

Emergency Meeting on the Horn of Africa

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STATEMENT BY THE ILO

The nations of the Horn of Africa are endowed with a dynamic, youthful and entrepreneurial population and an abundance of natural resources yet they are also beset by hunger, conflicts, poverty and growing inequalities. Decent work matters in crisis – in the short-term and long-term. Opening up opportunities for decent and stable jobs offers crisis-affected people not only income but also freedom, security, dignity, self-esteem, and a stake in the recovery of their livelihoods and communities.

Failure to address the high levels of unemployment, underemployment and informal work risks triggering even more turmoil and destabilization regionally and globally.

A recent ILO-IGAD-African Union Conference on *'Employment for Peace, Stability and Development'* (11-12 April 2011 in Addis Ababa) adopted a common strategy applying the Decent Work Agenda to the situation and conditions prevailing in this region.

It established three immediate objectives:

- To create employment opportunities through the better use of local resources, labour-intensive infrastructure development, “green jobs” and livelihood diversification;
- To reduce vulnerabilities and establish a social protection floor by building on the existing, community-based practices of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity;
- To improve governance through a bottom-up approach comprising enhanced social dialogue, a strengthened civil society and a vibrant social economy.

Based on this approach ILO Programmes in the Horn of Africa endeavor to engage communities in large scale employment-intensive projects through infrastructure works that serve to fight environmental degradation, restore primary production, revive local markets and build local skills and capacities. Cooperation with local administrations is strengthened and the training provided increases local capacities and accountability. This stimulates fresh entrepreneurial engagement, further enabling self-employment-led economic development.

In Somalia, for instance, immediate temporary employment – such as small scale work on road construction and environmental conservation to increase agricultural productivity – has created over 165,000 work days. Longer-term employment is also being created, tapping into the development that exist, even in a fragile situation, creating some 3,500 jobs. For every job created, short or long term, the jobholder supports five to nine people within a household.

In its crisis response in the Horn of Africa, targeted interventions are based on a four-pronged strategy comprising:

- **food-for-work** focusing on roads that provide access to food markets, as well as for better rain water management and conservation; ;
- **emergency cash transfers to stabilise the ongoing loss of key livelihood assets**, in particular cattle and other agricultural assets;

- **socio-economic recovery strategies** promoting the diversification of local economies to reduce vulnerability to natural events and strengthening local prevention and coping strategies against crises;
- **technical supporting** humanitarian agencies to strengthen recovery of local livelihoods and resources including on issues such as procurement and employment, to help ensure that aid does not stifle local markets which still function.

The experience gained here and elsewhere points to what can be done.

We urge this Meeting to recognize and act upon the important role of productive and decent employment in the international response.