

Check Against Delivery



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

**Twenty-first Special Session of the General Assembly
for the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of
the Programme of Action of the International Conference on
Population and Development**

**Statement by
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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Labour Organization appreciates this opportunity to address the Special Session of the General Assembly to review implementation of the Programme of the International Conference of Development and Population. The ILO is fully committed to promoting the goals set out in the ICPD Programme of Action within its own programme of work. The basic concerns expressed in the Cairo Programme of Action are consistent with the ILO's core mandate with respect to social justice, fundamental human rights, and sustainable livelihoods.

The ILO collaborates with other agencies of the UN system in pursuit of the goals emphasized in the Cairo Programme of Action and other UN global conferences held in the 1990s.

The ILO, on account of its mandate in the labour and social fields, has an interest and has been directly involved in population issues. The ILO statement at the Cairo conference stressed the strong link between population and labour issues. This is evident from the analysis of the relationship between population and development, as it pertains to labour market issues, which deals with issues such as: human resources development; gender equality in the workplace; migration for employment; and, more recently, child labour.

Some population issues are central to ILO's activities. Demographic dynamics relating to rapid population growth and changing age structure have significant bearing on labour and employment issues. With about a third of the population in developing countries below 15 years of age, many young people who will be entering the labour force may find it difficult to secure suitable employment because the economies of those countries are not growing fast enough to absorb all of them. Assistance and support from the international community to provide adequate employment would be critical in the alleviation of poverty and in ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

The integration of demographic variables and their outcomes also influence the attainment of basic ILO objectives, such as:

- the attainment of full and freely chosen productive employment;
- the reduction of youth unemployment and marginalization;
- the achievement of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women in employment;
- the elimination of child labour and the economic exploitation of children;
- improvement in working conditions;
- ensuring the sustainability of social security systems;
- safeguarding the rights of migrant workers.

The ILO has undertaken various activities to sensitize its tripartite constituents - governments, employers' and workers' organizations - about the importance of the link between population and development. It has encouraged its constituents to become actively involved in programmes which provide education and other social services for the reproductive health and welfare of workers and their families, as well as in national population programmes. ILO has also assisted numerous governments in the design and implementation of national population policies and programmes.

Migration is another demographic variable which is intrinsic to ILO's work. As regards international population mobility, ILO's constitution includes specific responsibility for the protection of the rights of workers employed in countries other than their own. Two ILO conventions - Migration for Employment Convention (No. 97 of 1949), and the Migrant Workers Convention (No. 143 of 1975) - are expressly concerned with the rights of migrant workers. In June 1998, the ILO played a major role in a symposium on international migration held in the Hague, which was a precursor to the Hague Forum.

Given the comprehensive perspective of the Cairo Programme of Action, and its concern for the dignity of mankind and basic human rights, it is not surprising that many of the issues on which the ILO has adopted international labour standards are also relevant as key components of desirable population policies. These relate to the principles of fundamental rights at work; human resources development and the promotion of equality.

The *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* adopted at the 1998 International Labour Conference commits the Organization's 174 member states to respect the principles inherent in the seven core labour standards and to promote their universal application. This declaration obligates member states to respect the fundamental principles involved, whether or not they have ratified the relevant conventions.