Statement by

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Excellencies, dear colleagues and distinguished guests,

It is my great pleasure and honor to be here today at this 18th Regional Seminar and I am humbled to be able to address such a distinguished crowd.

But first allow me to thank the Government of Tunisia for this warm welcome and for hosting this important seminar at a timely moment when quality and sustainable infrastructure have been such a central topic in many discussions in global for .

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Let me give you a few examples.

- from the launch in 2017 of the **EU's External Investment Plan** focusing on creating a favourable investment climate and contributing to jobs and growth in Africa and European neighbourhood countries;
- the **World Bank spring meetings** where PPPs and infrastructure flourished on the agenda,
- the **Quality Infrastructure Investment** principles which were endorsed by G20 leaders this past June,

- the **7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development** represented by 20 African Heads of State this August and where ILO hosted a High-Level Dialogue on the Future of Work and Jobs4Youth based on A Human-centered Agenda to Boost Investments and Productivity in Africa;
- but also more importantly around different regional initiatives such as the initiatives taken to address infrastructure deficits and regional connectivity by the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (REC),
- at the same time, it is worth highlighting programmes like the **G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme** and **the Sahel Alliance**, where financial commitments have already been made towards boosting infrastructure development and to build resilience and social cohesion in cross border regions.
- Other regional initiatives are also dependent on further investments in regional infrastructure to connect African countries, like for example to realize the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. The potential and opportunities that this creates for infrastructure and job creation in Africa are significant.

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However, today, **more than 2 billion people** are still living in fragile and conflict affected situations, where poverty and inequality are increasingly concentrated. A staggering **300 million workers** continue to live in extreme poverty and informality. Many governments continue to face difficult challenges, with reduced fiscal space, but including increasing structural unemployment, climate change risks and protracted crises, which in turn is leading to a downward spiral of increasing inequality and instability, environmental degradation, also leading to a number of conflicts, contributing to regional and global instability.

To create an inclusive and productive structural transformation it is important not only to stabilize certain regions and prevent violence, but it is key to address some of the root causes of this instability. Given the additional risks posed by a changing climate, scarce natural resources, protracted conflict and rather low levels of human development, this number is unfortunately likely to rise unless communities and development partners work together for building resilience and addressing some of the root causes for fragility: poverty, inequality, the structural imbalances, protecting existing resources, but more importantly to build resilience

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And at the same time, the **impacts of climate change** are being felt everywhere. For example, in Africa it is estimated that 75 to 250 million people by 2020 and 350 to 600 million by 2050 will be exposed to increased water scarcity due to drought and decreasing rainfall. Climate change could erase decades of international efforts in sustainable development, leaving people behind with life-threatening consequences.

The latest ILO report on the impact of heat stress on productivity and decent work suggests that, in Africa, 2.2 per cent of total working hours worldwide will be lost because of higher temperatures, a loss equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs. This is equivalent to global economic losses of US$2, 4 trillion. This, compounded by other negative effects of climate change, such as changing rain patterns, natural disasters, water scarcity and biodiversity loss – all of this, affects infrastructure, but also livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

The significant impact of climate change in Africa raises questions of social justice, especially given that the continent has contributed less than 1 per cent of the historical emissions that are responsible for climate change. Just Transition as declared in the Paris Agreement is not only about the transition of industries, but it is also about helping the vulnerable adapt to climate change and to protect their own natural wealth and avoid the mistakes that others have made already to the detriment of the environment.

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Some countries are also facing structural problems with inability to create sufficient number of formal jobs. We would need to create some 600 million new jobs to ensure that everyone had a job. And youth unemployment is exacerbating this situation with early labour market exclusion. To address inequality, inclusive, local resource-based approaches good labour practices and building capacity of youth is key. To ensure sustainable and quality infrastructure ensuring quality, environmental and social safeguards, and strengthening of local institutions is key. As fiscal space is becoming limited, with less funding from development partners, more convergence and integration are inevitable to be able to better address the same challenges we have been facing in a more innovative way and design programmes with better economic, social and environmental impacts.

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So why is Infrastructure key? Just last week I was on a UN Panel discussing the interconnectedness of different SDGs. There has been a tendency for development partners to focus on reaching the goals of each SDGs, but without amplifying their potential by strengthening their connectivity. But we, and as many of you who are here with us today know very well : "Decent Work" SDG 8 and "Building resilient infrastructure" SDG 9 are core at addressing many of the challenges we face today. They are at the nexus of humanitarian-development-environment-peace to say the least.

Creating an enabling environment for economic growth – which stresses the importance of infrastructure – is important, and decent work should at the centre of these approaches. Generating more inclusive jobs, especially for youth, contributing to the domestic and local markets, increasing trade opportunities, increasing productive lands through proper natural resource management and environmental protection, and better efficient resource use: all of this can contribute to a more productive transformation of this Region.

Increasing the employment content of public and private investments in the creation, rehabilitation and maintenance of existing public assets and public services can address structural imbalances and lead not only to increased productivity and livelihoods, but at the same time could protect existing natural resources through nature-based solutions.

So, why should the ILO be a key partner? As many of you know, ILO is celebrating its Centenary year, marking the 100th anniversary of the ILO's foundation, as part of the Treaty of Versailles which ended World War I. Carved into the foundation of its first headquarters are the words "If you desire peace, cultivate justice". It is on this principle that the ILO is founded. It is no less certain today than in 1919 that lasting peace and stability must be built on a foundation of sustainable development and social justice.

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work also recognized the importance of a human centred approach and stressed that "persistent poverty, inequalities and injustices, conflict, disasters and other humanitarian emergencies in many parts of the world constitute a threat to those advances and to securing shared prosperity and decent work for all." The use of "technology for decent work" is what many of you have already been developing through the use of spatial planning, GIS systems, mobile payment systems and technology used for protecting labour rights through online grievance mechanisms for workers. This is where we ensure that technology and innovation is working towards a "human in command of technology" approach which is beneficial to society.

Public Works and Investments Programmes have been used as a response to labour market challenges for many centuries, and have been central to the ILO agenda since its inception in 1919. Periodically, at times of economic crisis, for example during the 1920s and 30s, and again following the 1997 and 2009 crises public works have been used as countercyclical demand stimulus mechanisms, with macro-economic as well as social objectives.

So why the EIIP or HIMO? Over the last century, the ILO has taken the lead among the international agencies, in both the analysis of labour market problems and also in the coordination and design of responses linked to both labour intensification and public employment schemes since its inception. The ILO has supported both types of public investments: programmes which provide employment directly and those aiming to promote the labour intensity of state investment and increase the number of jobs created through national and sectoral investment programmes (e.g. agriculture, care work and social development, environment and transport) but also building the infrastructure that is required in all of these sectors, when market demand for labour is insufficient.

For the last 50 years the ILO has been pre-eminent in its contribution to the technical debate around the efficient design and implementation of labour-intensive programming and advocacy for labour-based approaches in order to stimulate growth and reduce unemployment. These efforts have been led for the last 40 years by the **Employment-intensive Investment Programme (EIIP).** It has also supported the use of PWP as key instruments for the provision of social protection and highlighted their role in realizing the basic income guarantees of the Social Protection Floor and the nexus of the SDGs.

EIIP, a demand driven programme, has for decades and through many pilot programmes with governments confirmed the technical feasibility, cost- effectiveness and competitiveness of labour-based technologies. This has been understood and in some ways has been mainstreamed through many national and donor-funded programmes with or without the ILO's support.

As we prepare to launch a publication on the 100 years of public works in the ILO, allow me to highlight some key areas of the ILO's work.

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Contribution to the Decent Work Agenda. The employment intensive investment approach contributes to the four pillars of the DWA. Going beyond the job creation objective, it also supports

- the normative agenda (C122 Full Employment, C94 Labour Clauses in Procurement, R202 SPF, R204 Transition to Formality, R205 Employment and Decent Work for Peace & Resilience)
- extending social protection through income security
- contributing to social dialogue between social partners, local stakeholders and the private sector
- promoting decent working conditions on construction sites and strengthening local institutional capacity

The consolidation of several decades of pilot programmes contribute to the consolidation of several best practice guidelines, such as on local and community contracting and private sector development, on the application of occupational safety and health, on environmental and social safeguards, eco-based adaptation and DRR and gender guidelines contributing to women's empowerment.

SLIDE 7

Development cooperation (DC). The EIIP has mobilized some US$140 million dollars including over US$60 million for Africa in a dozen active projects in Cameroon, Comoros, the Gambia, Madagascar, Mauritania, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and in our host country Tunisia. This volume is slightly falling and although this may be a positive sign that national entities are further integrating EII approaches, but there is much more we can do together. I would like to encourage and appreciate the countries that have supported ILO through their national budgets for the implementation of ILO technical assistance projects.

SLIDE 8

Strengthened Partnerships. Over the years, the programme has established institutional and financial partnerships that have been founded in 45 of the 54 countries in Africa. These partnerships with sectorial Ministries, Development Banks and UN agencies to promote labour based approaches and share resources and innovative methods are diversifying over time, especially in Africa: through the generous support of the Government of France, Ireland, Japan, Norway, the European Union. In addition, our collaboration with agencies like FAO, IFAD, IUCN, UNEP, WFP continues to expand our reach. The programme will consolidate its relationship with its traditional partners, but will continue to develop others in a spirit of openness, sharing of experiences and added value, and complementarity with different regional actors (the African Union, NEPAD, RECs etc.)

SLIDE 9

Capacity Development and Strengthening of Institutions. In addition to its privileged targeting of the most vulnerable youth, the programme develops a close link with the construction industry by providing training for local contractors and technical staff of Ministries in charge of Public Works. We continue to assess new opportunities for introducing new appropriate labour-based technologies, nature based solutions, in addition to working with national labour-based institutes. We offer training at the global level at our ITC-Turin, at the Regional level through the University of Cape Town and Costa Rica, and also in-country as the demands rise.

Distinguished colleagues and delegates,

The Regional Seminar for Labour based Practitioners, now in its 18th year, is a source of inspiration and creates a solid platform from where to engage on…. My simple message today is the same message I left at TICAD 7, that we all have to work together, the international community, regional organizations, national and local governments, social partners and non-governmental organizations, in order to build stable and effective institutions in Africa, to allow this region to develop Decent Work policies and programmes that address sustainable development, but also human security, conflicts and disasters, also by increasing the employment impact of existing public investments for long term sustainable development.

Let me leave you with 5 key messages.

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There is a need to better:

1. **Assess trade and employment impact of sectoral investment strategies** – how many more jobs could be created through public investments, which then creates local multipliers through the assets and services that need to be built.
2. **Increase investment in people's capabilities**: all of this has a cost, but investing in adequate skills for the labour market is about a human centred approach, which includes gender empowerment, and the targeting of key populations.
3. **Increase investment in the institutions of work** – is about strengthening local institutions and their local ownership;, including introduction of different technologies
4. **Increase investment in decent and sustainable work** – looking towards long-term, productive, transformative changes.
5. **Working in partnership – doing more with less, but even better!**

We look forward to working on these efforts together with you.