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Tripartite Declaration and Plan of Action for Realizing the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean

Adopted by high-level representatives of the governments and of the employers' and workers' organizations of member States and non-metropolitan territories of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean at ILO's Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum on 12 October 2006, Barbados.

Tripartite Declaration and Plan of Action for Realizing the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean

I. Declaration

The high-level representatives of the governments and of the employers' and workers' organizations of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean¹

Having met in Barbados from 10-12 October 2006 and considered the ILO discussion paper entitled, "Responding to Globalization: A Decent Work Agenda for the Caribbean in the context of regional integration",

Encouraged by the fact that eight (8) delegations were headed by women, four of whom were Ministers of Labour, and by the large number of women participating,

Having discussed social and labour issues of priority concern within the specific context of the English- and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean and taking into account the implications of the emerging CARICOM (Caribbean Community) Single Market and Economy,

Having noted the high-level international support for the Decent Work Agenda as a development agenda at: the 2005 World Summit; the 2006 High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, 2005); the XIV Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (Mexico, 2005); and the Sixteenth American Regional Meeting (Brasilia, 2006),

Recalling the ILO's 2003 Global Employment Agenda (GEA) to make employment more productive, and the GEA Implementation document on operationalizing the employment component of Decent Work Country Programmes,

Reaffirming the Millennium Development Goal "to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work" and recognizing the UN Secretary General's Youth Employment Network initiative,

*Recognizing the importance of the Conclusions of the Sixteenth American Regional Meeting at which the *Decade of Promoting Decent Work in the Americas* (2006-*

¹ Adopted by the representatives of the following member States and non-metropolitan territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

2015) was launched with the aim of promoting Decent Work and contributing to the reduction of poverty over the next ten years,

Acknowledging the efforts of the Caribbean to address the issues of globalization, development and Decent Work as evidenced by: the Subregional Consultations on A Fair Globalization (Barbados, 2003), the Workshop on Decent Work and Development Policies (Trinidad and Tobago, 2004), and the tripartite national consultations in preparation for the Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum (TCEF),

Reconfirming continued support for and commitment to the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda, namely;

1. Promoting and realizing standards and fundamental principles and rights at work,
2. Creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and incomes,
3. Enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, and
4. Strengthening tripartism and social dialogue.

Recognizing the importance of integrating, in a comprehensive and coherent manner, policies for sustainable economic growth and development, and for full and productive employment and Decent Work,

Acknowledging that each country and territory of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, while sharing certain historical and cultural similarities, is starting from different economic and social realities,

Have adopted and commit ourselves to implementing the following Plan of Action.

II. Plan of Action

We, as tripartite representatives of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, resolve to formulate Decent Work Country Programmes, to advance decent work priorities in national development agendas. Decent Work Country Programmes should adequately reflect tripartite priority setting, engagement and ownership. In keeping with the ILO Resolution concerning Tripartism and Social Dialogue (2002) and consistent with the *Guidelines for consultations with the Bureaux for Employers' and Workers' Activities*, the active participation of the social partners in these processes must be guaranteed.

The Decent Work Plan of Action addresses issues that are common to the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean as a whole. Each country or territory, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, will define attainable Decent Work

goals and shape its own national agenda, based on the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda.

Decent Work Country Programmes enable the ILO and tripartite constituents to work closely with the United Nations, Bretton Woods institutions, regional financial institutions, regional development organizations and donors to integrate the objectives of full and productive employment, poverty alleviation and decent work in policy dialogue and programming cycles at country level.

We resolve to promote actively regional cooperation, in order to identify common needs, share good practices and develop strategies and programmes for advancing the Decent Work Agenda and reducing poverty.

Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work

We resolve to do the following:

1. Raise awareness of and promote respect for fundamental principles and rights at work as well as ratified ILO instruments, through education and information dissemination;
2. Conduct a thorough review of national legislation and policies, including in the context of ongoing labour market reform, in order to ensure that it is in accordance with fundamental principles and rights at work and relevant ILO Conventions;
3. Collaborate in efforts to harmonize labour legislation with the support of the ILO and CARICOM to the extent possible and within the established national legislative framework;
4. To improve compliance with national legislation, regulations and codes by strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and through education and awareness-raising.

Create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and incomes

Within the context of an emerging regional single market:

1. Adopt employment-promoting macro-economic policies that foster conditions conducive to increased trade, investment, competitiveness and job opportunities;
2. Formulate a regional development strategy to complement the national policy with respect to employment creation.

3. Support economic diversification through strategic competitiveness and productivity-enhancing measures that include the promotion of competitive sectors and value chains with strong employment potential;
4. Create an enabling environment including financing for the establishment and growth of productive and competitive enterprises, with special attention to micro, small and medium enterprises including the creative industries, and those in the informal economy;
5. Ensure that the quality of education and training programmes provide the skills and attitudes needed to participate actively in the world of work, paying particular attention to the changing needs of the labour market in the global and knowledge-based economy;
6. Develop policies and programmes to address the obstacles to decent and productive work faced by youth:
 - a. Identify and analyze the specific factors that result in disproportionately high unemployment among youth;
 - b. Enhance employability, equal opportunity, entrepreneurship, and employment creation for youth;
 - c. Implement the CARICOM Regional Strategy for Youth Development;
7. Promote national and regional policies to ensure equal opportunity for the employment of persons with disabilities;
8. Formulate, in conformity with national employment and labour market strategies, proactive labour migration policies and programmes that optimize gains and minimize losses from migration, help manage intra-regional migration, enhance the regulatory mechanisms and protect migrant workers being guided by the ILO Non-binding Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2005);
9. Ensure that decent work is adequately addressed in regional and bilateral trade agreements;
10. Develop integrated policies and programmes to address the challenges of the informal economy and facilitate transition to the formal economy.

Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all

We recommit to:

1. Undertake a thorough review of existing laws, regulations and codes as regards occupational safety and health to ensure the causes of accidents and illnesses are covered through the regulatory mechanisms;
2. Strengthen the national labour inspection services taking into account ILO Labour Inspection Convention; and other relevant conventions addressing occupational safety and health, to take initiatives to promote a culture of safety and accident prevention;
3. Develop, improve and implement HIV/AIDS policies and programmes at the national and workplace levels, being guided by the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, in order to:
 - a. eliminate stigma and discrimination, and
 - b. ensure the rights at work of persons living with and affected by HIV and AIDS;
4. Develop national programmes designed to protect and maintain the health of the population recognizing the prevalence of lifestyle diseases;
5. Review and revise the social security systems with a view to balancing the need for an efficient labour market with effective protection;
6. Review the incidence and nature of non-standard employment and the situation of workers in the informal economy with a view to enhancing their social protection;
7. Promote programmes to sensitize workers to the need for planning early for retirement;
8. Devise social protection facilities and employment relief programmes to respond to emergencies arising from natural disasters.

Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue

1. On a national level, we reaffirm our commitment to deepen and promote tripartism and social dialogue to support good governance by:
 - i. strengthening and revitalizing existing consultative bodies and creating new ones where necessary;
 - ii. broadening their scope of action to include the goals of Decent Work into national economic and social policy-making;

- iii. strengthening the capacity of the social partners and labour administration; and
 - iv. giving effect to the 1995 CARICOM Declaration of Labour and Industrial Relations Principles and the 1997 Charter of Civil Society.
2. At the enterprise level, we will pay special attention to building trust and mutual respect while improving productivity on the basis of management-labour cooperation.

III. Cross-cutting issues

We commit to:

1. the development of sound labour market information systems (i.e. labour statistics and electronic labour exchanges) to inform policy design and monitor implementation;
2. mainstreaming gender equality in national development policies and strategies;
3. incorporating the Decent Work Agenda in national strategies to alleviate poverty; and
4. adopting national strategies to accelerate the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the various economic sectors to enhance innovation, productivity and competitiveness.

IV. Follow-up

Based on the outcome of our deliberations at this Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum (TCEF), constituents will review their own priorities and determine those areas where they would need support and advice from the ILO in order to advance towards the goal of Decent Work for all.

In this regard, we note the groundwork laid through the following: Programme for Management-Labour Cooperation (PROMALCO); the Caribbean Labour Market Information System (CLMIS) Project; the Programme to Combat Child Labour and the HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Programmes.

We reaffirm the Conclusions of the Sixteenth American Regional Meeting, and recognize that this Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum marks a major first step towards developing Decent Work Country Programmes to make the *Decade of*

Promoting Decent Work in the Americas a reality in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

We invite regional organizations such as CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM), Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), Caribbean Employers' Federation (CEC), University of the West Indies (UWI), Organizations of American States (OAS) as well as other international organizations, including Commissions, Programmes and Agencies of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions, to work closely with the ILO in supporting such efforts, as called for by the UN Economic and Social Council's High-Level Segment (July 2006); the Fourth Summit of the Americas (Mar del Plata, 2005) and the XIV Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour (Mexico, 2005).

We reaffirm our commitment to **tangible outcomes and practical measures for the implementation of time-bound policies and programmes** for the realization of decent work for all.

We undertake to implement and to review progress through agreed national arrangements, as well as through the meetings of the Caribbean Ministers of Labour.

We submit for the consideration of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) this *'Tripartite Declaration and Plan of Action for Realizing the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean'* bearing in mind Article 73 (Industrial Relations) of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. This Article provides for COHSOD, in consultation with Council for Trade and Development (COTED), to formulate proposals and adopt appropriate measures for the promotion of "harmonious, stable and enlightened industrial relations" that will promote the "objectives of full employment, improved living and working conditions; adequate social security policies and programmes; tripartite consultation among government, workers' and employers' organizations; and cross-border mobility of labour."

Barbados, 12 October 2006