

**UNLDC-IV – ISTANBUL**  
**ILO SPECIAL EVENT - 10 MAY 2011**  
**Employment and Social Protection in LDCs**  
**The LDCs and the Decent Work: Some Trade Unions perspectives for Africa**  
**By**  
**Kouglo Boèvi LAWSON BODY, ITUC-Africa**

Distinguished participants and panelists

First for all, let me thank ILO for inviting me to this special event. I would like to congratulate the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Republic of Turkey for the great and fruitful work done by Turkey to prepare this big conference on LDCs.

My interventions highlight three main points:

- The context of ITUC-Africa action in decent work
- Problems connected to employment and the working conditions in Africa
- Trade-union strategies to face the problems of employment and working conditions in Africa

### **1. Context of ITUC-Africa union action on decent work**

ITUC-Africa notices that the low level of decent work on the continent would be one of the causes of degradation of living standard of workers and the high incidence of poverty. Africa must thus make growth more favorable to the employment, decent work and to the poor people in order to meet the MDG1 (*the reduction of half of the extreme poverty and hunger*) foreseen in 2015.

Decent work has been essential these last years as a central question of the socio-economic policies and development strategies as well as on a national scale and at the international level. Africa is not of rest (Some main events in Africa, AU, Ouagadougou 2004 and 2009, ILO, Ouagadougou 2004, 2009 and Yaoundé 2010).

As regards to the promotion of decent work in Africa, actions must be permanent to impulse a significant and deep change in the working conditions and ITUC-Africa is committed to this. As evidence:

- The 2 forums of ITUC-Africa organized in 2009 and 2010 on the global economic and financial crisis and the global job pact;

- a workshop on the elaboration of documents of policies on the decent work in October 2010;
- ITUC-Africa New Year School in January 2011 on development strategies in Africa.

These initiatives contributed for the African Trade union movement to:

- *better apprehend decent work as a tool for the promotion of the development in Africa;*
- *identify strategies of promoting decent work in Africa, particularly through the Decent Work Country Programs (DWCP) and the implementation of the global job pact*
- *think about trade-union priorities concerning decent work and to release trade-union strategies materialize these priorities.*

This ILO Special Event on “Employment and social protection during this UNLDC-IV after the launch of a new ILO report “*Growth Employment and Decent Work in the LDCs*” offers an occasion to ITUC-Africa to give its orientations on the development strategy for Africa so that the Global Job Pact and the Decent Work agenda must be at the center of the economic program of restructuring and the investment’s development in order to satisfy the fundamental needs of the African populations.

## **2. Problems connected to employment and working conditions in Africa**

Generally, employment in Africa is characterized by four major features:

- an abundant young and low qualified working offer;
- a working demand directed to primary, not wage-earning activities and widely informal being translated so by precarious and informal jobs;
- an unemployment of the urban young people excessively raised and a massive underemployment, especially rural;
- a weak level of decent job.

These characteristics are now exacerbated by the perverse effects of the global economic and financial crisis which led to a deterioration of the employment picture all around the world. According to an investigation led with the African trade-union organizations, the problems connected to employment and working conditions can be gathered in the following six categories:

- the absence of social protection;
- the absence of hygiene, security and health in working places;

- the non compliance with international standards and the social laws;
- the instability of the employment and the unemployment;
- the lack of production factors;
- the absence of competence.

These problems would be connected to the context of the global economy characterized by the preeminence of the neoliberalism, bad economic and political governance, the weakness of the African States, institutional weakness of the structures of protection of workers and the weak intervention capacity of the African trade unions. Among certain immediate causes of these situations, one can quote:

- ❖ *the profit maximization by the companies operating on the continent,*
- ❖ *the relocation, the excessive flexibility and the deregulation granted to the investors in the EPZ,*
- ❖ *the resignation of the State in its mission of regulation, under equipment and the failure of the working administration,*
- ❖ *the absence of trade-union freedom,*
- ❖ *the lack of protection of workers and their representatives*
- ❖ *the lack of capacity of worker representatives,*
- ❖ *the weak capacity of job supply, and deficiencies of policies on job creation,*
- ❖ *the fatal effects of policies imposed by Bretton Woods's institutions and the WTO,*
- ❖ *and the iniquity in the distribution of the fruits of growth.*

### **3. Trade-union strategies to face the problems of employment and the working conditions in Africa**

Towards the African context and identified problems, the African trade-union organizations already undertook in actions of training and expertise not only to make a better diagnosis of their socioeconomic, cultural and political context but especially to strengthen their capacities in socioeconomic analysis and in formulation of alternative strategies of development.

The implementation of the global job pact can contribute to restore confidence and to help the countries to realize growth, to create decent jobs, and to guarantee the respect of the international standards of work, to ensure an adequate social protection for vulnerable groups and to provide the solid basis of a right and durable economic revival.

This is, why, ITUC and ITUC-Africa have already taken initiatives to promote the pact and to make sensitive its members.

With the global economic and financial crisis, Africa was seriously affected on several plans. Social implications are disastrous for populations and workers. The environment of the African countries did not change. To the climatic, ecological and food crisis effects are now added those of the global economic and financial. Trade unions have now a heavier and bigger responsibility to be involved even more strongly in the socio-economic dialogue by credible and relevant propositions.

Within this context framework and facing the heavy tendencies of the African context characterized by five phenomena, *the gearing of poverty, the weak accessibility of the economies to the world markets, bad governance of States, the trap of the natural resources, the danger related on the climate change and the food insecurity*, the orientations of economic policy recommended by ITUC-Africa take into account three major characteristics:

- i. *the need of a change of paradigm to lead policies and the development strategies in Africa.*
- ii. *the requirement of good governance in the African countries.*
- iii. *a real reform of the world governance*

Concerning the social protection, one attends nowadays a social security coverage which is in regression with as corollary the accentuation of the poverty. Debates on the improvement of the social protection system were limited to the formal sector, to the restoration of the financial balance by the increase in the rate of deduction from the wages.

Current debates touch little the fundamental question which remains the absence of coverage of the majority of the populations, the extension of the informal sector but especially the capacity of auto-organization of this sector and its contribution to the development of the social protection system. However, as the elements which are a part of human rights, the social protection floor is a social and economic need in sustainable development, peace and security. Also, several components of the social protection floor can be implemented by becoming integrated into the fiscal space and national policies.

For that purpose, political decisions on social protection should be continued in order to ensure social protection to the weakest and most vulnerable groups.

So, it is convenient for the **Governments** to:

- Mainstream social protection into the development programs;
- Effectively implement social protection policies by ensuring allocation of adequate resources, and capacity building;
- Develop sustainable source of funding for social protection;

*Development partners* should:

- Support countries technically and financially to develop and implement social protection policies especially for disadvantaged and poor communities;
- Support sharing of experiences between countries.

In conclusion, ITUC and ITUC-Africa note that the priority for the LDCS is not anymore the growth for the growth. But the growth must have for pillar the productive employment but especially the decent work with a big responsibility being incumbent upon the government of these countries but in the setting of a real social dialogue between governments and workers and employers professional organizations.

Thank you