Speech

H.E Mr. Abdulfeta Abdulahi, Minister, MoLSA

Improving Industrial Relations for Decent Work and Sustainable Development of Textile and Garment Industry in Ethiopia

Project Launching

4th February 2016

Arvind Lifestyle Apparel Manufacturing PLC, Bole-Lemi Industrial Zone

Your Excellency Ato Tadesse Haile, State Minister, Ministry of Industry

Your Excellency Ato Tadele Yimer, President, EEF

Your Excellency Ato Kassahun Follo, President, CETU

Mr George Okutho, Director, ILO Country Office for Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti

Ms Anneka Knutsson, Head of Bilateral Cooperation, Sida

Mr Tobias Fischer, Country Manager, H&M

Mr Rajarshi Dutta, General Manager, Arvind Lifestyle Apparel Manufacturing PLC

It is a great honor for me to be here today for the launching of Improving Industrial Relations for Decent Work and Sustainable Development of Textile and Garment Industry project. The project is very timely as it responds to the priority identified by the tripartite
partners in the Decent Work Country Programme for Ethiopia. Specifically the first priority which seeks to enhance labour market governance through the ratification and implementation of relevant conventions, and strengthen the capacities of social dialogue, labour dispute resolution and collective bargaining institutions. This is inline with the SDG Goal 8.

As you all know the creation of employment and decent work that brings about increased productivity and competitiveness remains a key priority in all our development efforts. The government of Ethiopia recognizes that an inclusive and job rich growth through decent work is the backbone for achieving the Growth and Transformation Plan vision of becoming a middle income country by 2025.

The emerging textile and garment industries are the one of the priority light manufacturing sector identified by the government as it has potential not only for employment creation but export earnings. The industry has great potential to be a spring board for the industrialization process of the country provided that we improve industrial relations, working conditions in tandem with productivity.

Sound industrial relations and effective social dialogue are means to create virtuous cycle by translating productivity and competitiveness gains into better working conditions.

The government is committed to fundamental rights and principles at work, while pursuing pro-poor development policy and encouraging dialogue between the parties. The ratification of 21 ILO Conventions
including the eight fundamental ones is the evidence of its commitment.

Despite the enabling policy environment for industrial relations and social dialogue in Ethiopia, institutional framework and capacity for ensuring continuous improvement of working conditions through improved industrial relations, is now up to standard. However, the government has a limited capacity to translate the commitment into the reality, through effective labour inspection for labour law enforcement, working conditions, promotion of collective bargaining and improving legislative framework at the workplace.

In addition, limited capacity of the workers’ and employers’ organizations prevents the use of social dialogue platforms and opportunities to improve working conditions and productivity. There is a need for strong industrial relations and social dialogue structures and processes at enterprise, sectoral and national level to resolve important economic and social issues and create an enabling environment for the realization of decent work in the country.

The project is designed with full participation of the tripartite partners in order to address the challenges I mentioned earlier. The interventions at Federal, Regional and Factory level will help us to identify key learning which can be applied not only in this sector at large but also other industries. We will closely follow up the progress of the project as we would like to draw and document lessens and scale it up.
For our industries, maintaining sound labour relation and healthy working environment not only helps them to comply with the labour proclamation but also bring more business as the international buyers are increasingly getting sensitive about ethical sourcing and international compliances.

I believe with collaborative effort of all partners we can make Ethiopia an African hub of socially responsible production of garments for both global and domestic markets.

Before I conclude my remarks, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to SIDA and H&M for their financial support to make this project a reality.

Finally I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Arvind Lifestyle Apparel Manufacturing PLC for hosting this launch.

I declare that the project is officially launched

Thank you