

Report on the ILO Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum.

Held 10-12 October 2006 in Barbados

Written by: Henna Toppenberg, Directorate of Labour Affairs Netherlands Antilles

Responding to globalization: A decent work agenda for the Caribbean in the context of regional integration.

Representatives Netherlands Antilles:

St. Maarten, employers' representative: Veronica Webster

Bonaire, island government representative: Giovanna Domacasse-Frans

Curacao, employees' representatives: Richenel Ilario and Kenneth Valpoort

Netherlands Antilles, national coordinator: Henna Toppenberg

Aims of the Forum:

1. to focus on ways in which creating jobs, while promoting respect for rights, social protection, and social dialogue, can be made central to social and economic development strategies at the national and regional levels;
2. to raise awareness of the Decent Work Agenda, and to discuss the modalities for key stakeholders to cooperate in making Decent Work a key goal of economic policy, and part of the response to the challenges of globalization; and
3. to discuss, with a view to adopting, a Plan of Action for achieving noticeable concrete results in a few priority areas.

Primary goal ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote the opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent work is the converging focus of all of its four strategic objectives: promotion of rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue (report of the Director-General "Decent Work"). Rights at Work, Employment and Incomes, Social Protection and Social Dialogue and Tripartism are considered the Pillars of Decent Work.

Program

Day one – 10 October 2006

- Opening Ceremony
- Session 1: Challenges and Opportunities
 - o Globalization and regional integration
 - o Balancing economic and social objectives
 - o People-centered development
- Session 2: Employment Promotion
 - o International context and the quest for a fair globalization
 - o Employment-promoting macroeconomic framework
 - o Labour market policies and institutions in a context of regional integration, trade adjustment and economic restructuring
- Session 3: Job Creation, Skills and Enterprise Development (sectoral policies, clusters and value chain upgrading in all strategic sectors)
- Special Session: Youth Employment Network: The Jamaica Initiative

Day two – 11 October 2006

- Session 4: Social Protection
 - o Social security coverage (informal economy / migrant and contract workers)
 - o Occupational safety and health
 - o Addressing the impact of HIV / AIDS at work
- Session 5: Labour Standards and Rights at Work: Their Developmental Role
- Session 6: Social Dialogue
 - o Representation and voice
 - o Strengthening the tripartite partners at the national and regional levels
- Session 7: International and Institutional Setting for Promoting Decent Work in the Caribbean
 - o Political context – the Decent Work Agenda for the Americas
 - o Institutional framework in the Caribbean – CARICOM
- Session 8: Towards Decent Work Programs in the Caribbean
 - o Action plan
 - o Institutional follow-up mechanism
 - o Linkages with other national development frameworks
 - o Partnerships

Day three – 12 October 2006

- Special Session: Sectoral Restructuring and Adjustment: A Country Case Study (Costa Rica)
- Session 9: Adoption of the Recommendation for promoting Decent Work in the Caribbean

Go to <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/oldwww/cef/agenda.pdf> for the complete agenda.

Almost every session consisted of several presentations with regard to the topic in concern after which the public had the opportunity to respond and discuss. For the power point presentations go to <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/oldwww/cef/presentations.html>.

In the last session (session 9), a **“Tripartite Declaration and Plan of Action for Realizing the Decent Work Agenda in the Caribbean”** has been established by a previously selected group of participants. Every recommendation in the proposed agenda has been publicly discussed and adapted where possible. The final version of the declaration can be found on <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/oldwww/cef/TCEF%20Declaration.pdf>.

Participants

More than 400 people have participated this forum representing 19 Caribbean countries.

Caribbean participating countries:

Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands.

The National Employment reports of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia and Suriname can be found on <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/oldwww/cef/country-reports.html>.

Non-Caribbean countries present:

Costa Rica, Finland, Peru, Switzerland, United States of America

Other organizations that were present besides several ILO departments and the country tripartite representatives are amongst others: CARICOM, CCL, IOM and academic institutions.

Follow up

- A TCEF Follow-up committee has been formed, currently existing of Kenneth Valpoort, Richenel Ilario en Henna Toppenberg and soon will be extended by one employers' representative.
- Information transfer will take place of the knowledge gained during the TCEF and of the "Plan of Action" by means of presentations on both a central level for the Minister of Economic and Labour Affairs and the Director of Labour Affairs and an insular level on Curacao, Bonaire and St. Maarten for employers' and labour union representatives.
- A request of recommendation will be formulated and directed to Ms Dr. Ana Teresa Romera of ILO with regard to the desired growth and improved organization of social dialogue on Curacao. Aim of the request is to receive ILO financed technical assistance in the form of Ms Walgrave who we will ask to give presentations and maybe a workshop during the seminar about social dialogue on Curacao. Before submitting the request for recommendation, the current situation, bottlenecks and challenges need to be investigated.
- The committee will organize a seminar for Curacao about social dialogue. The guest of honor will be Ms Walgrave of ILO. The seminar is planned to take place in April 2007.

- A Dutch Caribbean Employment Conference will be organized concerning Netherlands Antilles, Aruba and Suriname. The conference is planned in Augustus 2007. Sub themes will be specified by the committee in a later stage.

Literature

Several ILO information folders and reports have been taken from the forum and are available at the Directorate of Labour. Titles of these folders and reports are:

Reports and books:

ILO, (December 2005) Agricultural development and employment in the Caribbean: Challenges for the future

ILO (April 2006). Statistical report on the working poor in the Caribbean.

ILO (2005). Rules of the Game. A brief introduction to International Labour Standards

ILO (May 2006). Decent work in the Americas: An agenda for the Hemisphere 2006-2015

ILO (2006). Responding to globalization: A decent work agenda for the Caribbean in the context of regional integration. Background paper for the Tripartite Caribbean Employment Forum Barbados 2006.

ILO (August 2006). Social security for all: Investing in global social and economic development. A consultation. Discussion paper.

Several information brochures:

- ILO, The ILO: What it is. What it does.
- Highlights of Economic and Labour Market Developments in the Caribbean Subregion
- Single Market and Economy
- CARICOM. Charter of Civil Society. For the Caribbean Community.
- ILO (June 1998). ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work and its follow-up.
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- An ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work
- Employers Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago – client brochure
- ILO Bureau for gender equality
- Boosting Employment through small enterprise development

See also the ILO webpage (www.ilo.org) for ILO publications.