

**Value chain development stakeholders workshop
under the green jobs project.
19th August 2011 – Taj Samudra Hotel, Colombo**

Let me on behalf of the ILO warmly welcome all of you to attend this very important event, which marks a technical milestone in the ILO/Australia partnership green jobs in Asia project, Sri Lanka chapter.

As a specialised agency of the UN, the International Labour Organisation seeks to promote social justice and fundamental principles and rights at work since its inception in 1919. The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. This concept of decent work is the main frame upon which the concept of green jobs is built. The ILO's green jobs project, seeks to deepen the commitment of the ILO Constituents to be aware of gender-sensitive green job opportunities and their understanding of a just transition for workers and employers in low-carbon, climate resilient, environmentally friendly development.

The green jobs initiative was established as a partnership between the ILO and the United Nations Environment Programme (unep) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2007. The International Organisation of Employers joined in 2008. It is part of the ILO's work to respond to climate change by realising the potential for green jobs and supporting a positive labour market transition. Green jobs also contribute to low-carbon development and reducing the environmental impact of enterprises and economic activity, ultimately to levels that are sustainable.

The economic crisis, we all know, has forced millions of people out of work and pushed many more back to poverty. Globally, there were 27.6 million more unemployed people in 2010 than before the crisis. The number of workers in extreme poverty in 2009 is estimated to have been over 40 million. Environmental degradation, the misuse of natural resources and the deep-seated crisis of jobs and decent work are all interconnected.

Thus, the choice must be made to seize these opportunities or continue the downward spiral of economic dependence, overuse, degradation and loss of livelihoods. A sustainable future means turning jobs opportunities into decent green jobs.

The Western Province of Sri Lanka alone has to deal with around 60% of the total quantity of solid waste generated per day in the country. There are various strategies and initiatives underway to improve solid waste management and support local authorities in this endeavour through improved legal, administrative and institutional frameworks. The ILO will add value to these initiatives by providing technical and process upgrading through value chain analysis and follow-up interventions to the solid waste management sector.

In principle all jobs that are found in the municipal solid waste management sector would be considered by the ILO as green jobs, which include compliance to minimum labour and environmental standards at least. However, this is not always the case. By working in close collaboration with the Sri Lankan government and relevant partners including the ILO constituents, the green jobs in Asia project aims to address this issue to turn less-decent, unsafe, environmentally un-friendly jobs into productive green jobs and ensuring that both the decent work aspects that respect the rights of the workers and address environmental issue are properly focussed upon in a mutually supportive manner.

We must use every opportunity to make progress towards an inclusive growth model with policies and programmes that are efficient for people, for productive investment and for nature.

I take this opportunity to thank our donor present here today for their generous contribution to the ILO green jobs in Asia project, whilst also wishing all stakeholders present and not present every success in their endeavours to promote the concept of green jobs and work towards fair and just green development.