

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

37th ARLAC GOVERNING COUNCIL

MEETING OF MINISTERS

(Lusaka, Tuesday, 10 February 2011)

ILO ADDRESS

Mr CHARLES DAN

ILO Regional Director for Africa

Honourable Paurina Mpariwa, Chairperson of the 37th ARLAC
Governing Council of Ministers Meeting, Minister of Labour and
Social Services of Zimbabwe,

Honourable Austin Liato, Host of the 37th ARLAC Governing Council
of Ministers Meeting, Minister for Labour and Social Security of
Zambia,

Honourable Ministers,

The UN Resident Coordinator,

Senior Government officials,

ARLAC Director, Dear Cecilia,

ILO Lusaka Director, Dear Martin,

ILO Harare Director, Dear Alphonse,

Dear ILO colleagues from Pretoria, Lusaka, Geneva,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I would like to start by recognizing the presence of our Host, the Minister of Labour and Social Services of the Republic of Zambia.

May I also congratulate you, Honourable Chairperson, for your leadership in a challenging time.

And I would to acknowledge the presence today of the Ministers of Labour from Kenya, Namibia, Sudan, ...

Allow me also to congratulate our ARLAC Director for her achievements. Well done Cecilia.

And I am pleased to extend special greetings to the UNDP Representative, to the colleagues from the UN family as well as all to our ILO colleagues.

Dear Chairperson,

Honourable Ministers,

Dear friends,

We all know that Africa has been severely hit by the global financial and economic crisis.

Massive unemployment, widening inequality and a rise in job insecurity have increased the profile of labour administration and inspection in the crisis response.

Today, the global recovery process remains uneven.

In Africa growth is back. In the continent as a whole, economy accelerated to 4.7% on average in 2010 - and is expected to grow by 5.0 % in 2011 and beyond.

Africa has shown its resilience after the downturn caused by the global crisis - and this is great news -.

But this rebound has still not allowed us to meet poverty reduction targets and deliver decent jobs. Almost 75% of our workers remain in vulnerable employment in Sub-Saharan Africa.

And the longer term employment consequences of the global crisis are already becoming visible. Too many workers have been without a job

for too long. In too many countries youth unemployment has reached alarming levels.

Poverty has remained high. And growth has not transformed our economies.

From an historical standpoint, in the world's high-income countries, economic growth fuelled a shift from agriculture to industry and from industry to services. But Africa has not been able to follow a similar course. Instead, industrialization in much of the continent has been stunted or narrow, while productivity in agriculture and services has been low.

As a result, labour markets have remained segmented and unequal. There is widespread underemployment. Incomes in informal and agricultural activities remain low. And the terms and conditions of work are still particularly poor for women.

Lifting the most destitute out of poverty is Africa's most pressing collective challenge. This will require connecting people's aspirations with productive solutions.

Employment can no longer be regarded as a byproduct of growth. To achieve growth that is equitable and create decent jobs, deliberate policies are required.

This means that we need policies that empower the poor. We need institutions that work for the marginalized segments of society. We need incentives to improve productivity growth, quality jobs and sustainable income generation.

Today, here in Lusaka I salute with respect and admiration the personal participation of the Ministers of Labour at this 37th session of ARLAC Governing Council because the socio-economic challenges that we face - poverty reduction, jobs creation, social protection, protection of workers' rights - need political leadership and concerted solutions.

The Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007-2015 adopted at our 11th ILO African Regional Meeting held in April 2007 in Addis Ababa stressed that for decent work to become part of national development agendas, ministries of labour will need to play an active role in national macroeconomic policies, as well as growth and poverty reduction strategies.

The Global Jobs Pact and the Ouagadougou Roadmap for its implementation in Africa recognize labour administration and inspection as an important element in inclusive action on worker protection, social security, labour market policies and social dialogue and as a key area of importance for responding to the crisis and promoting economic and social development.

Let me focus today, on four policy directions where I firmly believe that ARLAC with ILO's support can accompany the efforts undertaken by our labour administration systems:

First, a sound employment policy: The lack of adequate and up-to-date labour market information and analysis often prevents many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa from adequately monitoring labour markets. The major effort that we are currently undertaking in Africa in developing Decent Work Country Programmes should take into account that the incorporation of employment policy objectives and targets in national development agendas will require better labour market data and analysis.

Second, a sound protection floor: As highlighted at the Second ILO African Decent Work Symposium in Yaounde last October, the gradual introduction of a social protection floor - which guarantees at least basic social services and basic income security - needs to be prioritized in national policy agendas. We will need to go bold and innovative and be able to combine job creation and conditional cash transfers.

Third, a sound implementation of international labour standards: since labour law compliance is a key condition for effective labour policies, labour inspection is to be considered a fundamental pillar of labour administration. If we need more labour inspection in Africa, this is because it ensures fairness in the workplace and leads to sustainable enterprise and economic growth.

Fourth, a sound social dialogue: we should never forget that the relevance of labour administration and their specific voice in policy matters depends on their capacity to maintain meaningful partnerships with employers' and workers' organizations and to remain the main channel and proponent for social dialogue within government.

For all these reasons, we look forward to the general discussion on the challenges and perspectives of labour administration and inspection which will take place next June at our International Labour Conference in Geneva.

The 12th ILO African Regional Meeting which will take place next October in Johannesburg will allow us to take stock of our progress in the region and assess how to better strengthen labour administration to meet Africa's social economic challenges ahead till 2015.

There will be no development in Africa without more productivity from Africa's labour force. But we also know that we cannot expect more productivity out of large vulnerability.

We have to empower Africa's peoples through training, skills, voice, representation and social protection.

But social policies for reducing poverty cannot be separated from efforts to create employment. Economic, social and development policies and institutions need to be systematically coordinated to

achieve the maximum impact. Labour administration is the development connecting link.

To accelerate the progress on the achievement of decent work in Africa, we call today for more resources for labour ministries for better economic and social policies.

In line with the conclusions of your High Level Symposium, we pledge our support to ARLAC to help shaping the labour administration systems that Africa deserves to accelerate the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda for all.