

Addis Ababa, April 25th

Mr. Director General,

Dear ministers and delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for this invitation to attend this Eleventh African Regional Meeting of the ILO and for the opportunity to share with you my commitment with the idea of placing the *Decent Work* agenda at the core of economic and social development.

It is for me a pleasure to be here with you today, the April 25, when in my country we celebrate the democratic revolution of 1974. Let me say that for me, as Portuguese minister, make a speech at an African Meeting of the ILO, is an excellent way of remember that day.

For some time now societies and economies have been facing challenging demands in result of the globalization process.

These challenges still don't mean that economic and social standards have become harmonized, but there's no doubt that they became a lot more interconnected and interdependent.

We compete, and live, in a global world where inequalities have consequences – not only to our near and distant neighbours, but also to each of us.

In the age of global economy and global migrations, we do not have the choice (or the right) to look the other way. The *Millennium Agenda* and the *decent work* approach are challenges that impose themselves on every corner of the world.

So, when we talk about global converging efforts to increase social protection and inclusion we are not using a rhetorical or ideological speech.

Basically, it is now time to put forward an agenda that allows us to battle the poverty trap with, not only employment opportunities, but **decent employment**.

Decent employment founded on the respect of fundamental workers rights, equality between women and men, social protection and social dialogue.

On the other hand we should be fair and recognise that few important steps have been made so far.

For instance, and from the European Union and some European countries side we have seen growing evidences of concern about the social demands of globalization.

The partnership with ILO is definitely one of those marks, and debates like this, are, I am sure of that, important opportunities to achieve concrete results in this field.

The ILO is the outcome of a profound ethic and politic thought on working conditions and the social costs of the industrial revolution. Its creation, in 1919, was a result of the effort made by the international community, worried then – as now – about the regulation of the globalization wave.

In my opinion **Decent work** is probably the most powerful concept, the more effective tool, that international community has produced, so far, for the rising of political options that might be able to gain effective answers regarding the globalization effects.

And this is the result of the quality of the ILO role and work.

Prove of that is the engagement of ILO with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which began in 2001-02, and with the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP'S), two long lasting achievements. But we must make a serious statement and realize that this is still not enough: we must promote the Decent Work agenda in the most relevant international *fora* such as the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the EU.

Recently – in May 2006 -, the European Commission, gave an important contribute and produced a communication about *promoting decent work for all* as a structural factor for development.

A commitment was then stated for the European Union to step up cooperation on social cohesion with Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In that statement, the European Commission redefined strategies, namely with the purpose of implement cooperation with the African Union concerning the social dimension of regional integration and decent work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much of our common future—including sustainable development—depends on how we face the challenge of a fair globalization.

And employment is, as we all know, the most powerful tool to fight poverty and to promote sustainable development and social cohesion.

But, on the other hand it is mandatory that we make a commitment to increase the efficiency of Development Cooperation.

This means that we must have a clear definition of objectives and priorities.

Having said this, the partnership with Portuguese speaking countries, especially African Countries, is, naturally, the higher priority for the

Portuguese Development cooperation, namely in the employment and training programs and in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion . But the multilateral arena is one of core ways to allow greater convergence of efforts in order to promote universal sustainable development, thus building the foundations for a fairer globalization and contributing to avoiding new risks and threats.

A constructive and structured dialogue between Africa and Europe is mandatory to this goal – and if we have a common ground and a joint strategy that is consensual between both continents, we put ourselves on the right path towards shared progress.

ILO has an essential role in this issue.

The implementation of the Decent Work Agenda, which we fully support, is a real guide for action, and, together with the Millennium Goals of the United Nations, constitutes the aggregating elements of a varied set of aims that the cooperation programmes must include.

Hence, the traditional distinction between bilateral and multilateral cooperation no longer makes sense. It is imperative for bilateral cooperation to be enhanced by multilateral frameworks, putting together within an articulated mobilization of resources supporting both ways of cooperation.

This may be achieved through an intelligent participation in the multilateral system, either through a more intense intervention in the relevant coordination processes, or by directly financing multilateral projects, whenever this approach brings added results and reflect a coherent effort between donors and developing countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, my country will hold the presidency of the European Union during the next semester. I want to tell you that the agenda on Decent Work and for a Fair Globalization will share an important part of our work. As well the global partnership between **Africa and Europe**.

My commitment is to be a serious partner in this challenge. Knowing that we don't have all the time of the world.

To conclude let me emphasise tree main conclusions I want to share with you.

Firstly, I think that promoting decent work and increase employment as a tool for inclusive societies must go, hand by and, with the building of the social protection schemes.

No matter the differences and levels of development this is, in my opinion, a corner stone for inclusive societies: social protection policies and employment policies are convergent and not opposite.

Secondly, I fully agreed that Social dialog is one of mains forces in order to improve the conditions of the decent work agenda.

And let me say that there isn't such a thing as a magical formula for promoting social dialog.

Each country, each society must develop is own path with the goal of involving social actors in this purpose. More or less centralized, with a small or a larger agenda, the question is: maximize the economic and social add value of this process.

Finally and despite our endless search of the keys for an inclusive society, I use to risk a key-word: **Learn**.

We should always learn- learn with our doubts and our certainties, learn with the other, learn with the unexpected.

In Portuguese and in many others languages, inclusion and cohesion rhyme with education, and maybe this are more than just a coincidence.

Thank you.