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Concluding statement at

"Breaking New Ground: Partnerships for more & better jobs for Young People"

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Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

At the ILO we are very pleased to have co-organized this Partnership Event jointly with UN-DESA, the UN Office for Partnerships, the UN Global Compact and others.

Our deepest thanks to all the participants in the dialogues and to everyone in this room.

We have just concluded two very rich and inspiring sessions.

Let me begin by stating two lessons that I think are quite clear: first, everyone has a stake in addressing the youth employment challenge and therefore everyone should assume the responsibility and, second, only collaborative approaches will produce real outcomes.

Everyone has a stake & everyone should assume responsibility... because

- Having 75 million unemployed Young People, more than 150 m young working poor, and millions of young people not working nor studying, is a huge waste of human capital for societies, of frustration for young people themselves and their families, and an enormous waste of opportunities for economic growth and higher standards of living.
- Everyone has a stake... because, such figures scream out about the risk of a “lost generation”, prompted by joblessness, social deprivation, and lack of voice and opportunity in society.
- Everyone has a stake... because socially excluded youth are more likely to engage in risky behaviors including substance abuse, crime, violence, joining gangs, drug trafficking, and other threats to social cohesion and peace in the community. Evidence from Latin America, for example, shows that being a NI-NI (neither working nor studying) is strongly associated with the risk of violence and crime. 80% of regular crimes in LA are committed by youngsters between 12 and 25 years old. One of the reasons for people’s disappointment with democracy in several Latin American countries, according to Latinobarometro, for instance, is the perception that the state is unable to guarantee the security of their citizens. Young people trapped in networks of violence and

drugs have very low probabilities of finding a good job unless social policy interventions rescue them from those networks and offers and motivates them with clear alternatives. The evidence is also very clear that a decent job reduces risky behaviors in young people.

- Everyone has a stake... because paraphrasing the visionary statement in the 1919 ILO constitution that “poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere”, today we can say “youth unemployment anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere”.
- The business community has a stake for all these reasons...but there are also a number of business-specific reasons: young workers are good for business because they are the best hope to introduce new technologies and increase productivity in the workplace; high youth unemployment and underemployment around factory plants increase the cost of doing business; high youth unemployment is tantamount to smaller markets and less growth.

As for the second statement, one lesson or conclusion the interactive dialogues this afternoon have confirmed is that only comprehensive, integrated, collaborative or partnership approaches involving the government, Education & Training institutions, the private sector, trade unions, and NGOs including youth organizations themselves, can be effective in maximizing benefits for young workers.

The most successful initiatives depend on sophisticated collaboration and partnership between the private sector, government and civil society organizations and unique combinations of incentives, regulations, funding and leadership. These partnerships are rich and complex in institutional detail and texture. It is very important to better understand these innovative partnerships. Successful initiatives must be documented and catalogued so that the underlying models can be analyzed for potential broader replication. This is one of the new lines of work we have in the ILO in our Youth Employment Programme. And this is one of the reasons we are very happy to be associated with today’s event.

What is ILO doing?

Let me say a word about the ILO Youth Employment Programme. The ILO has been working on Youth Employment issues for many years, and recently our programme has been strengthened with more projects and products.

In 2005 the International Labour Conference had a major discussion on youth employment, and concluded, among other things, that addressing Youth Employment challenges required integrated interventions in a number of areas:

- investment and growth for generating labour demand, including work on sectors, clusters and value chains;
- skills development and addressing skills mismatch problems;
- better understanding the school to work transition and overcoming the hurdle of finding the first job;
- entrepreneurship education and promotion measures;
- labour market information and employment services.

We have been working in all these areas and we now have a project portfolio in the Youth Employment Programme of more than 120 million dollars around the world and growing fast. One of the new recent partnerships has been precisely with the MasterCard Foundation who is supporting us in the application of the ILO-School to Work Transition survey methodology in 28 countries.

Last year, governments, employers and workers in the ILO decided to put the youth employment crisis as a major theme in the agenda of the 2012 ILC, to be held next June. This means that representatives from 183 member states, and their workers and employers representatives will be discussing good practices and policies, as well as partnerships to address the youth employment challenge.

But what is new this year is that as preparation for the Conference, and to strengthen the Youth Employment Programme of the ILO, Director-General Juan Somavia has directed us to reach out massively to young people, to listen to them and to search systematically for youth-led projects and initiatives. So the ILO is organizing during the month of March some 50 national consultations on youth employment with young people's organizations and initiatives in 50 countries. And this will build towards a major Youth Employment Forum in Geneva from the 23 to the 25 or May.

This is innovative, this is breaking new ground for us, and it is, of course, also a challenge for the ILO, because as Nicole Goldin said candidly about USAID, we in the ILO are also struggling to find an appropriate model to engage and to partner with young people, including finding appropriate ways of using social networking technology.

The state of knowledge: what we know, what we don't know?

I would now like to say a word about the state of knowledge on the question of addressing the youth employment challenge. There is a lot we know but also many aspects where we do not really have the answers, so there is a large knowledge agenda to be developed, and we are

certainly working on it and want to partner with researchers, practitioners, and others to develop leading edge understanding of what works.

As I said, documenting and cataloguing successful initiatives and better understanding the underlying models is extremely important.

We heard this afternoon how the private sector and companies, as well as trade unions, can do and are doing many things. From the discussions this afternoon and our experience on the subject, I would like to finish by listing ten types of partnership actions that business and/or trade unions can and should pursue, all of which would make a great contribution for more and better jobs for young people:

1. Help address the skills mismatch problem by connecting with schools, training institutions and Universities and helping to ensure that training meets enterprise needs, as well as financing the provision of training.
2. Participate in government programmes for providing work experience via apprenticeships and on the job training, to help young people overcome the very significant hurdle of finding the first job and facilitating the school to work transition.
3. Provide entrepreneurship training and mentorship for young entrepreneurs. We heard an eloquent case from Linda Ben from South Africa what a great need mentoring is for young entrepreneurs, and what a great difference mentoring can make.
4. Facilitate access to start up capital and angel investor networks.
5. Provide business development services, and, as Jose from Telefonica said, develop networks, ecosystems and connectivity and maximize the use of Information and Communications Technologies.
6. Partner with Public Employment Services and with private employment agencies to improve the identification of jobs seekers and connect them with job vacancies.
7. Be proactive and provide leadership in influencing policy frameworks on the issue of youth employment, engaging with public institutions and vocational training institutions and holding public policy and politicians accountable and committed.
8. Participate in schemes to support at-risk and disenfranchised youth, like former members of gangs.
9. Work with ministries of finance, labour, education, as well as relevant UN agencies to achieve sustainable results and mobilize resources.

10. Encourage networks of engaged companies, both nationally and internationally, to support effective youth employment action programmes.

If companies, business organizations and trade unions do all of this, and partner with youth-led organizations, and benefit from supportive government policies and institutions, the world would be a different place for millions of at risk and vulnerable youth. Done at a sufficient scale, these are all transformational partnerships.

It can be done, but good public policy is of course also an essential ingredient. Governments should put in place the right enabling environment for investment. As Ronnie Goldberg said, we know a lot about what attracts investment, and what kind of regulatory frameworks promote enterprise, investment and entrepreneurship.

But governments should go beyond an enabling environment, they should be proactive in promoting inclusive and job-rich growth. This means having sectoral and value chain upgrading strategies and productive transformation policies, improvement of education and vocational training institutions, supporting small and medium size enterprises, creating a culture of collaboration between key stakeholders, putting in place smart regulations and incentives.

The ILO is vigorously promoting this conversation and advancing this agenda. This year we will continue this dialogue in a variety of global, regional and national fora, including in the ILO International Labour Conference in June. And we are certainly working hard to promote innovative partnerships and projects and to provide a global platform for knowledge sharing on youth employment policies and practices.

Thank you for your attention, thank you for being here today, thank you for your commitment.