



**REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE ILO OFFICE FOR EAST AFRICA, MR.
WELLINGTON CHIBEBE AT THE OCCASION OF SIGNING AND LAUNCHING OF THE
RWANDA DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME
MARIOTTE HOTEL, KIGALI – 22ND FEBRUARY, 2018**

Hon Minister Fanfan Rwanyindo; Ministry of Public Service and Labour,

Mr. Stephen Ruzibiza; CEO of Private Sector Foundation (PSF),

Mr. Eric Manzi; Secretary General of CESTRAR,

**Mr. Mikael Boström; (Head of Development Cooperation; Rwanda Swedish
Embassy),**

High Level government officials present here today,

Representatives of trade unions and employers chambers,

Ladies and gentlemen; all protocols observed.

Good morning to you all.

At the onset I wish to express my pleasure for being invited to this auspicious occasion. It gives me, and indeed the ILO, great pleasure to witness protracted negotiations between the government, employers' and workers' organizations and the ILO come to a successful conclusion with the signing and launching of the Decent Work Country Programme for Rwanda (DWCP) under which we will

collaborate in addressing the challenges and forging partnerships to enhance opportunities in the world of work in order to accelerate social and economic development.

Although Rwanda is adopting the DWCP, only now and although, the *modus operandi* has been in place among ILO member states since 2006, I wish to acknowledge and congratulate Rwanda, as a country for having constantly integrated labour, employment and other workplace-related issues into the core of the country's development frameworks: the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS) and the National Employment Programme over the past years. Vision 2050 and the national transformation strategy have continued to place jobs, both the creation of more high earning jobs and improved job quality, demanded by the growing labour force, as the cornerstone of Rwanda's future transformation agenda.

For us in the ILO, it is indeed an opportune time to add value to these national endeavors to take the country further forward. Consider this: Rwanda remains with one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, having significantly reduced the percentage of people living below the poverty line - In the last decade, extreme poverty declined from 40 per cent in 2001/02 to 16.3 per cent in 2013/14; Income inequality declined with the Gini coefficient, falling from 0.52 in 2005/06 to 0.49 in 2010/11; and 0.45 in 2013/14 - and Rwanda is among a few countries in Africa to have achieved all the millennium development goals.

Yet based on the recent labor force survey indicators in Rwanda, a number of challenges facing the labor market still need to be addressed, here to mention but a few:

a) About 91% of total employment is still trapped in the informal economy. This portion of the labor force is characterized by workers who are not earning enough to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. Working in the informal economy is also often associated with other decent work deficits such as - Long working hours; absence of proper contracts; inability to combine work, family and personal life; lack of stability and security of work; unacceptable treatment of workers; unsafe work; environment; lack of social safety nets and several other aspects affecting the quality of jobs occupied by these workers. The capacity of the economy to create productive and quality jobs is therefore a challenge we need to overcome.

b) 16.7% of the labor force is unemployed and about 30% underemployed, indicating a significant share of Labor underutilization

c) About 30% of the potential labor force is trapped in subsistence agriculture, classified as outside the labor-force, representing the most vulnerable category of workers since they are not contributing to national productivity, yet they should be in the labor force

d) About 80% of the labor force has not attended primary school or finished primary school, an indicator of limited formal qualifications and hence limited employable skills of labor force

e) Rwanda having a youthful population, the number of young people entering the labor market requires the creation of about 200,000 productive jobs every year

DWCPs are premised on the idea that growth and development are best achieved and most evenly distributed through employment creation in both quantitative as well as qualitative terms.

Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families; offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; **AND** guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all. Productive employment and decent work are key elements for reducing poverty.

This DWCP is premised on these very tenets to ensure that not only jobs but also decent jobs are factored into endeavors to sustain growth and development in the country. It is my conviction that in so doing we shall ensure that truly, **NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.**

In line with national participatory approaches to development, this DWCP is an expression of the joint aspirations of the government, representatives of employers and workers in Rwanda and covers a 5-year period i.e. 2017-2022. I am pleased to note that it is in sync with the country's Vision 2050, national transformation strategy , the revised national employment policy, integrating pro-employment macroeconomic policy, skills development, entrepreneurship and business development, active labor market interventions and coordination and M&E of national employment interventions and the One UN Programs.

Hon. Minister,

Rwanda's role of hosting the SDG center of excellence presents an opportunity for this newly launched DWCP to add impetus to the country's pursuit of achieving the global goals in the same vein that the country largely achieved the millennium goals. The SDGs recognize the importance of decent work to achieving sustainable development and several goals and targets are anchored in ILO labor standards, particularly Goal 8; they have been concretized and quantified through a list of indicators that the ILO serves as "custodian" for 13 of those indicators while 17 additional indicators are considered of particular interest for Decent Work. As such, the launch we are about to witness today is indeed timely.

Hon. Minister,

The DWCP articulates a few priority areas that the ILO and government, employers' and workers' organizations will address over the next four years; however, doing so will not be without challenges, mainly mobilizing the requisite resources to facilitate implementation.

As a principle, the implementation of a DWCP is normally funded through a variety of integrated resources, including national budgets and often on the basis of cost-sharing arrangements with constituents. We take cognizance of the National Employment Program which the DWCP seeks to tap into, with resources mobilized from our engagement in UN country team endeavors in the same area; ILO development cooperation projects such as the project to promote Decent work in Rwanda's informal economy funded by the government of Sweden will also contribute in a substantive way towards achieving DWCP results. I wish to thank Her Excellency The Ambassador of Sweden to Rwanda for the generous support the Swedish government has provided in this endeavour, in operationalizing the DWCP particularly through the recently approved project to promote Decent Work in Rwanda's informal economy, also being launched today, which contributes to different priorities of the DWCP.

Hon. Minister,

As we are about to bear witness to the launch of the DWCP, we must take cognizance of the future that lies ahead in relation to the world of work. Next year Rwanda will join other members of the ILO in celebrating its centenary.

Much has changed in the world of work over the past 100 years, much in a positive way. However, with technological advances, new challenges have evolved obliging all of us to re-think how we can create sustainable jobs, both in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. The DWCP is but one framework within

which such consideration can be made, discussed amongst the tripartite partners and strategies implemented to create decent jobs.

I wish to close my remarks by assuring the people and government of Rwanda, the employers' and workers' organizations of the ILO's unwavering support in pursuing and delivering this programme so that each and every working woman and man gets to work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Thank you for your attention.
