



10<sup>TH</sup> ILO MEETING OF CARIBBEAN MINISTERS OF LABOUR

**REALIZING DECENT WORK UNDER THE 2030 AGENDA**

Jamaica Pegasus, Kingston, Jamaica

23-24 February 2017

## CONCLUSIONS

The Ministers of Labour and other high-level representatives of the Ministries and Departments of Labour of the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean<sup>1</sup>;

Having met in Kingston, Jamaica, 23-24 February 2017, and considered key issues under the theme “Realizing Decent Work under the 2030 Agenda”, with the participation of the ILO Director- General, representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, as well as representatives of the Caribbean Employers’ Confederation (CEC) and the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL);

Noted the attendance of 17 delegations, 11 of which were led by Ministers of Labour;

**Conscious** of the challenges confronting the Ministries responsible for Labour to realize the Decent Work Agenda and achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development;

**Recognizing** that success with this ambitious Agenda will depend on policy coherence of economic and social policies aimed at sustained and inclusive growth with productive employment and decent work, which requires an integrated and coordinated approach at both the national and regional levels;

**Reaffirming** the importance of developing a culture of meaningful dialogue, cooperation, and partnership at both the national and regional levels through the consistent and effective use of tripartite social dialogue on the formulation of inclusive social and economic policies;

**Noting with concern** the trend towards increased incidence of contract labour and use of non-standard forms of employment which is having negative effects on the quality of jobs and life for working people;

**Considering** the imperatives of harmonization of labour laws within the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and particularly noting its importance to the facilitation of cross-border movement of skills, goods, and services;

**Recalling** the ILO Americas Hemispheric Agenda on Decent Work agreed in Brasilia in May 2006 at the Sixteenth Americas Regional Meeting, and recognizing that the Regional Initiative, Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour, provides an opportunity for Caribbean countries to scale up their activities to protect children and eliminate child labour in the region;

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<sup>1</sup> Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Sint Maarten, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands

**Convinced** that a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies is needed;

**Reaffirming** that social justice is the basis for a prosperous and peaceful Caribbean;

Have endorsed and concluded that:

**1. *Elevating Decent Work to the national and regional policy level and the role of social partnership***

- 1.1. Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth with productive employment and decent work is key and a widely-shared objective of high priority in the Caribbean that requires the coordination and coherence of many policy areas that consequently have to be integrated into all national and regional economic and social policies;
- 1.2. Strengthening of inter-ministerial coordination and social dialogue mechanisms are key to fostering policy coherence and can have a positive impact on the design and development of policies aimed at improved productive capacity in the whole economy and specific sectors, including skills development, enterprise development and social protection;
- 1.3. Ministries responsible for labour, in consultation with social partners, will mainstream Decent Work into the development and monitoring of national policies aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). An efficient and effective social dialogue mechanism in CARICOM will be a driver for discussion and consensus on regional priorities and course of action.

**2. *Non-standard forms of employment (NSFE)***

- 2.1. Given the expected changes in the world of work, in-depth research on non-standard forms of employment and its implications in the Caribbean should be undertaken by the ILO to guide policy development, decision-making, and interventions to address this issue.

**3. *Harmonization of labour laws***

- 3.1. There is merit in the combined approach to labour law harmonization presented at the Meeting, which comprises the principles-based approach using instruments based on international labour standards, including the CARICOM Declaration of Labour and Industrial Relations of 1995; and the model law approach, using a set of model provisions for national laws building on the four CARICOM Model Laws; and corresponding practical tools that will facilitate the implementation of national laws;
- 3.2. ILO prepare a brief on the benefits and rationale of harmonization of labour laws by 15 March 2017, based on the background paper presented during the Meeting;
- 3.3. The CARICOM Secretariat be requested to prepare a report concerning the history of the discussion and development of the CARICOM Model Laws for circulation to member countries by 31 March 2017;
- 3.4. With the ILO brief and the CARICOM report, the Ministers will bring the matter to their respective Cabinets for consideration to move the matter forward. These submissions to Cabinet are to be made by 31 May 2017;
- 3.5. Ministers will table the matter at the COHSOD Meeting immediately following this Meeting with a view to recommending that harmonization of labour laws be placed on the agenda of the next CARICOM Heads of Governments Meeting;

- 3.6. ILO continue to have a critical role in providing technical support to the member States and to the CARICOM Secretariat.

#### **4. *Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour***

- 4.1. All Caribbean countries should engage in the Regional Initiative in order to strengthen efforts across the region to pursue the engagement made in the 2006-2015 Hemispheric Decent Work Agenda which seeks the elimination of all forms of child labour by 2020;
- 4.2. Placing child labour on the agenda of the Council of Human and Social Development (COHSOD) should be pursued;
- 4.3. It is important to raise the work and profile of the region at the World Conference on Child Labour in Argentina in November 2017 and to ensure significant Caribbean representation at this Forum.

#### **5. *Skilled workforce for sustainable growth and development***

- 5.1. Skills development, as a key component of active labour market policies, is instrumental to the Caribbean being able to cope with the challenges presented by changing labour market requirements;
- 5.2. The collection and dissemination of labour market data will be given priority with a view to informing the development of suitable and effective skills training strategies, skills anticipation tools and active labour market policies;
- 5.3. The proper management of, tripartite contribution to, and collective investment in the national technical and vocational education and training institutions are critical to the realization of a highly skilled Caribbean workforce;
- 5.4. Governments, social partners, and training providers will work together to foster a culture of lifelong learning and in developing national strategies for education and training policies to guide their effective implementation to achieve a highly skilled and certified Caribbean workforce;
- 5.5. The high levels of youth unemployment and under-employment are incompatible with the vision of a prosperous Caribbean. Increased efforts to improve young people's employability through the integration of workplace experience within the education system should be implemented through robust entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, and other types of work-based training.

#### **6. *Improving productivity and competitiveness: The role of the labour-management relations and transitioning to formality***

- 6.1. Total factor productivity is a crucial determinant of economic growth, and a driver of prosperity and higher standards of living. Programmes aimed at promoting, enhancing, and measuring productivity should be undertaken to address the deficits;
- 6.2. Informality has huge costs and negative implications for individuals, enterprises, and economies, including productivity loss. The promotion of formalization needs to be considered as a priority, and an integrated approach in line with ILO Recommendation No. 204 should be adopted to address this issue through a mix of policies that reduce cost, extend services and benefits, provide incentives, and strengthen law enforcement. Further, cooperative societies should be used in the formalization process;
- 6.3. The Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (ESEE) tool of the ILO and other ILO tools for productive transformation will be used to develop comprehensive policies aimed at bringing about a structural transformation in economies towards labour-intensive higher-valued sectors and at fostering a conducive business environment;

- 6.4. Constructive labour-management cooperation is critical in improving productivity and competitiveness as well as policy formulation related to transitioning to formality; and programmes and processes are to be put in place to foster and improve labour-management relations and cooperation.

## **7. Labour cooperation in the region**

- 7.1. Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) are relevant policy frameworks for cooperation with the ILO, and member States will, where appropriate and possible, work with the ILO to establish DWCPs as tools for mainstreaming decent work in the national policy agendas;
- 7.2. After discussion of the 2015 Recommendation of the ILO High Level Evaluation to develop a two-tiered approach for ILO future support to the region, the importance of work at the national level was reaffirmed. It was agreed that more discussion is required to determine the scope of a Regional Decent Work Strategy, and that regional level work should be pursued in specific components such as labour law harmonization, child labour, youth employment and others to be determined;
- 7.3. The ILO Office for the Caribbean be requested to develop, for further review and consultation, a proposal to outline the goals, scope and approach proposed for regional cooperation which would embrace the just transition for environmental sustainability, south-south cooperation, and the small island developing states and low-lying coastal countries (SIDS) agenda, show linkage to the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (UNMSDF) while being mindful of the CARICOM strategies, framework, and mandate.