

**FOR INFORMATION**

SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the Global Steering Group
on ongoing Action Programmes****Highlights**

1. The Global Steering Group meeting on 23 January 2007 focused on the three new action programmes, taking note of the outcome of the African regional seminar in the telecommunications sector, activities in the public services programme, and implementation of the health services programme, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The ensuing discussion centred on lessons learned from earlier Action Programmes, replicability of results, sustainability and the purpose, frequency and effectiveness of Steering Group meetings.

Summary of the discussion

2. Ms Walgrave, Director of DIALOGUE, welcomed the participants. The meeting would review progress in the action programmes in the health, public services and telecommunications sectors. Lessons learned from previous action programmes had been considered when implementing new programmes. Experience suggested that timely STM decisions and more focus on constituents' needs in the selection of topics and countries were required for successful implementation. More flexibility was needed for the Office to ensure efficient use of resources.
3. Ms Tinoco, Chief of SECTOR, summarized recent activities in the first-generation action programmes. In the *agriculture* sector, further work on occupational safety and health had been undertaken in Costa Rica and Kyrgyzstan. In the *education* sector, a national seminar in Brazil provided follow-up to the 2005 regional policy dialogue forum. In the *hotel, catering and tourism* sector, the International Hotel and Restaurant Association wished to work with the ILO on a project proposal on migration. Activities in the *textiles, clothing and footwear* sector included continued technical support in Morocco, and a special session of Romania's National Steering Committee in April 2007 to discuss sustainability. In the *construction* sector, the major focus was on sustainability, either through linkages with an existing national institution or the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP), or support to the Steering Committee. The education sector component of the *HIV/AIDS*

programme published the Portuguese version of the workplace policy document and was seeking resources for activities in Africa and the Caribbean.

Implementing new Action Programmes

Telecommunications

4. The telecommunications specialist, Mr Myers, presented several components of the action programme, the first being the Tripartite Regional Seminar on Skills and Employability in Telecommunications Services (United Republic of Tanzania, December 2006), which was greatly helped by ILO Dar es Salaam. This seminar adopted action-oriented conclusions, upon which the research, training and direct assistance components were being developed. The programme would focus on three of the following countries: Cameroon, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Selection criteria included opportunities for success, pre-existence of sectoral social dialogue, committed social partners and supportive structures.
5. Mr Trogen, spokesperson for the Employers' group, who attended the seminar, indicated that it had functioned like a traditional sectoral meeting, but was more "to the point" and therefore more effective. Participating countries faced similar situations and could easily identify common problems and solutions. He strongly supported such regional meetings and thanked the specialist, who had chaired the seminar and facilitated the adoption of meaningful conclusions. In future, such regional meetings could serve as models for sectoral activities. In the final selection of countries, the action programme should focus on the most promising cases, with committed employers' associations.
6. Mr Medland, Union Network International (UNI), remarked that the seminar had been very successful. Its useful conclusions were a good starting point, but more important was the follow-up that the programme would develop and implement. The issue of child labour in the sale of pre-paid phone cards should receive particular attention. Concerning country selection, Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia were good candidates, but neighbouring countries could also be invited. He confirmed the UNI's support for follow-up.
7. Mr Zellhoefer, spokesperson for the Workers' group, found the UNI's comments encouraging, demonstrating that trade unions had international sectoral structures capable of efficiently contributing to problem solving. The ILO and the Steering Group should adapt action programmes to the reality of countries and ensure collaboration with committed governments and strong employers' associations to fully benefit from the opportunities offered.
8. Mr Omondi, the African Regional Coordinator, stressed the relevance of this programme's topic for Africa. The seminar positively contributed to regional integration. Concerning the selection of countries, while Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia were primary candidates, the door should be left open to other countries that might be interested. All programme components were important.

Public services

9. The public services specialist, Ms Tomoda, presented the programme, which aimed to strengthen social dialogue in public services. Participating countries were invited to focus either on social dialogue mechanisms and stakeholders' capacity to engage in meaningful

dialogue or on human resource strategies to respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS on public services. In Ukraine, technical comments had been provided on the country's draft Civil Service Code; in October 2006, a workshop was held on civil service remuneration and pensions. A second seminar in April 2007 would focus on skills upgrading. In the United Republic of Tanzania, technical comments were provided on a draft publication by the President's Office on managing HIV/AIDS in the public sector; guidelines would be produced in English and Swahili. A draft technical document containing recommendations on social dialogue in the Jamaican civil service had been produced. Malaysia had initially been selected for the programme, but following interest expressed by Sri Lanka, the Office was considering shifting activities there.

10. Mr Zellhoefer stressed the importance of public services for the ILO's work. Many governments considered that public service concerns were not within the scope of their obligations as member States, although good governance was one of the ILO's underlying values. The fight against corruption was an important part of this. Proper remuneration and pensions were needed to attract and retain capable, dedicated people to the civil service. Without them, graft was inevitable.
11. Ms Wintour, Public Services International (PSI), noted good progress in the United Republic of Tanzania and Ukraine. The results should be disseminated to neighbouring countries. Remuneration in the public sector was fundamental in ensuring efficiency and quality in the civil service.
12. Mr Trogen congratulated the specialist on her work. In follow-up activities, the right balance needed to be struck between ILO "steering" and a constituent-driven approach.
13. Mr Chamberlin, Government of the United States, asked how the sectoral action programmes were integrated with other ILO programmes. For example, would Ukraine's draft Civil Service Code have been submitted for comments even without this programme?
14. Ms Tomoda learned of the draft Civil Service Code on a mission to Ukraine and suggested its submission to the ILO for comments. The seminar on remuneration, particularly the knowledge sharing with Hungarian and Slovenian resource persons, had created a basis for developing social dialogue mechanisms.
15. Mr Omondi noted that many governments had yet to recognize trade unions as partners in development. Many did not understand the importance of such organizations for civil servants. Since responsibility for public service matters often fell within the mandate of the President's or Prime Minister's Office, the speaker suggested that the ILO could offer training to high-level government officials, providing examples of the value of positive labour relations in the civil service.

Health services

16. The health services specialist, Ms Wiskow, presented her programme, which aimed at developing and disseminating strategies and good practices on the management of health worker migration. It benefited from close collaboration with the WHO and IOM. The participating countries were: Costa Rica, Kenya, Romania, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago. A common framework for work had been established at the tripartite, interregional meeting which launched the programme in March 2006. Costa Rica, Kenya, Romania and Senegal had established national steering groups and developed action plans that focused on data improvement and strategy development. The next steps in programme implementation should focus on research and development of databases, policy reviews and an impact analysis, informing the subsequent development of policies.

17. Mr Trogen noted the good results obtained by this programme. The cooperation with the WHO and IOM underlined the importance of partnerships.
18. Ms Wintour highlighted the importance of this programme, which built on a PSI partnering programme in participating countries. Two issues were of concern: (a) the focus on research; greater reliance should be placed on research by the WHO, IOM and academic specialists; and (b) greater emphasis was needed on practical approaches. PSI would continue close cooperation on implementation.
19. Ms Davies, IOM, remarked that this programme helped her organization to learn more about the structures and modes of operation of the other two agencies, especially the ILO's tripartite approach. She noted potential synergies between this action programme and others, notably the HIV/AIDS component of the action programme on public services in the United Republic of Tanzania. Links existed between health workers' migration and HIV/AIDS, so lessons learned from one programme could assist another. Inter-agency cooperation had begun at an early stage, focusing on countries where one of the organizations had an office or representative. The IOM was now present in all six countries, and could assist operational activities. The March 2006 meeting that launched the programme and the IOM Seminar on Migration had been particularly important in informing stakeholders about the issues and mutual concerns. Being a very decentralized, project-based organization, the IOM had sensitized its field offices to the programme's importance. For Kenya, by securing government support from all three members of the East African Community to this programme's priority, funding and cooperation on implementation were available. The IOM was committed to continued inter-agency collaboration in this area.

General discussion

20. Mr Schwass, International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), requested information regarding the cross-sectoral action programme on HIV/AIDS. The International Finance Corporation's guidelines were long and unwieldy. ILO guidelines based on tripartite agreement should be developed for the mining sector. Ms Tinoco responded that consultations with the social partners were ongoing regarding the guidelines for the mining sector.
21. Mr Celaya Alvarez, representing the Regional Coordinator for the Americas, asked about the replicability of action programmes and the scope for applying best practices. Ms Walgrave responded that the future of action programmes and any follow-up would depend on the decisions of the Governing Body. Mr Zellhoefer added that the Steering Group would be in a better position to consider such matters as replication of best practices and other sources of funding at its next meeting.
22. Mr Chamberlin raised issues concerning the function of the Steering Group, the frequency of meetings and the criteria for termination of programmes. Mr Dejardin believed that these questions should be addressed to the Steering Group's next session, when the action programmes had made further progress and the evaluation process was fully under way. In principle, action programmes should run for two years and then become self-sustaining or stop. Mr Zellhoefer agreed that the opportune moment for such a discussion would be after the March STM discussion on the future orientation of SECTOR.
23. Mr Blazek, Eastern European Regional Coordinator, felt that the lessons learned from the public sector action programme were important, especially on the unpredictability of political change. The programmes' flexibility should be maintained.

24. Ms Tinoco recalled recent discussions regarding the need to shift resources from one country to another to ensure programme implementation. In line with previous experience, SECTOR would transfer resources quickly to countries where programmes were working. Some resource mobilization and cost sharing with other departments was occurring. DWCP objectives were being taken into account, and SECTOR was providing input to field offices on this. Ms Walgrave remarked that social dialogue often required five years to become sustainable. More work should be carried out in the field.

Date and purpose of the next meeting

25. Participants agreed to defer a decision on this point until more information was available. The Office would contact members in early autumn to set the date.

Geneva, 2 February 2007.

Submitted for information.