



## **Meeting Report High-level Stakeholder Meeting to Discuss Objectives of the New Labour Force Survey of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

October 23, 2014

Baku, State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan

### **1. Introduction**

A one-day meeting organized by the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan in close collaboration with the International Labour Office (ILO) Department of Statistics was held on October 23, 2014 at the headquarters of the State Statistical Committee (SSC) in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan. The meeting was an important opportunity to share information regarding the ILO Decent Work Measurement Framework and indicators, the latest international statistical standards concerning work statistics, as well as share information about Azerbaijan's selected set of decent work indicators and highlights of the labour force survey in Azerbaijan.

The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To share information regarding decent work measurement and the new international statistical recommendations for measuring work, employment and underemployment adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians in Geneva in October 2013
- To share information regarding the decent work situation in Azerbaijan, provide an overview of the most recent labour force survey (LFS) of Azerbaijan and discuss new opportunities for the forthcoming LFS with the implementation of the 19th ICLS Resolution concerning work statistics
- For high-level tripartite stakeholders to discuss and identify the substantive objectives of the new LFS in Azerbaijan including scope, topic areas, geographic coverage, domains and initial indicators

### **2. Meeting Participants**

Participants of the meeting included high-level policymakers, researchers and other data users of decent work indicators and labour statistics in general, representing the public and private sectors and civil society. In particular, participants included officials from various line ministries and institutions including:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Azerbaijan



- Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation
- National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of Azerbaijan
- Ministry of Taxes of Azerbaijan
- Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan
- Ministry of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan
- The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan
- The State Social Protection Fund of Azerbaijan
- Azerbaijan State University of Economics
- Scientific Research Institute of Economy (Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences)
- The Institute for Scientific Research on Economic Reforms

### **3. Meeting sessions and outcomes**

The meeting was organized into an opening session, two informational sessions, a session focusing on participant feedback on the substantive objectives of the LFS (including the scope, topic areas and initial indicator selection), and wrap up and closing sessions.

#### **Opening session**

Mr. Yusif Yusifov, Deputy Chairman of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan opened the meeting by welcoming all of the participants, providing an overview of the role of the SSC as regards the production of statistics, and explaining the objectives of the meeting. The representative of the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of Azerbaijan, Mr. Tapdig Osmanov, thanked the organizers of the event and recognized the importance of quality statistics on the labour market for tackling issues such as unemployment and recognized the benefit of such statistics for entrepreneurs. The representative of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, Mr. Nadir Muradov also expressed his keen appreciation and interest in the meeting, noting that the event represented a good foundation for future efforts to better understand the labour situation.

The representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Azerbaijan, Mr. Vahab Mammadov, Head of the Department of Employment Policy, provided some remarks in the opening session as well as providing the keynote address. He discussed the special and principle role of labour rights within the broader realm of human rights. He noted the importance of decent work promoted by the ILO as an important goal and indicator of social well-being. He discussed the important gains made in the Republic of Azerbaijan in combatting unemployment since monitoring began with a new method in 1995. He noted that indicators such as the unemployment rate are very important to policymakers, in particular to monitor the national employment strategy. To ensure the highest quality production and use of statistical information on the labour market, there is a need to build institutional capacities. He argued that more work should be done in some key topic areas, such as informal employment and disabilities. Data should be collected with the support of the social partners who are the responsible parties for carrying out the policies. Thus he suggested that the meeting created an

opportunity to work closer with the social partners. He suggested that coordination should be improved between national and international agencies, and suggested the possibility of establishing a working group as a next step to further facilitate such coordination.

Participants were then invited to introduce themselves. The meeting participant list is provided in the Annex.

### **Session 1: The Decent Work Measurement Framework and the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization**

During the first information sharing session, Ms. Monica Castillo, Chief of the Standards and Methods Unit of the ILO Department of Statistics gave a presentation on *The Decent Work Measurement Framework and the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS Resolution Concerning Statistics of Work, Employment and Labour Underutilization*. She discussed the global goal of Decent Work and provided an overview of the decent work measurement framework, noting that the framework was developed by a Tripartite Meeting of Experts in 2008; then presented to the ILO Governing Body and 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in that year. She noted that the framework groups both statistical and legal framework indicators under 10 substantive elements plus one area for the social-economic context of decent work.

Ms. Castillo also provided an overview of work and labour force statistics, including the key objectives, scope, use and relevance. In particular, she noted that the purpose is to describe and monitor labour markets, measure the participation in all forms of work (both paid and unpaid) and assess the differences in participation between various population groups. She explained that the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) has served as the world standard-setting body on labour statistics since 1923. The international statistical standards adopted by the ICLS serve to promote coherence in concepts and methods of labour statistics across sources and domains while also promoting international comparability of statistics. The adoption of ICLS standards is supported by tripartite constituents representing governments (i.e., National Statistics Offices and Ministries of Labour), Employers' organizations and Workers' organizations.

Ms. Castillo explained the 18th ICLS mandate to modify and expand the 1982 standards on employment, which were no longer considered adequate to monitor employment since the 1982 ICLS definition of employment was too broad and covered many forms of work, both paid and unpaid, which were not being appropriately measured by many countries. She provided an overview of the Resolution Concerning Statistics of Work, Employment and Labour Underutilization adopted by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS in October 2013, and in particular key aspects of the Resolution, including the new statistical reference concept of "work" and concepts of "forms of work", classifications of the working age population (including labour force status and main form of work), measures of labour underutilization and recommended indicators (including headline indicators) and national strategies for adoption.

During the discussion that followed, a participant representing the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs raised the issue that unpaid workers and in particular unpaid volunteers represented



an important but as yet unexplored topic of statistics in Azerbaijan. It was mentioned that the upcoming First European Games in 2015 that will be held in Baku will require the engagement of volunteer workers and that it would be very useful to capture information about such unpaid workers. It was further suggested that a single web-based portal could be developed to allow data users to access statistical data about Azerbaijan in a single database.

The representative of the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of Azerbaijan stated that his organization would be particularly interested to obtain information regarding job vacancies, reasons for the vacancies, working conditions, and skills needs of employers. In the response, it was stated that while some of this information can be provided by a LFS, in other cases such as job vacancy information and other establishment-related information, other sources of information are more appropriate, such as administrative records and establishment surveys.

The representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Azerbaijan, Mr. Vahab Mammadov, Head of the Department of Employment Policy stated that the implementation of the new international statistical standards on work statistics could require a lot of research work and asked about the preparatory work and human resources that will be necessary for the SSC to carry out this work. He raised the issue of further review to ensure legitimacy in the Azerbaijan context. He also suggested that joint efforts could be considered in terms of conducting analysis on the current situation and outlook regarding decent work.

## **Session 2: Decent Work Situation in Azerbaijan and Overview of the LFS in Azerbaijan**

Mr. Nemat Khuduzade, Deputy Head of the Labour Statistics Department of the State Statistical Committee gave a presentation on *The Decent Work Situation in Azerbaijan and an Overview of the Labour Force Survey in Azerbaijan and New Opportunities with the implementation of the 19th ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization*. He provided an overview of the Assessment of Decent Work at the national level and noted that in 2013 the SSC of Azerbaijan again produced statistical information for the set of Decent Work indicators which had been previously published. (Azerbaijan produced a *Decent Work Country Profile* in October 2009.) He also presented the main indicators of economic and social context for decent work at the national level for the 2003-2013 period. He provided information about the Employment Strategy, state programs on socio-economic development by region, poverty reduction, and developing official statistics of the country to meet the information needs of different data users.

Mr. Khuduzade also provided an overview of the LFS in Azerbaijan from 2003 to the present time including population coverage, geographic coverage, persons covered by the survey, structure of the questionnaire and LFS domains. He explained the sample design, data quality evaluation and stages used in the sampling design in the current LFS in Azerbaijan.



Mr. Khuduzade discussed the issue of improving the current questionnaire and the methodology of the LFS in light of future opportunities with the implementation of the 19th ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization.

In the discussion that followed, some participants expressed their interest in obtaining statistical information in Azerbaijan on key topics such as informal employment, persons with disabilities, and child labour. In the response, it was noted that these topics require specific survey modules since a few questions are often not sufficient in the questionnaire. The representative of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, Mr. Nadir Muradov, raised the issue of obtaining statistical information about medical insurance coverage, trade union membership, and collective bargaining agreements, as well as the number of persons working in unfavourable working conditions including fatal occupational injuries.

In the response, it was noted that while some of these topics can be addressed in a labour force survey, others require the use of other data collection instruments including administrative records obtained by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population. Some participants raised concerns regarding specific questions on the current LFS questionnaire, however sometimes the questions and/or response categories related to established international guidelines, for example on industry classification guidelines. It was proposed that the work of the LFS questionnaire design be carried out by the statistical experts at the SSC, while high-level stakeholders should play an important role as regards defining the main topics and survey objectives of the LFS.

### **Session 3: Discussion of substantive objectives of the LFS: scope, topic areas and initial indicator selection**

In the afternoon working group session, participants were organized into four rotating groups where they discussed their information needs and related issues regarding the substantive objectives of the forthcoming labour force survey in Azerbaijan, taking into account the information shared in the previous sessions. This session provided critical feedback to the State Statistical Committee organizers regarding continuing support of the decent work measurement framework, including the ten substantive elements and corresponding indicators. It also was an opportunity for participants to provide feedback regarding new topic areas that could be introduced into the forthcoming labour force survey including forms of work and labour underutilization. The sessions were conducted in a manner so as to encourage maximum participation from all participants.

The meeting results confirmed the support for the SSC to continue its role in producing statistical decent work indicators in order to continue to provide high-level stakeholders with timely, relevant, and accurate information to monitor progress towards decent work in Azerbaijan. New topic areas including labour underutilization and forms of work in particular generated much interest and discussion. While labour underutilization measures and indicators as defined in the new international statistical standards were viewed as important in the Azerbaijan context, discussion on the topic of forms of work (including



employment and unpaid forms of work) yielded a mixed reaction from participants, with some expressing highly favourable views about the need to include this topic as a module in the forthcoming LFS and others taking a more cautious view, suggesting that further review could be necessary to ensure its legitimacy in Azerbaijan.

More detailed feedback prepared during the group discussions is included in the Annex.

*Note: Due to information shared during the presentation by Mr. Nemat Khuduzade regarding the established population and geographic coverage and LFS domains in the Azerbaijan LFS, it was decided that a discussion by stakeholders on these topics was not necessary during the meeting. Nonetheless, the ILO discussed the possibility of future discussions relating to population coverage to ensure consistency with international recommendations.*

### **Wrap-up and next steps**

During the wrap up session, Mr. Khuduzade and Ms. Castillo highlighted key outcomes of the meeting and thanked all the participants for their engagement and very valuable contributions, particularly regarding the substantive objectives of the forthcoming LFS in Azerbaijan. They discussed next steps in the planning and welcomed all stakeholders to continue the open dialogue as the process moves forward. The organizers and interpreter were also recognized for their excellent work.

### **Closing session**

In his closing remarks, Mr. Vahab Mammadov, Head of the Department of Employment Policy, acknowledged the new challenges faced by the new statistical standards which will lead to future opportunities. He reiterated the need for better coordination with relevant organizations including international agencies. He stated that the ILO should play a leading role in cooperation efforts. He noted that the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population's doors are open for continued discussions to all stakeholders and thanked the organizers for the very productive and "nonbureaucratic" meeting. The representative of the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of Azerbaijan, Mr. Tapdig Osmanov, also thanked the organizers of the event and again reiterated the importance of labour statistics for different organizations' needs. He stated that labour market analysis requires flexibility and that it is important to have information about both the workforce and non-workforce. The representative of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, Mr. Nadir Muradov, also thanked the meeting organizers and signalled his strong support for continuing the work on decent work indicators and other statistical information to support decent work analysis. Mr. Khuduzade closed the meeting on behalf of the senior management of the SSC, noting that it had been a very beneficial and interesting meeting and kindly thanking all for their participation.



#### 4. Next steps

The meeting provided valuable input for the next steps as regards the future planning of the Azerbaijan LFS. The lead agency in the process will be the SSC, in close collaboration with the ILO. Follow up activities will include:

- (1) further discussions and outreach with some key stakeholders regarding concerns about measuring paid and unpaid forms of work in Azerbaijan to ensure clarity on expectations in the future LFS.
- (2) developing a new sampling design of the LFS, in line with international guidelines and best practices
- (3) building on the current set of statistical decent work indicators produced in the LFS to produce an updated, more refined set in the new LFS based on feedback from the High-level stakeholder meeting and taking into account the latest research and international good practice and
- (4) planning for the development of the new LFS questionnaire based on the updated set of indicators, to be guided by the experiences of international pilot surveys.

**Attachments: (1) Meeting agenda, (2) Participant list, (3) Presentations by ILO and SSC, and (4) Participant feedback regarding substantive objectives of the forthcoming Azerbaijan LFS prepared during the group discussions**