



High level Forum:

Social Dialogue and Decent Work: Our Challenges

Welcome Address by Ms. Panudda Boonpala
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International Labour Office

On the occasion of the ILO's 90th anniversary,
Bangladesh China Friendship Hall
Dhaka, Bangladesh, 3rd May, 2009

- **Engr. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Honorable Minister of Labour and Employment and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment**
- **My colleague, Ms. Renata Lok Dessallien, United Nations Resident Coordinator**
- **Mr. Kamran T. Rahman, President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation**
- **Mr. Abdul Matin Master, Chairman, National Coordination Committee for Worker's Education (NCCWE)**
- **Excellencies**
- **Representatives of government agencies, employers and workers organizations, media and civil society**
- **Our development partners and UN colleagues**
- **Ladies and gentlemen.**

Good afternoon

First of all, I would like to extend our warm welcome to our Chief Guest, Honourable Minister of Labour Engr. Kandekhar Mossharaf Hossain, for his support to the ILO and for his presence as Chief Guest in today's event. I also would like to welcome BEF President, Mr. Kamran T. Rahman, Chair of NCCWE and my colleague, the UNRC, Ms. Renata Lok Dessallien.

Excellencies, senior officials, colleagues and friends, I would like to welcome you all and thank you so much for joining us this afternoon !

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ILO was founded in 1919 in the aftermath of World War I, on the principle that “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice”. In these nine decades, through war and peace, depression and economic growth, governments, workers and employers have continued to come together in dialogue around our table of shared values; that work must be a source of dignity; that labour is not a commodity; and that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.

Our values and action have set the norms for the treatment and well-being of workers – women and men – including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, equality of opportunity and non discrimination, freedom from forced labour and from child labour and safe and healthy work.

These values and action have helped create sustainable enterprises that generate jobs, develop skills for all persons—wherever they live, whoever they are—and promote a movement for corporate social responsibility.

These values and action are needed more than ever to create a globalization that is fair and sustainable.

Distinguished guests,

Bangladesh is a long standing member of the ILO and we have been honored to work together with you through these 36 years. I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to the Government of Bangladesh for putting employment and protection of the rights and welfare

of the people including those of the employers and workers at the center of the policy of the current Government. Bangladesh has ratified 33 ILO Conventions and is one of the Asian countries which is actively implementing the Decent Work Country Programme.

On the ILO's 90th birthday it is right that we should feel pride in completing more than three decades in Bangladesh. But what is more important is the future challenges! We use this occasion not only to celebrate our past but to look ahead and focus on the pressing priorities of working people and forge solutions.

Dear colleagues

The Bangladesh Decent Work Country Programme prepared in consultation with the constituents, focuses on improved skills training and entrepreneurship, improved coverage of social protection and rights for workers, including overseas workers and the rights of tribal populations; eliminating the worst forms of child labour; and enhancing the capacities of tripartite constituents and partners.

For the ILO, Social dialogue with government, workers, employers and social partners is very important for advancing the decent work agenda. The dialogue should be aimed at fostering hope and action plan in terms of responding to the current needs and priorities.

Distinguished guests,

The world has witnessed a backdrop of rising unemployment, deteriorating conditions of work and the undermining of respect for rights at work, along with growing inequality, poverty and insecurity.

The Global Jobs Summit to deal with the impact of financial and economic crisis will be organized on June 15-16 as part of the International Labour Conference. The Summit will bring together Heads of States, Ministers, policy makers, workers and employers organizations to discuss coordinated and coherent actions at the national, regional and international level for economic stimulus packages, job creation and preservation, and social protection as central to sustainable recovery and growth.

Dear colleagues

Decent work and social dialogue has never been more important than it is now at the time when we have to prepare ourselves for the impact of the economic and financial crisis on the World of work.

The ILO offers the building blocks of the Decent Work Agenda: employment creation – including green jobs – through sustainable enterprises; solidarity in the form of social protection; upholding standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; and harnessing the creative power of dialogue and collective bargaining to find the best solutions.

On this prestigious occasion, I wish to extend my gratitude and express my sincere thanks to the government of Bangladesh for working ‘hand in hand’ with the ILO and assuring their commitment of the decent work country programme. Thank you honorable Minister!

Ms. Renata Dessallien, we are grateful to you and the UN colleagues for cooperation and team work, guided by the UNDAF and MDGs, and for acknowledging the work of ILO under the UN Normative work in Bangladesh.

We are indeed grateful to the Bangladesh Employers’ Federation and the National Coordination Committee for Workers Education, for being the two strong pillars of ‘tripartism’, and their support in facilitating and promoting social dialogue and decent work.

The civil society, academia and research organizations, and media have always played an important role in forging forward the objectives of our decent work agenda, and we are thankful to them for their valuable contribution.

To all of you, colleagues and friends of the ILO, myself and my ILO team (may I request my ILO colleagues to stand up) would like to thank you all for your support, friendship and your commitment to advance the ILO Decent Work Goal.

Thank you