

**Employment for Peace, Stability and Development
A Regional Strategy for the Horn of Africa
Stakeholders' and Development Partners' Conference
(Addis Ababa, 11 April 2011)**

**Opening remarks by Mr Charles Dan
Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa
International Labour Office**

Excellencies,

Dear tripartite representatives,

Dear friends,

I feel honoured today to join hands with IGAD and the African Union Commission in the launching of our first regional Employment for Peace initiative on the Horn of Africa.

I would like to thank you, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, for welcoming, on behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, this important event in Addis Ababa.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency, the Vice-President of South Sudan, for the peaceful and successful

referendum. In welcoming you to this meeting, we welcome the people of your country in the global concert of nations.

I wish to express my respect and gratitude to the Honourable Ministers who are here with us. Your presence today, Honourable Ministers, is a powerful demonstration of your government's commitment to ensure a secure and conducive environment for the realization of the Decent Work Agenda in the region.

I am pleased to extend a special welcome to Dr Ralf Brauksiepe, Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Republic of Germany. Thank you so much for your keen interest on African development issues, in particular in the East African region.

Many thanks also to Ms Henriette Geiger from the European Commission for being with us.

And I would like to pay a special tribute to the Ambassadors present as well as the permanent missions and UN institutions represented here.

We are gathering today for a great cause: Ensuring peace and people's security through decent work for all.

Indeed, this notion of security is central to human life. But we also need to go deeper than the issues of the security of states and address collectively the importance of people's security.

As repeatedly emphasized by our ILO Director-General, Mr Juan Somavia, if you ask peoples what are their major sources of insecurity and anxiety, the answers are: civil disorder, armed violence, instability of governance system too often caused by unemployment, inequalities, poverty, discrimination and lack of participation.

For too many years, the countries of the Horn of Africa have been suffering from such sources of individual and collective insecurity.

For too many years, the Horn of Africa has been identified with conflict, poverty, hunger, piracy, instability.

The peoples of the Horn of Africa - a region blessed with an abundance of human and natural resources - do not deserve this situation.

This reality compels us to think collectively and act together to address the common challenges facing the countries in the Horn of Africa.

Indeed, we should have no frontiers in our struggle for dignity through employment - in our fight for respect of workers' rights - in our endeavour to extend social protection - in our call for participative

governance through social dialogue - in our commitment to gender equality.

This is the reason why through this Conference on “Employment for Peace, Stability and Development”, we are seeking to adapt the Decent Work Agenda to the reality and diversity prevailing in the Horn of Africa.

We hope that our two-day conference will lead to concrete results that will have a tangible impact on community lives and family livelihoods.

The regional strategy that will be debated during this Conference targets three immediate objectives:

- To create employment opportunities through the better use of local resources, labour-intensive infrastructure development, “green jobs” and livelihood diversification;
- To reduce vulnerabilities and adapt the concept of a social protection floor by building on existing, community-based practices of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity;
- To improve governance through a bottom-up approach comprising enhanced social dialogue, strengthened social partners and a vibrant social economy.

This is why we are so convinced that the peace dividends of a stabilized Horn of Africa deserve the national and international investments needed to succeed.

The social challenge of this regional strategy is clear: offering the peoples - women and men - in the Horn of Africa a productive perspective in life; and giving the youths in the region hope for the future.

The political message is plain: Nobody can do it alone.

This is a national duty. This is a regional necessity. This is an international responsibility.

Thank you so much for your attention.