

Speech by ILO Director General Guy Ryder
Opening of the Ghana Job Summit
ACCRA, 14 April 2015

I want to begin by thanking all of you for your generosity in offering me the privilege and opportunity of addressing this Ghana Jobs summit and for the wonderful atmosphere as well that has been created in this hall. I am truly delighted at this opportunity because your summit is indeed a most important event because as well this event brings me back to Ghana and because it provides a very concrete demonstration of the strengths and practical character of the partnership that binds together Ghana's tripartite constituents, Government, Employers and Workers and our International Labour Organisation. And let me say that it is a partnership that I hope to see further strengthened Mr President if your very heavy responsibilities allow to come to Geneva to address the International Labour Conference in June this year. Your message will truly be an inspiration of our work together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me go immediately to heart of the business before us today and straight away convey to you the ILO's whole hearted support to the NEP which this summit is launching today. I know that it is a result of much careful preparation. I am very pleased the ILO has been able to contribute to it. Let me say to all of you that you must take my presence here in Accra with you today as a confirmation of our determination as the ILO to continue with you to see this policy implemented.

But what is most important Ladies and Gentlemen is what is said today, what is done tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Let me say that when I come to the details, I find an enormous amount to commend in this policy. I am going to limit myself to highlighting just four points that I think a particularly important about it.

The first is that you have founded the plan on an uncompromising assessment of the challenges facing Ghana's Labour market and indeed some of the shortcomings of previous policy outcomes of the past. And that is not an easy thing to do Ladies and Gentlemen, as it requires intellectual honesty and it needs as well political resolution. And both have gone into formulating the plan and without them perhaps we would not have got very far. The second point I want to highlight in your plan for Employment policy is that you can only takes up the key challenges of creating a sufficient number of jobs to meet the needs for Ghana's young and growing population, but insist as well and in the strongest way that these must be Decent jobs "ADWUMA PA". I see ILO's Decent Work Agenda with Ghanaian characteristics and that's what we want to see put into action and I know as well that the same commitment to Decent Work is at the centre Mr President of your own Agenda for Transformation which provides for an enabling policy environment for this Employment Policy.

Then I come to the third aspect and that is the importance that the policy attributes to Social Dialogue. The Policy is infused throughout by a spirit of tripartite

cooperation and its very last provision addresses the need for the institutionalisation of strong Dialogue between social partners for informed decision making and calls on ILO support for that. I welcome this. Ghana has wonderful Social Partners and I think you must make the fullest use of them.

That brings me to my forth point Mr President and that is undeniably that this plan is extremely ambitious both in the number of issues that it addresses and the extent of the transformation that it seeks to generate. I have looked at it carefully and I counted 74 Action points under the four strategic objectives you have set and I have noticed as well that you have decided to take up squarely the difficult issues of Labour productivity upon which the long term growth, living standards and prosperity by definition depends. And also the Labour governance administration questions which are equally critical if self-inflected blockages are to be cleared from the future overall progress of your country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we find in the plan a truly determined and impressive statement of intent. It underlines the challenges of promoting and providing skills and jobs for Ghana's youths. It talks of the need to formalise your very large informal sector, to realise the enormous potential of the rural economy and to place your priority on full productive employment and also for role of the private sector and providing it with the energy, policies and infrastructure that it needs.

So Ladies and Gentlemen having provided you with this encouraging I hope endorsement of the content of the National Employment Policy and in the intention of implementing it in a tripartite partnership, would you allow me to say a few words about the context in which it is now being launched, the national and international context. I aware off course, that following a period of impressive growth and with prospects of major future developments of Ghana's oil and gas industries, your country has nevertheless had a difficult period of economic slowdown and significant challenges in Public finances in recent years and now off course been tagged to the extended Credit facility of International Monetary Fund (IMF). I am aware equally that the implications of this for many of actors in this hall but it leads me to two thoughts one that comes from my personal experience and the other that comes from International developments.

Firstly, I first came to Ghana in mid-1980 in the context and because of what we then called Structural Adjustment Programmes. It was a painful experience for the people of Ghana and Mr President I am afraid of what you have to say about that experience. It might be tempting and discouraging to conclude that thirty (30) years later we have come full circle and must revisit that experience. But let me say it and say it in the clearest possible way that does not have to be the case and I believe it's not the case. It would only be the case if nothing had changed in your country and the international Community had learnt nothing from past experiences. But the point I want to make to you is that much has changed. It is a different Ghana and this is a different International Partnership in which you are engaged.

This is where the International context I think maybe useful to you. Ladies and Gentlemen, I came here to Accra yesterday from Europe where the dominant economic and social policy question above all others is precisely how to break out of a situation in Europe of very slow growth and unacceptable high rates of unemployment while at the same time restoring the balance of public finances of many countries which are experiencing acute deficits and debt to GDP ratios considerably higher than what Ghana faces today.

I think you will all know Ladies and Gentlemen that this has been an extraordinarily challenging experience and the challenge is not over but the lesson that I can draw from that experience I want to share with you is that we need to address simultaneously the twin goals those of Jobs and growth on one hand and of addressing public sector finance on the other and to do that in a balanced way and through dialogue. It is illusionary to believe that growth can be sustained by simply ignoring the deteriorating public finances and but it is equally mistaken to think that debts can be paid off and deficits reduced if growth is to be tripped off by excessive austerity and let me tell you that my estimation of the mistake in Europe has been to err much on financial rigour in a way that has been self-defeating in many ways. All this is to say Ladies and Gentlemen, it is precisely the different context that lends even greater value to your National Employment policy the one that you are launching today and the one that will see you into the future. It is one way of getting this this damage right.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the global and regional context that forms the backdrop to this summit are it must be admitted quite worrying. But not without some positive perspectives. We all know and it was confirmed yesterday by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that since the Global crisis hit us all in 2007, the World Economy is on a slower growth trajectory than it was pre-crisis and that after the advanced economies, it is the emerging world that is now feeling the sharpest effects and that we must also realise that the so called super cycle of potent growth based on high price commodity exports seems to be over. And in fact our job crisis is deepening. Think of this, the crisis meant the loss of 60 million jobs worldwide and under the current growth rates that number is set to increase and so the Agenda for jobs being set here in Ghana today must be the Agenda that the International community puts up in the future.

And here is the good news, ladies and gentlemen; we have the opportunity internationally to act because in September, the UN will set its post 2015 development agenda. This is what comes after the Millennium Development Goals. We at the ILO have been working with our member states to ensure that the Decent Work for all is explicit and central goal of the global development institutions. Thank you Ghana for doing that for us.

I think this is crucially important but it will not serve for very much if we do not have the means to meet our goals and that is why the second international agenda is important. This the meeting that will take place in Addis Ababa in July, **“the Financing for Development”**. The International Community has to put its hands

into the pocket and put on the table that we need for development and Decent Work for All. This is what we are going to Addis Ababa to do in July. And finally the third International event of this year, I just wanted to mention that the United Nations will be picking up in France the challenge of Climate change at the UN Climate Change Conference in December and our collective future depends on that as well. There are no jobs on a dead planet.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the African growth experience of the first fifty (50) years of the 21st Century was perhaps the most positive piece of an otherwise quite gloomy global growth pattern. After synthesizing the highly divergent trajectory of the continents sovereign states, I think there is some justification to be optimistic positive about the experience, judging by the record of sustained levels of rapid growth and widespread gains in governance of much of Africa in recent years.

But it is in this regard that the uncompromising diagnosis in the National Employment Policy to which I have already referred which states very clearly that Africa economy that has not fed through and or will not always fed through or not enough into decent job creation. We need to correct this if we are launch broad based and broadly balanced development and shared prosperity for continent in the future

The ILO Looks forward to contributing to that goal and looks forward to doing it with our partners in the African union through the follow through of the Ouagadougou +10 process on Employment and Poverty eradication and in our own organisation we look forward to doing that when we come to our once in four years African Regional Meeting in December this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I think all this matters to Ghana and I think Ghana matters enormously to what happens to the African Continent and the international community. Your history is one of leadership on the continent and in the world, it is one of strong commitment to the goals of Social Justice which are the mandate of the ILO. I ask you at the same time and I give our commitment to work with you on the implementation of this National Employment Policy, to work with us and make Ghana's strong contribution to the ongoing struggle in the World for Decent Work for All.

I wish you luck and I thank you