

Green Jobs Experience Sharing and Policy Consultation Meeting,

Beijing, 30-31 March 2010

Opening remarks

**Ms. Ann Herbert, Director,
ILO Office for China and Mongolia**

- Ms Zhang Yali, Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security,
- Mr. Wang Yadong, Deputy Director General, Department of Employment Promotion, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security,
- Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and its Institute of Labour Studies for organizing this meeting today.

Last year – on exactly the same dates in the end of March – ILO and MOHRSS held their first experience sharing meeting on green jobs in China. The meeting – organized in this same venue – brought together over 20 Chinese experts and business representatives from China, six international specialists and several ILO specialists from headquarters and different offices in Asia. The objective of the meeting was to introduce the concept of Green Jobs, share information and build capacity for implementation of pilot research and field studies in China. The meeting was particularly useful in highlighting the challenges and benefits of

- a) shifting the economy towards a low carbon, environmentally friendly path in times of economic recovery,
- b) bringing the social and labour implications of the change to a low carbon economy more fully into the national debate, and
- c) engaging the social partners in new areas of dialogue and cooperation around the potential of green jobs.

In the course of the past year, our pilot activities have already allowed us to see the types of impacts the transition to a green, low carbon economy can have on women and men working in different industries and occupations in China.

Such experiences have given us a strong feeling that the promotion of green jobs is an important strategy for ensuring decent work and livelihoods for China's workforce...but it is not a panacea.

The transition to a low carbon economy brings both opportunities and challenges. The positive and negative effects will not be distributed evenly across regions or among population groups. Older workers, those working in sectors destined to decline and those with low skill levels will find it hard to make the transition. In order to realize the government objectives to ensure more equitable development and realize a moderately well-off ‘xiao kang’ society for all people in China, policy measures are needed to minimize the negative impacts and distribute benefits equitably. Here is where China’s current efforts to strengthen and extend its social protection system are of vital importance.

A balanced labour market transition to a green economy requires coherent and comprehensive policy guidance. China has a strong commitment to addressing environmental problems and climate change. China has been working to have a complete employment policy framework in place, and is now engaged in efforts to extend social protection. In other words, China has the tools it needs to develop a coherent policy to realize the full potential of green jobs creation and address the negative labour market impacts.

In addition, China has exceptional experience in guiding labour market transitions, gained over the past three decades. I am therefore confident that China has the ability to make the labour market transition to a green economy a successful one. As with any other industrial restructuring and labour market transition, a workable, sustainable and equitable green transition will be easier to achieve with the support and participation of the tripartite partners.

Policy coordination is another factor of success. The Green Jobs team at ILO was therefore very happy to learn that, following the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen last December, MOHRSS has been invited to join some of the main inter-ministerial working groups and consultation mechanisms on formulating coherent policy responses for climate change and a green economy in China. This approach really brought to life the type of response foreseen in the Global Jobs Pact – a response which would “contribute to a fair globalization, a greener economy and development that more effectively creates jobs and sustainable enterprises [...]”

President Hu Jintao was among the first world leaders to recognize the need to take combined action to promote the joint goals of decent work and environmental sustainability. In January 2008, he stated in the International Forum on Economic Globalization and Trade Unions in

Beijing that, “achieving sustainable development and protecting the earth [...] is closely bound up with [...] the immediate interest of vast numbers of workers”, and that “a good ecological environment is [...] an important precondition for decent work for all workers”

The recognition that joint responses to environmental challenges and the decent work deficit can produce positive outcomes is one of the main conceptual breakthroughs of the Green Jobs Initiative. Environmental protection and employment promotion are no longer seen as conflicting policy objectives, but as closely linked and mutually endorsing objectives that can be jointly promoted to gain benefits in both areas.

Realizing such outcomes requires active policy guidance. How best to address the opportunities and challenges posed by the green transition to ensure positive outcomes for China is the main issue for discussion in this two-day meeting.

In the course of the next two days, we shall have the opportunity to

- a) share the results of the green jobs research and pilot activities completed during the past year;
- b) learn from the progress and good initiatives taken elsewhere, including both international experiences and local level experiences in China; and
- c) discuss the policy implications of the research results and good experiences to outline next steps for green jobs promotion in China over the next five years, including the ILO role in supporting the tripartite partners’ efforts in these areas

In closing, I wish to thank once again the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and its Institute of Labour Studies for organizing this meeting. I wish you every success in your deliberations.