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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE LOOKS AT INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE GROWTH

NEW DELHI (ILO News) – An International Conference on South-South Cooperation on "Innovations in Public Employment Programmes and Sustainable Inclusive Growth" took place New Delhi, India from 1-3 March 2012.

Some 40 high level delegates including 10 Labour Ministers from 22 countries from Asia, Africa and South America attended the Conference, which took place under the aegis of the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). The event was organized by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India in collaboration with the Ministries of Rural Development and External Affairs, with the technical collaboration of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Speaking to delegates Ms Sachiko Yamamoto, ILO Regional Director for Asia and Pacific, congratulated the Government of India for organizing an important and timely event. She said that South-South cooperation is about applying local and home-grown solutions to local problems. The ILO can assist in matching the needs of cooperation countries – in particular the Least Developed Countries – with those of contributing countries and adding its own repository of knowledge and expertise to enhance the technical and programmatic quality of the cooperation.

During the High Level Panel Discussion for Labour Ministers, India's Labour and Employment Minister H.E. Mr Mallikarjun Kharge said that developing countries were facing similar problems in many areas of employment and social protection. He mentioned about the key features and roadmap of cooperation under IBSA, more particularly in the areas of employment and social protection. He also re-affirmed the commitment of the Government of India in promoting South-South Cooperation for achieving sustainable inclusive growth that benefits all and the vulnerable sections of the society and highlighted the crucial role of public employment programmes.

The delegations from South Africa and Brazil recalled the Declaration of Intent between IBSA and the ILO signed on 22 November 2010 during the Global South-South Development Expo hosted by the ILO and the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. They extended their full cooperation and support in formulating the road map for this cooperation.

Mr José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ILO Executive-Director for Employment, stressed the need for a new inclusive growth strategy focused on policies that target the working poor, informal workers and micro and small entrepreneurs, through innovative public employment schemes, employment-intensive infrastructure investments, entrepreneurship promotion, minimum social protection floor schemes and transition to formality and decent work.

The participating countries recognized the need for promoting decent work and more innovative and effective public Employment and Social Protection Programmes through South-South Triangular Cooperation through ILO. The Conference also recognized the progress made in countries of the South in developing solutions to the challenges of poverty and decent work gaps, such as India's Mahatma Gandhi's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA), South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and Brazil's Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme - Bolsa Familia.

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In her remarks during the concluding session, Ms Sachiko Yamamoto said that “this Conference builds on the important milestones set by the three IBSA countries and all the participants that have shared so many lessons on public employment policies, their social protection interface and how it impacts on the important elements of youth employment, skills development, etc. In the ILO we hope this will lead to a continued South-South dialogue on the Decent Work Agenda”.

The Conference concluded with the following recommendations:

- To further develop and promote south-south and triangular cooperation in order to contribute effectively to the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and its four strategic objectives through building of partnerships and exchanging experiences in the fields of employment, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue.
- To enhance policy dialogue and exchanges between India, Brazil, South Africa and all countries of the South and the ILO.
- To better appreciate the range of policy issues relevant to public employment programmes/employment guarantees, green jobs and other innovative social protection schemes.
- To provide and obtain guidance on the design of effective policies and programmes and exchange these experiences among countries of the South.
- To support and work with ILO’s South-South and Triangular Cooperation Initiative to foster greater solidarity and enhance equality among countries and peoples in the world of work.

Established in June 2003, IBSA is a coordinating mechanism linking three emerging multiethnic and multicultural democracies. Four IBSA summits have been held. In November 2010, a Declaration of Intent was signed by India, Brazil and South Africa with the ILO to contribute to the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and its four strategic objectives, namely promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

The ILO is the United Nations specialized agency dealing with work and work-related issues. It has a unique tripartite membership structure, under which governments, employers' and workers' organizations act as equal partners, making decisions representative of the real economy.

South-South cooperation has been historically used to describe the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries, also known as countries of the global South. Recently, South-South Cooperation has been successful in decreasing dependence on the aid programmes of developed countries and in initiating a shift in the international balance of power. The main objective of the Workshop was to share knowledge between countries to ensure better cohesion for overall inclusive growth with equity.

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