

**Launch of Decent Work Country Programme for Afghanistan
Kabul, 17 July 2010**

**Speaking points - Hervé Berger, ILO Senior Coordinator / Representative
for Afghanistan**

- I am delighted to have the opportunity of speaking at such an auspicious occasion. The signing of the first ever Decent Work Country Programme for Afghanistan is indeed an important occasion.
- I feel I am speaking not only on the behalf of the ILO today, but really on behalf of the ILO Constituents, represented here today by Her Excellency Madame AFZALI, Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Mr. KARGAR, General President of the umbrella trade union organization the National Union of Afghan Employees, and Mr. ALKOZAI, Vice-Chairman of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the employers' umbrella organization in Afghanistan.
- As was just mentioned by Her Excellency, the DWCP before you has been developed in close collaboration with the tripartite constituents and truly reflects the priorities they have identified.
- It is reassuring that the priorities of the DWCP as well as many of the outcomes of the DWCP also overlap with many of the employment related priorities that will be presented by the Government of Afghanistan at the upcoming Kabul Conference.
- This means that when the ILO will be supporting the Ministry of Labour, Workers' and Employers' Organizations in the implementation of the DWCP, it will also be supporting the Government of Afghanistan in accomplishing its priorities as presented to the Kabul Conference.

PRIORITIES OF THE DWCP

- The DWCP has three key priorities, in addition to the cross-cutting themes of social dialogue and gender equity. The priorities are:
 1. **Promoting productive employment through labour market information and skills development.**
 2. **Promoting and applying International Labour Standards with a focus on ratifying ILO core conventions and strengthening the labour inspection machinery.**
 3. **Strong, representative employers' and workers' organizations that contribute to national policy formulation and better industrial relations.**
- The focus of all of the DWCP is to strengthen the capacity of the ILO constituents, namely the Ministry of Labour, Workers' and Employers' Organizations, as well as

other partners that will be involved in the implementation of this framework agreement.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- With regards to the first priority on promoting productive employment, the expected results of the work undertaken under this priority will include:
 - The regular production, at least yearly, of labour market information that will provide the Government of Afghanistan with labour indicators such as desegregated information on the state of unemployment, underemployment, the demographics of the labour force, type of employment (white collar, skilled, unskilled, etc.) wage levels, etc.
 - A regular employment report for policy makers of the Government of Afghanistan produced by the Ministry of Labour which will analyze the labour indicators and provide policy makers with advice on how best to improve the employment situation in the country.
 - A gender-responsive employment policy with specificity regarding the industries and services where women predominate and a corresponding action plan for its implementation.

 - It will also include increased training and employment opportunities for women and men. And in this regards we will be working closely with the Ministry of Labour, Education and other Ministries as well as international actors already involved in this area of work.
 - Existing Employment Service Centers will be strengthened and new ones created at provincial levels to help match job seekers with employment opportunities.

 - The conditions will be created for the generation of more micro and small enterprises both in the urban and rural context of Afghanistan. Opportunities will cater to both men and women.

 - Employment opportunities will also be created for vulnerable groups especially women, ex-combatants, returnee migrants and people with disabilities. Note that I am not referring to youth as a vulnerable group, as they are the majority of persons on the market looking for jobs. They, of course, be benefiting from all of these efforts.

- With regards to the second priority on the promotion of International Labour Standards, which, by the way, refers to ILO Conventions. These are international instruments that countries ratifies which sets a variety of labour standards that countries who ratify these instruments are expected to respect. A copy of the 19 ILO Conventions the Government of Afghanistan has ratified can be found in your folders.

- So as I was saying, with regards to the second priority, the expected outcomes will include:

- The strengthened capacity of the Ministry of Labour to apply these international standards in national law so that they can better protect Afghan workers.
- The improvement of conditions of work as a result of better labour policies, labour code, labour administration and inspections services. This means that work places will be visited by labour inspectors to ascertain if they respect the labour law, and if not, to ensure that they will do so in the future.
- The establishment of a minimum wage at industrial and regional levels for unskilled and skilled workers.
- One of the growing challenges in Afghanistan is child labour. One of the outcomes of this DWCP is to contribute to the progressive elimination of child labour. This will include the identification of a list of hazardous occupations that must not employ children below the age of 18; raising awareness about this list across Afghanistan, and, in parallel working with families of working children to find alternative employment opportunities for parents so that the children can be taken out of labour and enrolled in school.
- As a means to contribute to poverty reduction and social insecurity the capacity of the tripartite constituents will be strengthened to develop policies that improve social security coverage, notably for excluded groups.
- Finally, with regards to the third priority of the DWCP, namely strong and representative Employers' and Workers' Organizations, the key outcomes will include:
 - The development and establishment of social dialogue and industrial relations mechanisms such as a Tripartite Commission that will include at least 20% women representation and which will meet regularly.
 - The progressive participation of representative Workers' and Employers' Organizations in national level policy formulation processes that effect socio-economic policies.
 - And ultimately the establishment of a social dialogue platform where employers and workers will be able to meet regularly to discuss workplace issues such as minimum wage, working hours, contractual agreements, workers welfare, etc.
- These are key aspects of this DWCP programme which have been developed by the Ministry of Labour in close consultation with Workers' and Employers' Organizations.
- As you can see, this DWCP will support the Government of Afghanistan as well as workers and employers in creating decent work at a critical juncture in its history.
- That is, work which is carried out in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.
- Thank you.