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Decent work and protection for all in Africa

Report of the Director-General

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*The primary objective
of the ILO in Africa
is to promote opportunities
for women and men
to obtain decent and productive work,
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equity, security
and human dignity.*

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Introduction

After nearly two decades of economic stagnation, the economic performance of a number of African countries has improved during the last five years. However, Africa is still facing a multitude of problems, which include debt burden, poverty, child labour, HIV/AIDS, food security, etc. The region continues to be afflicted by ethnic conflicts and civil wars into which large parts of civilian populations are drawn, including children forced into military action. The benefits of economic development have not been translated into just and equitable social progress.

Given this situation, the ILO's primary objective is to ensure that each woman and man obtains decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. This is a major challenge for the Organization, especially in a world where employment is an issue of vital concern and constitutes one of the key factors of economic security and the fight against poverty and vulnerability.

In order to address the above challenge, this discussion paper presents the four strategic objectives that will guide the ILO's policies and programmes in the coming years in Africa. These objectives make up the core of the Programme and Budget for 2000-01 and have also been developed in the Report of the Director-General to the 1999 International Labour Conference entitled "Decent work". The objectives are: (i) promotion and realization of fundamental principles and rights at work, (ii) creation of greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, (iii) enhancing the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, and finally (iv) strengthening tripartism and social dialogue. Appraisal of development needs and gender dimensions will be cross-cutting issues in defining specific activities in all strategic objectives.

Under each strategic objective, a number of international focus (InFocus) programmes of high priority, relevance and visibility have been identified. The InFocus programmes will concentrate and

integrate activities already under way while responding to new needs and demands related to the four strategic objectives of the ILO for maximum impact and coverage.

While the ILO has always advocated universal values and goals, it cannot prescribe universal solutions. We live in a multicultural world with a diversity of traditions and institutions. The ILO must therefore be sensitive to the cultural and institutional diversity of its tripartite constituents.

The purpose of this report is thus to launch an interactive exchange of experiences and views on the future direction of the ILO's programme of technical cooperation grounded in African regional needs. To allow the ILO to strengthen its technical capacities and to respond concretely and rapidly to the challenges of adjustment and development in Africa, we hope that the discussions during this Regional Meeting will tailor the priorities of our policies and programmes, including our new InFocus programmes, to our common goal of decent work and protection for all in Africa.



1. Promoting and reinforcing fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards

1.1. Challenges

The democratization process that began during the 1980s continued right through the 1990s, accompanied in most countries by the revision of constitutions and electoral laws, the emergence of independent institutions, political parties and trade unions, and the organization of elections in several countries. Most African countries have made considerable progress in the establishment of democratic rule of law, marked by enhanced political and union activities and the existence of a free press. There is greater transparency in the management of public and private institutions at the national, provincial and local levels.

Despite this development, the democratization process has been characterized by many weaknesses: chronic poverty and widespread unemployment; numerous armed conflicts causing political instability in the countries concerned and forcing millions of people into misery (refugees, displaced persons, ex-fighters, etc.); and the slow pace of the review of labour laws and ratification and implementation of international labour standards.

Child labour is widespread in Africa. About 80 million children are working, often under dangerous conditions and in the extreme forms of exploitation. The economic exploitation of children is an insult to humanity. By continuing to work, children in the region put their education, their health, their normal development to adulthood and even their lives at stake.

The problem of HIV/AIDS has reached alarming proportions. Africa is the continent that is most affected by this disease. People infected by HIV are often the victims of all kinds of discrimination, particularly in the workplace and/or in trying to access employment opportunities. The fight against HIV/AIDS infection, protection of vulnerable

workers and elimination of HIV/AIDS-based discrimination at the workplace require increased sensitization campaigns by the ILO.

These challenges will entail focusing on four priorities.

1.2. Priority programmes and actions

1.2.1. *Promoting the Declaration*

The 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work marks a renewal of the universal commitment to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work. The follow-up to the Declaration is promotional in nature; it will provide new avenues for the flow of information about these rights and principles as they relate to social and economic development. The ILO will provide and broker technical cooperation services to enhance the effective application of the principles contained in the fundamental Conventions, as well as the possibility of ratification by African member States.

The InFocus programme on promoting the Declaration will combine efforts to promote fundamental principles and rights at work and to support activities relating to reports provided for under the Declaration. The InFocus programme will work closely with field and technical cooperation structures.

1.2.2. *Ratification of international labour standards*

Conventions have always been an inspiration in the development of national legislation and practices. Over the years, the ILO has always stated that it is not enough to ratify Conventions, but that the Conventions should be used to improve the lives of the people. However, numerous structural weaknesses at the national level reduce the efficiency of the bodies responsible for ratifying and applying international labour standards.

The democratization process in the region can be strengthened and supported by better application of international labour standards, especially the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

InFocus programme on promoting the Declaration

This programme has a threefold purpose: to raise awareness of the Declaration within countries and at the regional and international levels, as well as among interested socio-economic actors; to deepen understanding of how these fundamental principles and rights reinforce development, democracy, equity and empowerment for women and men; and to promote policies to implement these principles in the development conditions in each country.

The ILO must bring home the importance of these rights and principles in improving the lives of ordinary people, in line with the promotional nature of the Declaration and its follow-up. The ILO will sharpen its understanding of how the implementation of these fundamental rights and principles underpins democracy, equity, economic efficiency and sustainable growth in both developed and developing countries. As called for by the African member States, the ILO will continue to stress that the Declaration and its follow-up work are not to be used for protectionist purposes. On this basis, the ILO can assist its constituents in integrating these principles into their development strategies and stimulate institutions and actors outside the ILO to embrace the Declaration and to respect its objectives in their own work.

The programme will mount an information campaign to bring the message

to policy-makers and the various segments of the general public. This provides an opportunity to work with the ILO's constituents and cooperate with parliamentarians, public opinion leaders, enterprises and the development community. The work of the programme will be informed by the annual and global reports provided for under the follow-up to the Declaration, as well as by research work exploring the mutual reinforcement of sound development and respect for the rights and principles, taking full account of gender aspects.

Given the changing environment of the African continent and the importance of informal economic activity and agriculture, technical cooperation activities will be conceived to respond to the concrete and practical problems of the region, which include respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, abolition of child labour with emphasis on its worst forms, and elimination of all forms of discrimination in terms of employment and occupation. The region will promote widespread ratification and application of the fundamental Conventions. Technical cooperation and advisory services will be provided to governments, employers' and workers' organizations, especially in those countries where the ratification and effective application of these Conventions are still under way.

A concerted effort involving information, advocacy and training is required to facilitate the ratification of the eight core Conventions.¹ The ILO will continue to provide technical cooperation services to

¹ Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

governments and the social partners, with a view to promoting the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The ILO will strive to have international labour standards exert a greater impact on economic development and social justice. Attention will be given to the relation between implementation of standards and sustainable development, democracy, equity and the empowerment of women and men. Emphasis will be placed on integrating the fundamental principles and rights in technical cooperation programmes and projects.

Review of national laws and practices is often an opportunity for the ILO to provide technical support. It is also often an occasion to increase the number of ratifications of the core and other Conventions, and ensure their application in the law and practice of the countries concerned.

1.2.3. Elimination of child labour

The elimination of child labour, especially in its worst forms, through the recently adopted Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), will be promoted through active advocacy for their ratification and proper implementation, and a wide range of technical cooperation activities from the provision of policy guidance to information material. These actions will go hand in hand with the promotion and follow-up of the Declaration, which enshrines the effective abolition of child labour among the fundamental principles.

The International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is a major tool used by the ILO to combat child labour. In July 1999 ten African countries were participating in the IPEC programme, while about 15 others had expressed their intention to do so. The ILO will provide support to these countries in their efforts to undertake analytical studies on the forms and scope of child labour, to raise public awareness and to implement time-bound programmes.

In collaboration with national and international partners, IPEC will implement a number of activities in 1999 and beyond, at the national, subregional and regional levels. These include the following subregional programmes: Programme to prevent, remove and rehabilitate children from hazardous work in commercial agriculture in Eastern and Southern Africa; Combating the trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa; Developing a strategy for the elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in four selected East African countries; Action against child labour

through education and training in three anglophone and five franco-phone African countries. Action programmes and surveys relating to direct action aimed at working children will be implemented in North Africa.

InFocus programme on child labour: IPEC

Child labour is detrimental to any investment in human capabilities, and therefore to efforts for development. Poverty and child labour are mutually reinforcing, with poverty generating child labour and child labour perpetuating poverty. The policy to fight against child labour should be clearly addressed in national development policies, plans and programmes. The InFocus programme aims to eliminate child labour and promote development by pursuing efforts to extend and build on the work of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The ILO's activities have evidenced the extremely complex nature of child labour which needs to be handled with sensitivity, particularly in the context of poverty, economic deprivation and parental unemployment. Child labour should be gradually removed by concurrently addressing all root causes and providing working children as well as their families with sustainable alternatives: namely, education, rehabilitation and decent work for adults.

As a major feature of both the policy and operational aspect of IPEC, gender will remain a steady component of all activities. In this respect synergies will be built with programmes dealing with women's employment, which has a substantial incidence on child labour. In addition and as specified in the Convention, the special situation of girl children will be taken into account.

IPEC will intensify its efforts on a global scale, as the foremost operational instrument in the fight against child labour. The programme will continue to

operate through national capacity strengthening, with high priority to the immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In this respect it will assist the Members in their national efforts which should include a clear political will translated into countrywide enforcement of laws and concrete actions backed up by proper monitoring and reporting. The programme's priority is to prevent child labour, remove children from work and provide for their development as children. As of August 1999 ten countries in Africa were implementing the IPEC programme, with several other countries preparing to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO.

National systems for the collection and analysis of data on child labour will be further developed with the assistance of the ILO-IPEC Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC). The statistical work on child labour will be intensified through the collection of information on changes over time that can be linked to national data sets. In collaboration with national statistical departments, nine African countries are currently participating in the SIMPOC programme. The data generated will be an important input for improved and accurate programme and project planning. Countries that have not yet undertaken analytical studies on the forms and incidence of child labour will be assisted. It is expected that the African countries will take appropriate measures to ensure rapid ratification of Convention No. 182 and concrete action to eradicate the worst forms of child labour.


These programmes will be implemented by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, as well as local organizations, with ILO support. Furthermore, information and advocacy campaigns will be launched to favour the widespread ratification and proper implementation by African countries of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1999. The Decision adopted in July 1999 by the 35th Ordinary Session of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, which requests member States to ratify Convention No. 182 as a matter of urgency and preferably before the next Summit in the year 2000, should favour the swift ratification of this Convention in Africa.

1.2.4. Intensifying the fight against HIV/AIDS and discrimination against infected workers

The ILO's tripartite structure and its involvement with other development partners such as civil society, NGOs and communities provides it with a stronger edge to tackle effectively the issues of HIV/AIDS from many different perspectives.

A number of ILO core Conventions and international labour standards contain provisions that enable governments, employers and workers' organizations to deal with issues of discrimination and human rights. These will be used as entry points to get commitments from the partner organizations and deal with HIV/AIDS in a much more aggressive manner. Assistance will be provided to the tripartite structure to institute laws and regulations to protect the rights of those with HIV/AIDS, as they relate to access to health insurance, employment, education, etc. In addition, assistance will be provided in highlighting the relationships between HIV/AIDS and areas of interest of the ILO programme in Africa, such as labour administration, productivity and the informal sector.

The main concern will be to obtain a commitment from member States, employers and workers' organizations to promote strategies that are likely to protect and benefit the workers, their families and the communities at large.



2. Creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income

2.1. Challenges

The challenge of job creation in Africa is as serious as ever, as unemployment and underemployment rates hardly seem to be declining in the region. While in the long run economic growth is vital for sustainable job creation, in the short to medium term it is imperative to intervene to offer opportunities for productive employment to the needy groups. The African Employment Planners, in February 1999, called on the ILO to assist in developing economic policies that can generate employment.

Poverty is endemic in the region, with more than half the population in sub-Saharan Africa living in absolute poverty. The recent economic recovery has not been sufficient in most countries to prevent the continued growth of unemployment and underemployment in both urban and rural areas. Opportunities for decent employment and income are extremely scarce for the vast majority of the population in Africa. The impact of this crisis, largely due to low economic performance and high population growth, civil strife, debt and its adverse effects, significantly worsens the situation. The employment situation is further aggravated by low absorption capacity within the labour market, difficulties encountered by women, young persons and vulnerable groups in gaining access to training systems and employment, low literacy rates among adults, inadequacy of technical and vocational training, and the high number of countries affected by armed conflicts in the region.

Formal employment has been declining in Africa over the last few years. Retrenchment brought about by economic reform programmes has resulted, in many countries, in the decline in the number of people employed by the public sector. In general, despite the economic reform programmes, the increase in private sector employment has not compensated for the loss of the job opportunities in the

public sector and has resulted in an overall decline in formal sector employment. This has led to informalization of the economies and to increased unemployment and underemployment.

Particular attention should be given to the problems raised by the informal sector, which accounts for about 60 per cent of the urban labour force. Though it provides vital employment, the informal sector raises major concerns for the ILO's constituents. Trade unions worry that informal labour practices will both undermine labour legislation and reduce levels of formal employment. Employers worry about "unfair" competition from informal producers. Governments wish to preserve the growth benefits of the informal sector while providing adequate protection for its workers, e.g. conditions of work, occupational safety and health and social security.

The inability of labour market information systems to produce reliable and appropriate statistics is a real setback for the analysis and formulation of labour policies. For example, the lack of adequate information on the situation of women in the labour market, particularly in the informal sector where most of them are working, impedes any effort to adopt positive measures to meet the objective of gender equality.

The ILO will aim to assist African countries to develop policies and programmes that will create employment and alleviate poverty, based on the following priorities.

2.2. Priority programmes and actions

2.2.1. Integration of employment issues into economic policies and programmes

The ILO's constituents in Africa emphasize the importance of increasing employment and incomes. This requires a multifaceted approach that will include: promotion of economic policies that are employment generating; investment in knowledge, skills and employability; small enterprise development and increasing productivity, while at the same time fostering economic and social security; combating child labour; and responding to the social and political crises.

The support provided for the promotion of employment during the previous biennia, particularly in the context of programmes such as Jobs for Africa, the Urban Employment Programme and More and Better Jobs for Women, will be consolidated and extended. The groundwork has been laid and the programmes should become fully operational in the coming biennium. The employment components of economic policies and public investment programmes will be exam-

ined with a view to maximizing their impact in terms of job creation and poverty reduction.

Given the importance of the informal sector in Africa, employment opportunities existing in this sector will be explored and exploited within the framework of an integrated approach based on social protection of workers, improvement of their conditions of work and access to microfinance/microcredit.

Technical cooperation will continue to be an important means of action in supporting quality employment generation in the region. Comprehensive packages capable of attracting donors and having a positive impact on the ground will be sought in Africa. The ILO is already moving in this direction with the “Jobs for Africa” programme, whose implementation will be an important step towards responding to the region’s needs. Its emphasis on employment policy responds to the need to include employment concerns in economic reforms, while its “Employment for Peace” component is designed to help post-conflict countries meet the challenge of reintegrating people affected by war.

Steps will be taken to ensure that economic reform programmes are designed to achieve sustained economic growth which is favourable to employment promotion, in terms of both quality and quantity. In addition the ILO will assist the constituents in ensuring that social and economic reforms that have an effect on employment are based on social consensus.

Following the settlement of several conflicts in the region, the ILO will develop a programme of assistance to the countries concerned. This will focus on training, enterprise development, labour-intensive reconstruction programmes, the specific needs of women and demobilized child soldiers, labour market information and support for initiatives by employers and workers. Capacities will also be strengthened in the fields of labour administration and employment services, labour law reform, tripartite dialogue and extension of social security to vulnerable groups.

2.2.2. Ensuring that women have access to more and better jobs

A gender perspective is imperative for the ILO’s work in the region, not merely for reasons of equity and fairness but also because of the prevailing economic and social role played by women. Building on current initiatives to promote equality of women in the region, the ILO will therefore articulate a gender perspective in its programmes.

InFocus programme on crisis response and reconstruction

The programme covers the most urgent needs associated with the socio-economic reintegration of the vulnerable crisis-affected groups and the reconstruction of the economy of countries emerging from such crisis situations as war, natural disasters, financial and economic downturns and difficult political transitions. In addition to their local repercussions, the crises also often have a subregional and regional impact. It is essential to develop a timely and coherent ILO response to these crises with the aim of facilitating an improvement in the material welfare, social and human security and reintegration of the affected groups and contributing to the promotion of an enabling environment — including social dialogue, elaboration of relevant socio-economic policies and the building of institutional capacities.

The InFocus programme, which builds on earlier ILO work in a number of crisis situations, will strengthen and extend the ILO's contribution to tackling the serious employment, poverty and other challenges associated with the different crises. It is also geared to increasing awareness at the national, regional and international level of the importance of employment and other social concerns in crisis situations and of the need for a greater role for the ILO's constituents in overcoming the effects of crises.

There is a need to develop both short-duration and medium-to-long-term co-ordinated interventions whose form will be adapted to the nature of the specific crisis, the socio-economic and political environment and the target population. Apart from early warning and crisis preparedness measures, critical aspects will include emergency employment schemes, rehabilitation and development activities, infrastructure development and other employment-intensive

works, skills training and retraining, vocational rehabilitation of the disabled, microfinance and other forms of support for small enterprise promotion, local economic development, and promotion of social dialogue and social protection.

The programme will thus maintain a close working relationship with the other ILO InFocus and technical programmes as well as with the ILO's field structure in planning and delivering the ILO's crisis response. Gender considerations will be important in the programme since women and children tend to constitute the majority of the people adversely affected by crisis. To respond to the specificities of the African region, including the alarming number of armed conflicts, special attention will be given to the situation in countries emerging from such conflicts.

The programme will develop a special resource mobilization strategy, since availability of resources is critical for the ILO's timely and credible crisis response. It will also develop strategic partnerships with relevant bodies, not only within the United Nations system but also regional, subregional and national institutions, for greater synergy of the diverse crisis interventions. Apart from direct interventions, the ILO will systematically strive to enhance the capabilities of the partner institutions at the local and regional level, it will prepare guides and manuals, and undertake demonstration projects to achieve a multiplier effect through promotional activities and also undertake advocacy activities.

This InFocus programme will contribute to the solution not only of economic problems, but also of long-term political problems, a major cause of unemployment in the region. The activities will encourage worker protection and democratization through enhanced popular participation.

The programme on More and Better Jobs for Women is developing integrated approaches to women's employment, highlighting the linkages with poverty reduction, the effective use of human resources and the progressive elimination of child labour. The stress on better jobs reflects the need to address both the quantitative and the qualitative dimensions of employment relationships.

The ILO will continue to provide advisory and support services for the design and implementation of national plans of action, as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference. The "More and Better Jobs for Women" programme, which initially covered Burkina Faso and the United Republic of Tanzania, will be extended to other countries in the region. Emphasis will be placed on the creation and strengthening of national institutions responsible for gender issues, as part of technical cooperation, and on the strategy and means of creating jobs for women and improving those they occupy, particularly in the urban and rural informal sector.

The ILO will also continue to ensure that issues concerning women and equality are integrated into national policies and programmes on development, training and employment. Assistance will be provided to constituents in reforming their judicial system so as to make it more responsive to gender issues, and establishing and/or strengthening institutions to support and assist women in exercising their rights.

Promotional activities on the Conventions on women, employment, the family and protection of maternity, as well as sexual harassment, will be initiated so that the constituents can adopt appropriate policies and measures for their implementation.

The integrated gender policy requires action at three levels in the ILO: the political level, within technical programmes, and at the institutional level. At the political level, gender mainstreaming will require far greater representation of women in the tripartite decision-making structures. The Africa programme will also take systematic steps to mainstream gender considerations in ILO programmes and technical cooperation. This will require greater impact assessment, supported by empirical research on key issues such as the gender aspects of globalization and the changing nature of work.

2.2.3. Promoting access to decent employment for young workers and vulnerable groups (migrants, the disabled and indigenous populations)

There are a number of different groups of workers who are particularly vulnerable to labour market inequality. In Africa these include the youth, disabled persons and migrants.

The problem of youth employment reflects the contraction of jobs in the formal sector and is also linked to the fact that many African countries continue to record high population growth rates, such that the population structure is relatively young. Young people in the region are more frequently found in irregular and casual employment, and their unemployment rate is much higher than that of adults. In several countries, there is no simple transition from school to work in both the formal and informal sectors. Access of youth, who make up more than half the African population, to decent and productive employment is a crucial problem. However, youth unemployment is a problem that cannot be solved in isolation, for it is not only a question of employability but also the result of lack of demand for labour, and of the unequal ways in which labour markets distribute opportunities. Special attention should be paid to the youth in countries in conflict or emerging from a conflict situation who were directly involved as fighters, refugees, displaced persons, or persons suffering the consequences of the destruction of the educational and vocational training infrastructure or of an attack on their physical integrity.

In most countries, in addition to labour market problems, disabled workers face discrimination and other serious problems. Technical support and advice will be provided for the formulation and implementation of the action plan of the African Decade for the Disabled (1999-2009), recently adopted by the OAU.

The situation is the same with other groups such as migrants and indigenous peoples, who are facing all kinds of discrimination. Significant actions will be initiated to promote the ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions on equal treatment for migrants and the respect of their fundamental rights.

2.2.4. Strengthening labour market information systems

The ILO will provide substantial assistance to African countries to enable them to formulate and implement technical cooperation projects and programmes aimed at enhancing their labour market information systems.

With a view to intensifying the commitment of donors to support the development of labour statistics, the ILO will ensure the promotion and ratification by African countries of the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160) and Recommendation (No. 170) which provide a coherent framework for their development as well as the production of data on a comparative basis.

The capability of projects and programmes such as Jobs for Africa, IPEC, STEP, WOMEMP, etc. will be strengthened in order to improve collection and dissemination of labour market statistics, particularly concerning women, working children and vulnerable groups.

A model framework, including methodological and training tools, will be developed for employment and training observatories at the national, subregional and regional level. Capacity-building activities will include training for those responsible for labour information at national level and the provision of technical advice in collaboration with universities, statistical training centres and research institutes.

Greater tripartite influence over institutions that regulate labour markets will be promoted through the analysis of the functioning of national tripartite institutions in all countries in the region. Improvements in the quality, quantity and timeliness of labour market information will continue to be supported, in particular through the practical application of the existing work on Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) and through employment and training “observatories”.

2.2.5. Human resources development and training

Different local environments call for different skills. African economies increasingly demand science and technology skills (including information and communication technology) both at work and in society. The changes in the nature of work demand multiple skills, new work attitudes and an ability to communicate and adjust. There is also a demand for competencies and experience that have been lost through premature mortality from AIDS.

The ILO appreciates the urgent need for constituents in the region to adapt their training systems to the rapidly changing skill requirements of the labour force by placing emphasis on labour force adaptability, a more effective school-to-work transition, effective enterprise promotion policies and programmes, and public/private partnership in training delivery.

Basic education and training should be supported by a firm commitment by the social partners to continuous, demand-driven, life-long education and training. The private sector — enterprises, other private training providers and individuals — will play a central role in continuous training investment and provision. This will ensure that these investments meet enterprise and individual needs. Continuous training should also provide competencies that are needed in order to identify and exploit new market opportunities.

Another major human resources development problem in Africa is the inequality of access of women and poor population groups to education and training. A first priority must be to remove the economic, social and cultural barriers that often arise from policies other than education and training policies proper. Factors that generate inequalities in education and training include: high opportunity and marginal cost of attending training programmes; stereotyping in the choice of training courses; training programmes that disregard time constraints imposed by women's household duties; and badly designed education subsidies that rich people exploit better than the poor. Practices inimical to equal opportunity in education and training must be removed by a combination of policy and legislative measures and affirmative action programmes.

Workers displaced by industrial and government restructuring must be offered training opportunities, preferably before they are laid off and after employment opportunities have been identified. This will help them find jobs or become self-employed. The cost of training

InFocus programme on investing in knowledge, skills and employability

This InFocus programme will be a new strategic initiative, built around the ways in which human resources development can help support employment growth. The ILO now proposes an approach, flowing from close consultation between government, employers and workers, that focuses particularly on the contribution of training and human resource development to the promotion of employment.

Training is seen by most African countries in the region as an essential instrument in creating skills for gainful and quality employment and enterprise creation. While most countries now give priority to skills development, investment in human resource development by both private and public sectors remains inadequate. Labour market, education and training institutions are often too sluggish to cope with rapidly changing production systems. Strong inequalities in access to learning opportunities persist, notably gender inequalities. The poten-

tial contribution of skills development to the reduction of unemployment remains unfulfilled.

Labour market information systems will be further strengthened. Technical cooperation activities will be provided to strengthen the national systems as well as for subregional networks. Knowledge and capacity developed and acquired in some projects will be disseminated throughout the region for duplication. Maximum use of modern methods of communication will be utilized.

Assistance will be provided in establishing or rehabilitating labour information systems as a basis for the development of labour policies and programmes. This trend is illustrated by the progressive establishment of employment and training "observatories". The ILO will further strengthen subregional observatories on employment and training. These will not only provide labour statistics, but will also have an impact on policy formulation.

should be borne primarily by the restructuring organization or enterprise. Displaced workers should also have access to adequate guidance regarding jobs and training.

In recognition of different capabilities among partners, capacity building is needed. To promote a partnership approach to training, special attention should be paid to establishing appropriate legislation and an institutional framework in order to ensure sustainability. Attention should also be given to recognition and certification of skills and competencies in less formal settings.

2.2.6. Small and medium-sized enterprises and job creation

In most economies the bulk of jobs are created in small enterprises, ranging from the informally self-employed to complex production units with dozens of wage earners. Plenty of these jobs provide secure incomes and a decent working environment. Nevertheless, there are many poor jobs as well, low in productivity, dangerous or lacking in basic social protection. Women are particularly over-represented in such areas. Small enterprises are diverse, ranging from traditional artisans to technologically sophisticated manufacturing or service firms. This very heterogeneity epitomizes both the potential and the challenge of this sector — a challenge that needs to be faced in the development of truly effective employment policies.

In Africa, the promotion of employment generally involves the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, their organizations and cooperatives. The ILO will put special emphasis on small enterprise development where, in Africa, most jobs are created. It will also pay attention to the special needs of women as entrepreneurs or workers. Employment-intensive programmes will continue to promote entrepreneurship through training and subcontracting arrangements that incorporate workers' basic rights. Various initiatives have been developed in the region, or are under way within the ILO, to promote employment and productivity in the informal sector and in small enterprises. The Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme that has benefited many in East and Southern Africa has now been introduced in Central and West Africa.

2.2.7. Upgrading informal sector activities

In view of the importance of the informal sector in African economies and the fact that the vast majority of women and children are working in this sector, the ILO will systematically encourage the

integration of the urban and rural informal sector into development policies and programmes. Its interventions will aim at the creation of self-employed jobs and micro-enterprises as a means of fighting against poverty, improving the efficiency of small and micro-enterprises and creating and strengthening workers' associations in the informal sector. These actions will be accompanied by efforts to improve social protection and safety and health in this sector, to promote equality of the sexes and to combat child labour.

Gender issues will be highlighted in activities related to the informal sector. Assistance will be provided to women homeworkers and strategies aimed at increasing the quality of their employment will be promoted.

2.2.8. Supporting regional economic integration and coordination of national development policies

Regional and subregional integration is seen as a decisive step taken by African constituents towards better governance and sustainable growth. The ILO will consider regrouping its various activities aimed at supporting regional integration in order to achieve greater impact and visibility.

The ILO will support current efforts made at the regional and subregional level to strengthen regional and subregional organizations, implement efficient legal and regulatory frameworks to promote employment, facilitate the circulation of persons and goods, harmonize commercial laws, develop negotiation capabilities and participation in international economic organizations, and promote inter-African trade.

The ILO will also intensify its cooperation with regional and subregional bodies and institutions, including the African Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The agreement signed between the ILO and the Southern African Development Community is one step in this direction. Cooperation with OAU, particularly its Labour and Social Affairs Commission, will be given a fresh boost.

The ILO's capacity to analyse regional trends, develop policies and provide a quick response to challenges in the region, notably as regards adjustment and development, will be strengthened. The creation and strengthening of subregional databases on employment and the labour market will be an indispensable tool in that respect.

Regional programmes such as Jobs for Africa, SIYB, ACOPAM, PACDEL will constitute a coherent intervention framework for net-

InFocus programme on boosting employment through small enterprise development

This initiative seeks to harness the ILO's diverse technical capabilities to promote the large-scale creation of quality jobs in small enterprises. A wealth of practical experience in the different domains has been adapted to small firms — as enterprise development, conditions of work, microcredit, informal sector development, regulatory and fiscal frameworks, and options for organization and representation. The ILO intends to build upon its accumulated knowledge in these areas to forge a portfolio of instruments which can support the growth of decent, gender-equitable employment in a wide variety of production settings. This will require fresh research on the workings and dynamics of small enterprises, their response to crisis, the sources of productivity growth, skills and capabilities, networks and inter-firm relations, forms of representation and dialogue. More will need to be known about how policies aimed at job creation in small enterprises can contribute to other major goals, such as ending child labour or providing decent levels of protection and security. The position of women in small enterprises, in terms both of development of entrepreneurship and of access to good jobs, needs particular attention. The complementarity between better jobs on the one hand, and more dynamic, productive and innovative enterprises, on the other, needs to be researched and ways found to reinforce it. Regulatory frameworks will need to be examined in terms of both economic and social consequences.

Various approaches will be explored to help increase economic opportunities for small enterprises, for example by improving collaborative efforts among small producers to increase productivity, enter new markets and improve working conditions, by including support for small businesses in industry development strategies, and by improving small enterprises' participation in public investment in infrastructure and services. The research and service activities of the InFocus programme will serve a dual purpose: to enable employers to start and develop sound businesses; and to motivate entrepreneurship by expanding the potential markets for the products and services small enterprises can produce.

Employment promotion in the informal sector is particularly important in Africa. A large and growing segment of the labour force is engaged in informal activities and will continue to be so for many years to come. For this programme to contribute to sustained action against poverty, it must include approaches that are geared to unorganized and informal enterprises, whether in the form of credit and business development services that can help them join the regulated economy — at the low-productivity end of the scale — or in the form of direct transfers and employment promotion within broader anti-poverty programmes.

The experience and methodological tools developed in regional and inter-regional programmes, such as ACOPAM, PA-SMEC and the Start and Improve Your Business, will be replicated and disseminated.

work coordination. Information on the experiences of the various countries participating in these regional programmes will be shared.



3. Social protection for all

3.1. Challenges

Working conditions, social protection and the health and safety situation of workers are precarious in most African countries, particularly in the rural and informal sectors. The increasingly widespread use of new technologies, chemicals and pesticides, and the rising levels of pollution and environmental degradation are resulting in risks which are all the more serious because workers concerned have inadequate information on them.

In addition to their poor working conditions, social protection in Africa is limited to a minute fraction of the labour force. In some countries social protection systems cover less than 10 per cent of the total labour force, and this coverage is for a limited number of hazards. Most of the labour force work in the informal sector and in the rural sector, where underemployment, lack of regulations, poor salaries and exploitation of child labour are the order of the day. The use of chemical products, pollution and the degradation of the environment often expose workers to serious health risks.

In the modern sector, non-observance of minimum security standards at the workplace increases the risk of accidents.

The ILO will ensure that more countries establish mechanisms which improve the occupational health and safety situation and working conditions, that a large number of them develop more effective, financially balanced and better managed social security systems, and that more countries formulate policies and develop mechanisms to extend the scope of social security schemes.

3.2. Priority programmes and actions

3.2.1. Working conditions and occupational safety and health

The improvement of conditions of work, the environment and safety and health at the workplace will be achieved by providing advisory and support services for strengthening the capabilities of the

constituents to formulate and implement policies on hygiene, safety and health at the workplace. This strategy will be implemented through the tripartite adoption of policies, tripartite identification of occupational hazards and the establishment of joint structures, such as tripartite

InFocus programme on SafeWork: Security and productivity through safety and health at work

Work-related accidents and disease continue to be a serious problem in the African region. The economic losses are enormous and, in terms of affected families and communities, the damage is incalculable.

Action is generally hampered by inadequate knowledge and information and by limited capacity to design and implement efficient policies and programmes. Major industrial accidents have taken place in the region, resulting in many deaths.

SafeWork is designed to respond to this need. Its primary goals are:

- (a) *Protecting workers in hazardous conditions*: preventive policies and programmes are developed and increasingly implemented by member States to protect workers in hazardous occupations and sectors, with due consideration to the impact on environment.
- (b) *Extending protection to vulnerable groups*: effective protection is extended to vulnerable groups of workers falling outside the scope of traditional protective measures.
- (c) *Promoting workers' health and well-being*: all three constituents are better informed and equipped to address problems of workers' well-being, occupational health care and quality of working life.
- (d) *Showing that protection pays*: the social and economic impact of worker protection is documented and recognized by policy- and

decision-makers internationally, nationally and in enterprises.

The programme will pursue a two-pronged approach. First, it will create alliances and partnerships by launching activities which can be used by the ILO's constituents, non-governmental organizations and human rights groups in advocacy campaigns and in calling for vigorous action from governments. Second, it will support action at the national level through an integrated programme of direct technical assistance. This will include the development of management and information services designed to prevent occupational accidents and diseases and protect the health and welfare of workers and the environment.

The primary focus will be on hazardous occupations. It will target workers in highly hazardous occupations, categories of workers vulnerable on account of gender or age, and workers in the urban informal sector, who usually lack basic health protection.

The support that the ILO will provide in Africa will result in tripartite mapping of occupational risks, the formulation of policies and the establishment of joint structures, for advisory services. In collaboration with WHO, technical assistance will continue to be provided for the revision of laws and regulations on occupational health and safety. The work carried out in collaboration with the United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS and other bodies will continue to focus on combating discrimination against workers with HIV/AIDS and preventing the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

national advisory councils, joint safety councils and enterprise-level committees, safety representatives and management systems.

Assistance will also be provided for strengthening hygiene, safety and health at the workplace, at both the national level and within the enterprise, through the training of the staff, including labour inspectors, occupational physicians, hygiene and safety specialists, etc.

The ILO will support the establishment of national information networks to be linked to the regional network and the International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre. Technical assistance will be provided to promote and raise awareness on the ratification and implementation of the relevant Conventions and Recommendations.

The fight against HIV/AIDS will be intensified through the implementation of programmes aimed at preventing the disease and fighting discrimination against infected workers.

Issues of alcohol and drug abuse at the workplace will also be addressed.

Greater attention will be given to improving working conditions in the urban and rural informal sector.

3.2.2. Reform and extension of social security systems

Given the situation in the region, it is extremely important to take urgent measures to improve and broaden the scope of social protection systems which, as stated above, currently cover less than 10 per cent of the population in most African countries.

Activities aimed at reforming and enhancing the capabilities of social protection systems will be pursued. These will consist of providing support for the formulation of legislation on social security schemes, strengthening institutional capacities to design and manage adapted social protection systems, identifying areas of reform and training staff.

With the support of the “Strategy and techniques against social exclusion and poverty” (STEP) programme, approaches for the gradual expansion of social security schemes to new risks and population categories will be tested and implemented, particularly through local solidarity schemes such as mutual health funds.

Technical advisory and support services will be provided to ensure that social security concerns are taken into account in economic and social programmes.

InFocus programme on socio-economic security


In Africa a large proportion of the population face chronic economic insecurity. Many people are excluded from basic forms of social protection and access to institutions that could provide them with support. In many countries the conventional forms of social protection perform poorly and are often inefficient. With globalization, more flexible labour markets and the spread of informal forms of work, there is evidence that various forms of socio-economic insecurity are spreading, leaving a growing number of people and communities unsupported by mainstream forms of protection. In these situations, it is women who are most adversely affected. These trends are worrying. A tenet of the ILO is that security is the core of social justice; insecurity breeds fear, impoverishment and social tensions, while preventing people from realizing their potential as workers and as members of society.

In promoting social protection and in reducing economic insecurity, the ILO will assist policy-makers to develop schemes that could reach those commonly excluded by conventional social security schemes, to enhance access of disadvantaged groups to social services, to promote their work and occupational security, and to enable more ordinary people to have a voice in the

design and operation of social protection policies. The InFocus programme will assist in formulating cost-effective and equitable ways by which social protection can be extended to all groups in society and will advise on the relative efficacy of alternative policy options to promote social and economic security.

Recognizing that conceptions of security vary among social groups, basic security surveys will be undertaken in a cross-section of countries within the region to enable workers and their families to identify their perceived security needs and aspirations within their communities. Subsequently, it will assist countries in developing policies and institutions that could attend to these needs and aspirations.

In reaffirming that workers' security is largely determined by practices within enterprises and farms, enterprise labour flexibility and security surveys (ELFS) will be carried out in some countries, building on the methodology and surveys conducted in the recent past. By examining links between various forms of security in and around the workplace, the programme will seek to promote the idea of an optimal level of security at work by focusing on firms and farms as places where dynamic efficiency, profitability, flexibility and work-related security can be combined and fostered.



4. Strengthening tripartism and social dialogue

4.1. Challenges

Emerging from decades of authoritarian rule of varying shades and degrees, democratic institutions in the region have yet to take firm roots. The tradition of tripartite consultations and social dialogue, as essential ingredients of democratic governance, are non-existent in some countries. Where formal tripartite institutions and structures have been established, they are extremely fragile and liable to crumble under any perceived threat to the power of the State.

However, the on-going democratization process has helped change significantly relationships within institutions in the region. The need to involve employers' and workers' organizations in the design and implementation of social and economic policies is increasingly acknowledged. Most governments have confirmed their desire for efficient management of public affairs, by applying the principles of good governance. This desire is reflected in the increased participation of employers' and workers' organizations in the decision-making processes concerning social and economic policies, through tripartite consultation mechanisms which exist in different forms in different countries. Nevertheless, this consultation is often irregular and inadequate given the benefits social dialogue would bring to sustainable, social and economic development in Africa.

Tripartite dialogue in most of the countries remains generally weak and is advisory and limited in its mandate. Although endeavours have been undertaken to revitalize the practice, the social partners remain generally excluded from the consultative machinery of governments. In addition, with the exception of the ministries of labour, most government departments do not consult the social partners on social and/or economic issues which concern them. One of the major constraints on social dialogue is the progressive marginalization and fragmentation of the ministries of labour; in most countries, the ministries are weak and enjoy relatively low status and image. Moreover, in some countries labour issues are dealt with by a department that is

within a larger ministry, making it difficult to promote and sustain meaningful social dialogue.

The labour ministries in Africa are also generally poorly or inadequately staffed and do not have adequate resources to carry out their mission. The impact on major orientations of economic and social reforms are relatively limited and the confidence of employers' and workers' organizations is often put to test. This situation explains the inefficiencies, delays, reservations and complaints with regard to the amendment of labour laws, the ratification and implementation of standards and the operations of public employment and labour inspection departments.

In some countries employers' and workers' organizations are virtually absent from the urban and rural informal sector, where one finds the majority of African workers.

The ILO aims at ensuring that employers' and workers' organizations have their technical capacities strengthened to defend the interest of their members and represent them in social dialogue. Constituents in all the countries in the region will be encouraged to establish and strengthen tripartite consultative mechanisms. At the same time, new strategic alliances and partnerships between the ILO's tripartite constituents and relevant organizations of civil society may provide new and additional support for the achievement of the ILO's strategic objectives. The social partners will need to target those things they are able to do themselves and those which they may wish to do with others or have done by others.

4.2. Priority programmes and actions

4.2.1. *Support to employers' organizations*

Employers' organizations face great challenges under globalization and other recent changes. The evolving labour market scene has major implications for employers' organizations. In addition, the informal sector is having an impact on the activities of employers' organizations in the region. Employers worry about "unfair" competition from informal producers. With the increased informalization of the economies, this will have an impact on the activities of employers' organizations.

Another challenge for employers' organizations in Africa is to help their members to understand the emerging business environment, and to respond to the growing expectations for a wide range of services.

The ILO will continue to support efforts for restructuring and strengthening employers' organizations. Particular attention will be given to strategic planning and training efforts in the fields of investment, human resource management, entrepreneurship and productivity, safety and health at the workplace, as well as issues related to globalization and regionalization. The Turin Centre will also assist employers' organizations in their training programmes.

4.2.2. Support to workers' organizations

The ILO considers trade unions in Africa to be essential active partners in the tripartite dialogue, and to have played a fundamental role in translating the aspirations of workers into coherent and structured strategies at the national, continental and international level. They are one of the most relevant forces striving for universal respect for human rights and social justice and for the promotion of the values of solidarity and protection of the weakest members of society, as embodied in the ILO's Constitution. The ILO has been working with trade unions in Africa to develop new and effective responses to many issues — advocating stronger representative, independent and democratic trade unions that can participate effectively in tripartite dialogue and thus promote workers' rights — and to further their efforts to organize informal sector workers and provide them with services.

Through the programme for workers' activities of the ILO Turin Centre in Italy, the ILO offers fellowships, grants and contributions as an important form of assistance in facilitating the participation of trade union representatives in training events. The training is supported and complemented by action-oriented research, the dissemination of information using new technologies and the development of guides and manuals.

4.2.3. Support to governments

Just as workers and employers' organizations have to deal with a new world of work, so do all governments in the region. Over the years the ILO's traditional government partner has been the ministries of labour. Government policy also has an impact on workers and employers through many other ministries, particularly those of finance, industry or planning. In these circumstances, the ILO needs to be involved with several government partners to encourage a more coherent and integrated set of labour policies.

Emphasis will be placed on strengthening the capacity of ministries of labour to assume their role in establishing the regulatory

framework and rules of the game for the world of work, as well as that of the ministries of finance, industry and planning in the formulation and implementation of economic and development policies.

4.2.4. Promotion of tripartism and social dialogue

At the request of governments and social partners, the ILO will provide technical assistance under existing projects and programmes. The ILO believes that there can be no effective social dialogue, whether bipartite or tripartite in nature, without strong labour ministries and modern labour administration. Governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations will be given technical advice on social dialogue and other issues, such as macroeconomic reforms and their effects on employment, social security, vocational training, etc. The ILO will also track the privatization efforts currently taking place in the region, identifying best practices that involve effective social dialogue.

Studies or consultations will be conducted to determine areas where intensification of dialogue with the social partners is required. Information and advocacy activities will be initiated to promote ratification of Convention No. 144 and other relevant Conventions.

InFocus programme on strengthening social dialogue

The social partners need reinforcing to gain a stronger voice in economic and social policy at all levels, from the community to the national and regional levels. In Africa tripartite dialogue is weak and employers and workers' organizations have limited influence. Most governments are now confirming their orientation towards better governance and increased consultation and participation of employers and workers' organizations in social and economic policy formulation. Four issues are addressed with this InFocus programme.

The first priority is to enhance the recognition of the benefits of social dialogue, both as an end in itself and as a means of action for the success of all the ILO's strategic objectives. The programme will initiate activities aimed at assessing and analysing examples of

social dialogue in order to understand better the effectiveness, benefits and costs of social dialogue. Based on good practices, the Office will launch a significant advocacy and media campaign to promote the acceptance and use of social dialogue.

The second priority is to assist workers' and employers' organizations separately to reach out to new constituencies, especially women, youth and informal sector. For trade unions, this will include highlighting successful organizing techniques, and for employers, development of relationships with agents of job creation (with small and medium-sized enterprises as well as large companies). For both, it will involve effective exploitation of cutting-edge communications technology in different contexts and for various types of organ-

izations. Concerning the third pillar of tripartism, the ministries responsible for labour administration, often very weak in Africa, should be strengthened in order to play their vital role in the promotion of social dialogue. The programme will contribute to the strengthening of their capacity to offer better services and to promote, facilitate and engage in social dialogue.

The third issue relates to guidance in improving the quality and depth of the services these organizations offer to their members. This would range from the development of innovative services and alliances to principles of sound internal administration and support to change-oriented leadership, with an integrated gender component. This aspect will involve strengthening the social partners' capacity to engage effectively in debates on social and economic policy at the national and supra-national level. It will also address the important question of developing the skills of organizational leadership.

The programme will work on identifying the key contact points within gov-

ernments that deal with labour and related issues, with a view to creating and nurturing networks among various administrative units and between them and employers' and workers' organizations. At the regional and international levels as well, the programme will seek to forge stronger links between policy-makers and representatives of workers and employers.

The fourth aspect of the programme will stress the importance of building strong bipartite and tripartite institutions, by putting the spotlight on success stories such as those in dispute prevention and resolution, innovative enterprise-level sectoral bargaining, and economic and social councils or pacts that have contributed to social peace and economic growth in specific ways. The programme will try to outline the key policy parameters in which such initiatives have emerged. It will also take a close look at how alliances with other groups have been used to strengthen the social partners at various levels of interaction.



Conclusion

Implementing the four strategic objectives requires an efficient management of both our structures and our systems. This involves setting up appropriate linkages between headquarters and the field; building the organizational capability to respond to our tripartite constituents' needs in a diversity of national situations; creating institutional capabilities for knowledge generation; and developing external partnerships.

At headquarters the new organization of the Office is already in place as the technical sectors have been structured around the four strategic objectives. A review of the field structures and the Active Partnership Policy is now being undertaken, and better interaction between headquarters and the field will feature among the key issues to be addressed.

The budget for the Africa region will be organized around the four strategic objectives, and within this framework on a number of operational objectives. This strategic budgeting process will focus on setting targets, monitoring performance and evaluating impact and achievements.

Technical cooperation will take the form of advocacy, research and advisory services as well as the execution of technical cooperation projects; its effectiveness will be enhanced through an increased participation of the ILO's tripartite constituents and local experts in our activities.

The ILO will develop global partnerships with the recipient countries in Africa and the international community in order to create an enabling social and institutional environment for balanced growth. The ILO will strengthen its relationships with regional and subregional organizations such as the OAU's Labour and Social Affairs Commission, the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions/African Regional Organization (ICFTU/ORAF) and the Pan-African Employers' Confederation (PEC). The ILO will intensify its contacts with the African

Development Bank (ADB), as well as with the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. We will also need to think carefully how the ILO can secure good relationships with NGOs and civil society.