

Empowering Africa's Peoples with Decent Work

Introduction of the Report of the Director General

By

Mr. Charles Dan, ILO Regional Director for Africa

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Madame Chairperson of the 12th African Regional Meeting, Minister
Mildred Oliphant,

The tripartite members of the Bureau of the 12th African Regional
Meeting,

Dear Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body,

Dear Chairperson of the African Union Labour and Social Affairs
Commission,

Honourable Ministers,

Dear Delegates,

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure for me – and a great honour - to introduce the Report
of our Director General, titled “***Empowering Africa’s Peoples with
Decent Work***”.

After this ceremony where you have paid tribute to Mr Juan Somavia
for his extraordinary achievements, you can understand my feelings
of emotion and pride. I have had the privilege of working with the
Director-General since his first day in office on 4th March 1999.

I have had the honour of accompanying the Director-General to
three previous Regional Meetings - 1999 in Abidjan; 2003 in Addis

Ababa; and again 2007 in Addis Ababa. I was happy to be part of his CABINET for almost ten years.

And since July 2008, under his leadership and instructions, I have dedicated myself to supporting your ambitions in making decent work a reality for peoples and families on our continent.

In Addis Ababa in April 2007, you put together and adopted a tripartite Agenda in Africa, for Africa. Ambitious, forward-looking, concrete.

One purpose: Decent Work for all – Four strategic objectives: Rights, Employment, Protection, Dialogue – 17 areas of policy interventions.

The Report before you takes stock of achievements in the realization of those 17 policy targets. And it looks ahead on how best to accelerate their implementation as we approach 2015, and beyond.

It must be read together with another supporting document before you – Success Africa III, titled “Realising a New Era of Social Justice through Decent Work: Success Stories from Africa”.

Today Africa is the continent of economic opportunities.

But the recent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, spearheaded by young women and men, also testify to the potential political and social fallouts when African peoples are not provided with social opportunities to realize their decent work aspirations.

Africa is working. Africa is growing.

But the missing link on Africa's growth strategy has been the inability of our economies to translate that high growth into productive employment and decent work opportunities for all.

Before the financial crisis, conventional wisdom was that deregulation would unleash growth. And the rising tide of globalization would ensure prosperity for all.

This is what the "Washington consensus" was all about – a development paradigm imported into Africa, just like the financial crisis was also imported.

It is clear that the continent's growth has been primarily externally driven. The sectors that are responsible for the economic growth are the resource-extractive sectors. Besides, the extractive and primary

commodity sectors are often disconnected from the rest of the economy.

So the continuing challenge has been on how best to mainstream productive employment opportunities and decent work into such an externally-driven growth process.

Over the past four years we have made strides into making the turn around. So, how have we performed to date?

The Report before you summarizes the progress you have made, with our support, towards achieving the 17 targets of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa. My task is only to highlight some areas of notable progress, as well as the challenging ones ahead.

Today I am proud to say, as the ILO Regional Director for Africa, that four years of implementing your agenda are bearing decent work dividends for the peoples of Africa.

It is noteworthy that DWCPs have become the operational blue prints in countries.

To date 31 countries have finalised and are implementing DWCPs, which are now being endorsed at the Cabinet level after their tripartite adoption.

And 22 countries are drafting their first or second phase DWCPs.

Moreover 48 countries have made progress in mainstreaming decent work into national development strategies.

Building on the 2004 Ouagadougou Extraordinary Summit outcomes, you have provided the impetus for an effective tripartite and collective response to the global financial and economic crisis, grounded on the conclusions reached at the following major continental events, organized with you, namely:

- The Preparatory Meeting of Experts on the First African Decent Work Symposium in Addis Ababa in February 2009.
- The Special Meeting of the Tripartite African Members of the ILO Governing Body, convened in Geneva in March 2009.
- The First African Decent Work Symposium, which took place in Ouagadougou in December 2009
- ...And the Second African Decent Work Symposium on “Building a social protection floor with the Global Jobs Pact” we had in Yaoundé in 2010.

There has been significant progress towards the universal ratification of the eight fundamental Conventions.

Only 12 ratifications are needed in Africa to reach a full regional ratification of the eight fundamental conventions.

In the area of child labour, about two thirds of member States are making progress towards eliminating the worst forms of Child Labour in Africa by 2015.

Considering the importance member states attach to social protection, more than 30 countries in Africa have made progress in the adoption of policies and programmes, which promote a Social Protection Floor.

These results show that tangible change is taking place in the lives of African people.

However, so much work lies ahead. While such results confirm that we are making progress toward our Decent Work destination, we still need to need to accelerate the pace, given the magnitude of Africa's decent work challenges.

- The informal economy, with its decent work deficits, is expanding.

- HIV/AIDS remains a development challenge, a drain on human and financial resources.
- ...And only thirteen countries have made progress in developing policies to ensure the protection of migrant workers.

Let me now turn to the third and last part of the Report, which is forward looking. Aware of the results achieved thus far and the four years to the end date of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa – 2015 - there is no doubt that efforts need to be up scaled to accelerate the realisation of this Agenda.

The ILO 2008 Social Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization emphasises that the decent work strategic objectives are integrated, inter related and mutually supportive. Hence there is a need to foster synergies between the 17 targets that you adopted to develop a portfolio of a focussed set of integrated priority areas. This would not only facilitate policy coherence, but also respond to the current decent work needs in Africa.

It is in this regard that the Report before you calls for an acceleration of the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa from now to 2015. We are proposing to do this through an integrated approach. And this is also in line with the Global Jobs Pact, and the

2009 Ouagadougou Roadmap for the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact in Africa.

What we propose is an accelerated framework for empowering Africa.

This is our roadmap towards a winning Africa.

Fast-tracking also means we have to focus – in order to go deeper and farther.

Accelerating the implementation of ratified international labour standards.

Accelerating the creation of job opportunities for the youth.

Accelerating women economic empowerment and gender equality as key development goals.

Accelerating the building of the social protection floor for all women and men, in line with the Yaoundé Declaration.

Accelerating the implementation of the ILO Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the world of work.

Accelerating the promotion of decent work in rural development.

Accelerating the realization of green jobs as an African development strategy.

Accelerating the development of the social economy as a bridge between informality and formality.

Accelerating the development of a sound and well-articulated system of wage and income policies and building effective minimum wage policies in Africa.

Accelerating the putting in place of sound labour relations as a prerequisite for decent work through tripartite social dialogue.

This is the way forward ahead.

Yes, the targets set in 2007 were indeed very ambitious. But you have shown that you were up to the hard task of implementing the Decent Work Agenda in Africa you set four years ago. Can we do better? Yes. And yes we will. So, let us accelerate the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa to empower our people.

Thank you so much for your attention.