Hofmeijer, ILO Acting Regional Director for Africa at the opening ceremony.

The Conference – first regional meeting on the topic organized by the ILO in recent years – brought together high-level government officials, employers’ and workers’ representatives and civil society from ten countries across Africa, members of the diplomatic corps in Lusaka, as well as the two UN Special Rapporteurs on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and on Trafficking in Persons.

The ILO estimates that the “cost of coercion” in terms of lost income and illegal recruitment fees is as high as 1.5 billion US Dollars in Africa alone. “This is money that could and should be used to help lift families out of poverty, promote decent employment and develop communities,” underscored the ILO Acting Head for Africa.

In his keynote address, Hon. Edgar C. Lungu, Zambian Minister of Home Affairs highlighted the push and pull factors for human trafficking in Africa, including the “demand for cheap labour, which is a consequence of wanting to produce products at the lowest possible cost.”

In Africa, agriculture, construction, domestic work, the sex industry and certain parts of global manufacturing supply chains are most affected by forced labour.

The regional meeting is an opportunity to assess the state of knowledge on forced labour, human trafficking and slavery in Africa, and to agree on ways and means of how best the region can contribute to the 2014 International Labour Conference, which will consider this particular subject matter.

The two-day conference should adopt a final communiqué detailing the agreed consensus for concrete actions.

“By bringing together the main players of the real economy – workers, employers and Ministries of Labour – the ILO believes that innovative solutions can be developed to combat forced labour,” concluded Martin Clemensson, ILO Director for Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

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