



Developing a South-South Regional Cooperation for Joint Efforts to Transform Working Conditions.

Statement of commitment and action

We, representatives of faith based organisations from the Christian and Muslim traditions, trade unions and associations of employers, and other organisations involved in the promotion of decent work at local, national or international level gathered in Kampala-Uganda on 26TH and 27TH April 2017;

- Acknowledge the contribution of JACODeWU working in partnership with the German Commission for Justice and Peace and the ILO in convening and facilitating dialogues and helping us identify some critical issues for the development of South to South regional cooperation in support of the transformation of working conditions, decent work, in relation to the ILO future of work initiative and the SDGs in general.
- Are mindful of the commitment taken in Rome during the Global Seminar organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, together with the Catholic inspired organisations working group on decent work, Caritas Internationalis and the ILO and reiterating the conviction that people, including workers, their families, and communities, should be placed at the centre of sustainable development policies and should be the first concern in the reflection and debate on the future of work;
- Envision that our profound discussions and reflections, held during this inter-religious conference have opened the path for further reflection, dialogue and cooperation between our organisations as well as other faiths based organisations and social organisations for the promotion of decent work for all especially at the regional level, within a South - South framework;

Hereby communicate as follows:

- That there is need to further develop just public policies and practices to address some of the most pressing needs of the world of work.
- Work and employment are to be the main route out of poverty. As stated by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si paragraph 129*, people should have access to jobs, so as to ensure not only their livelihood but also their personal fulfilment and dignity.

- In the East African context, a large share of the working poor are engaged in agriculture related activities, and endure the adverse effects of climate change. In this situation, they should be supported by governments, at national and local levels, together with civil society organisations by devising and implementing policies that are geared at improving food security and promotion of sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- Youth, including young women, is in Africa the largest segment of the population and also one of the group suffering most from unemployment. Adequate education, vocational training and capacities are to be provided to empower young people and create an enabling local business environment. Our organisations in this case have a specific role to play in partnership with all relevant public and private actors who could also contribute to employment, job creation and entrepreneurship.
- Informal economy in Africa is also a strong preoccupation. Our organisations can contribute to a just and better transition toward the formal economy with the view of providing better health and social protection, access to credit and investment, while ensuring the promotion of the fundamental rights and principles at work as well as a contribution to the common good and social peace.
- In our countries, people are increasingly looking for employment opportunities beyond their home country for a decent pay and survival. For sending countries, it is a consequence of imbalances in the labour market resulting from high rates of unemployment, underemployment among low-skilled workers, low wages for skilled workers and unmet demand for education. Cases of migrant workers abuses are on the rise. We call upon our governments, our organisations, and all relevant partners to ensure that migrant workers benefit from the same rights and protections as all workers.
- It is a common and central tenet of many faiths and denomination to acknowledge and promote the dignity of work and the rights of workers. As stated in the ILO Philadelphia Declaration in 1944, labour is not a commodity. We commit ourselves to engage our organisations in the promotion of the dignity of work, as a care for creation and humankind.
- The world of work is changing. The future of work initiative from the ILO provides us with a unique opportunity to continue engage and reflect on some of the most pressing emerging challenges in the East African context. In particular, we express our concerns for the consequences of continuous technical innovation on the dignity of labour, social cohesion and the safeguard of creation. We would like that the trend towards greater East Africa integration be at the service of the promotion of decent work. JACODEWU should be at the centre of achieving this.

In light of the challenges and issues that we have identified, we propose to develop together a framework for south-south and triangular cooperation. Activities in this framework could include the following:

Awareness and information sharing :

1. Organize awareness raising programmes on decent work among key stakeholders including governments, private employers and workers and institutions of higher learning where employers and workers are prepared.
2. Translate and simplify labour related laws and policies and important pontifical and other critical messages talking about work into majorly spoken languages for easy dissemination to the masses.
3. Conduct media activities i.e. spot messages, newspaper articles, TV and radio talk shows and use of social media channels
4. Create linkages with other international conferences for information sharing and for developing south to south and triangular cooperation for joint efforts to transform working conditions.

Coordination

1. Form and organise regional, national and local committees on decent work to provide guidance and follow up the implementation of activities and to replicate these activities in other countries in the African region.
2. Create a regional platform that creates and connects young people in emerging job opportunities by bringing together various committed stakeholders in the platform that has capacity to create job opportunities for our targeted beneficiaries.
3. Identify primary and secondary stakeholders to collaborate with in relation to labour issues.
4. Focus on information sharing through creation of online information sharing platform for strong coordination mechanisms.
5. Organise follow up meetings for partners to actively participate in achieving the set targets.

Advocacy

1. Organize joint advocacy dialogues to discuss critical work issues in collaboration with faith based organizations, workers, employers, governments and institutions of higher learning.
2. Participate in organizing internationally recognized events ie World Day of Safety and Health at Work (28TH April), Labour day (1ST May), World Day for decent work (7TH October), Human Rights Day (10th December) and International Day of migrants (18th December) to advocate for improved working conditions.

3. Engage government and private key players to advocate and lobby for the enactment, amendment and implementation of labour laws that are directed at improving the working environments.
4. Prepare joint position papers on labour laws including those in operational and those that are being enacted, e.g. on minimum wage in Uganda that forms a basis for a decent pay especially for informal workers.

Capacity building

1. Organise and conduct trainings for government labour officers and private players including trade unions, labour unions and civil society organisations and academicians on issues of decent work and relevant laws and policies.
2. Conduct programmes that help improve food security including providing training to improve planting, harvesting, transportation and storage techniques, thus reducing post-harvest losses.
3. Engage government and other stakeholders for more resources for facilitating acquisition of knowledge and skills that focus on the realities of African countries' economies and labour markets with special focus on vocational training to improve livelihoods and employability of the masses.
4. Organise and conduct sensitisations to faith based and civil society organisations, employers and employees to enhance their capacities to fight gender discrimination and work towards gender equality as well as sensitising the masses on the value of work and human dignity.

Research

1. In partnership with academic institutions and other civil society organisations organise and conduct research in the issues of work to gather information for evidence based advocacy towards the dignity of work with specific focus on the informal economy.
2. Disseminate study findings through dialogues to the relevant authorities with purposes of lobbying for just laws in regard to the critical issues in the world of work.

In conclusion, the conference provided an opportunity for analyzing critical issues in the world of work and information sharing among people from different walks of life. The dialogue has extended a clear invitation to faith based organizations, trade unionists, employers and academia not only to become involved but to actively participate in working towards transforming working conditions. The suggested activities serve as entry points for common engagement and mutual support across borders. We hope that this event will help build a strong working relationship and a more productive relationship across the region for sustainable development.