



Recommendations of the Conference "Labour Market Governance in the Context of Changing Arab Societies"

Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

24-26 September 2013

At a time when a number of Arab countries are experiencing profound economic, social and political transformations, a joint-conference was organized the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Arab Labour Organization and the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt from 24 September 2013 to 26 September 2013.

This conference aimed to realize cooperation among social partners and to establish common ground for enhanced labour market governance based on consultation, coordination and concerted efforts to develop the capacities of productive institutions. Moreover, the conference aimed to provide a forum to discuss ways to produce an environment conducive to decent work opportunities that stimulate investment through a fair legal environment supported by dialogue among social partners. It was also agreed that attention should also be given to women and the social groups that have difficulties gaining access to the labour market.

Participants in attendance supported a process of engagement in dialogue to enact best practices and mechanisms that create job opportunities for millions of young men and women who suffer from unemployment, a lack of job security, or are employed in the informal sector.

The participants noted the urgent need to generate more job opportunities through the adoption of a new development paradigm that gives priority to employment generation and considers decent work a basic human right. The conferees recognized that decent work is the main avenue towards social justice and poverty alleviation.

Based on the appreciation of the efforts made by the governments and social partners to enhance decent work, conference attendees recommended the following:

1. The need to adopt a development model based primarily on job creation to address unemployment, poverty and ensure a more equitable distribution of income and services. Accordingly, the prioritization of

development projects as well as labour markets policies need to be informed by these objectives.



2. Ministries of Labour should receive the same level of attention and funding as other ministries. They should take their rightful place as key stakeholders in formulating development policies to ensure that the needs of Arab labour markets and the requirements of social development are met. It was also noted that representatives of employers and trade unions should participate actively with government bodies in the formulation and implementation of such policies.
3. That labour market governance should become a shared responsibility among different social partners. Participants agreed that effective labour market governance will require free and transparent environment of cooperation and consultation to devise policies that maintain balance between economic and social dimensions while tackling issues related to employment, labour relations and establishing social justice as a pre-condition for social security and stability. Accordingly, social dialogue must take on a strategic approach and become institutionalized within legal and regulatory structures.
4. Governments should to provide the necessary funds to reintegrate the unemployed in the economy through training, capacity building and effective active labour market policies. To this end, education systems need to be reviewed to ensure alignment with the labour market needs, including the introduction, in various stages, of curricula that promote added value and provide young people with guidance to enable them to make appropriate career choices. This principle should apply to academic and technical education as well as to vocational training.
5. Labour departments must be strengthened and provided with adequate resources to upgrade their working methods while ensuring transparency, the rule of law and modernizing labour regulations to bring them in line with international standards.
6. Incentives to encourage the youth to enroll in vocational education and training to ensure harmony between theory and practice should be provided. Moreover, enterprises should be encouraged to invest in training to enhance staff capabilities and improve productivity.
7. Labour inspection programmes must be strengthened to ensure enterprises comply with the national laws and regulations and improve the working conditions.

8. Governments should take action to engage in meaningful national dialogue to ensure that social insurance cover various social groups including a minimum level of social protection especially in terms of pensions, maternity and unemployment schemes, in line with the ILO social insurance standards.



9. The tripartite partners should adhere to the principle of equitable social dialogue, a necessary framework for developing strategic labour market, economic and social policies to ensure their sustainability and maintain social cohesion.