

Public Works for Decent Jobs and Poverty Reduction: Policies and Practices

Statement by Ministers of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment, Roads and Transport, Public Works and Labour made during the Ministerial Roundtable at the

14th Regional Seminar for Labour-Based Practitioners and Policy Makers,

5 - 7 September 2011, Accra, Ghana

WE, the Ministers in charge of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment, Roads and Transport, Public Works and Labour:

- I. **Having** met at the Ministerial Round Table Discussion on the 5th September – 6th September in a parallel session during the 14th Regional Seminar for Labour-based practitioners and policy makers, during which an opening statement from His Excellency Professor J. E. A. Mills, President of the Republic of Ghana was delivered, reiterating the persistence of poverty, unemployment and under-employment as major challenges facing development practitioners and policy makers;
- II. **Noting**, the impact of unemployment, underemployment and poverty among the vulnerable groups, particularly, the youth, now being widely recognized as a major threat to social cohesion, thus requiring urgent joint action by all partners, i.e. governments, social partners, development partners, civil society, private sector;
- III. **Noting**, with concern the unlikeliness of meeting the global commitment made under the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG 1), Target 1, to halve extreme poverty by 2015 being so close away;
- IV. **Noting** that climate change will have increasingly larger impacts on growth and employment strategies affecting governments, employers and workers;
- V. **Noting**, with concern, the precipitant of the international financial global crisis and the subsequent effect on developing economies, such as reduced foreign direct investment, loss of export earnings, fall in migrant remittance, and declining budget support assistance;
- VI. **Noting**, with appreciation, the road map for the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact in Africa drawn by Ministers of Labour, that put rural employment and employment-intensive infrastructure investment at the centre of African Recovery Strategy¹;

¹ First African Decent Work Symposium – Recovering from the Crisis: Implementation of the Global Jobs Pact in Africa; Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 12 December 2009

- VII. **Noting** the well documented positive impacts of the appropriate application of labour-based technology (LBT) in infrastructure and service delivery, mitigation and adaptation work in environmental protection and including social protection to the disadvantaged groups of the society;
- VIII. **Observing**, the backlog of infrastructure as well as the poor state of the existing infrastructure in Sub Saharan Africa that cuts national economic growth by two percentage points and can reduce business productivity by as much as forty percentage points²; and
- IX. **Recognizing**, the progress made by African states in promoting and mainstreaming the application of LBT in sectoral investments and the significant innovations and achievements in public employment programmes, especially, large scale public works programmes.

WE RESOLVE TO:

1. **Formulate** and **pursue** the implementation of national policies that are employment centered, target particular groups such as youth, women and people with disabilities as well as sectors with employment creation potential and benefit the disadvantaged across the economy;
2. **Mainstream** employment creation in all national, sectoral and local investment strategies and programmes for sustained impact and job-rich growth;
3. **Encourage** our governments to accord high priority to the application of LBT by designating specific institutions to promote and lead the application of LBT so as to put in place clear guidelines and procurement systems for the works, goods and service delivery;
4. **Operationalize** policies and strategies that promote the increased application of local resources for local economic, social and environmental development using applications and processes that actively involve beneficiary groups;
5. **Initiate and pursue** the process of reviewing existing financial and procurement rules and procedures with the aim of supporting the participation of emerging and local delivery enterprises;
6. **Engage** the academia and research institutions to further promote studies, documentations and disseminations of the lessons learned and challenges faced in promoting the application of appropriate local resources;
7. **Strengthen and promote** the continued data collection, reporting, monitoring and evaluation, employment impact assessments of interventions with the view of

² Africa's Infrastructure: A Time for Transformation; World Bank, 2009

improving the knowledge base on strategies, procedures, and processes that can generate and sustain productive employment opportunities;

8. **Promote, Develop and Advocate** operational strategies and capacities, increase investments and budgetary allocations to programmes and projects that optimize the use of appropriate local resources; and
9. Strengthen regional partnerships among African countries in building capacities in LBT.

WE REQUEST:

- a. The ILO to continue its engagement with other international development partners including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the European Union, and the G20, for increased knowledge and coherence on the role of employment-intensive investments in infrastructure and other sectors, and to strengthen its provision of technical advisory support on best practices, capacity building, and knowledge sharing with an emphasis on advocacy and employment impact assessment;
- b. The Chair Country (with support of ILO) to engage the AU, ECA and NEPAD to give a high priority to LBT as a means to tackle employment challenges in African Countries and help in knowledge sharing and resource mobilization;
- c. Development partners such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, Regional Economic Communities, etc., to recognize African States effort in mainstreaming employment and decent work in infrastructure and other sectors development and provide financial and technical support in their partnership agreement with our countries; and
- d. The Government of Ghana together with the ILO to present this statement for the attention of participants to the 12th Africa Regional Meeting: Empowering Africa's Peoples with Decent Work to be held in South Africa from 11th – 14th October 2011.