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PRESS RELEASE

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Japan and ILO launched new partnership on Youth Employment for Sustainable Development in Kenya

DAR ES SALAAM/ADDIS ABABA (ILO News) – The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Government of Japan launched a new creative partnership and program aimed at promoting youth employment for sustainable development of the East-African country of Kenya.

The nine months technical cooperation project – USD1.6 million funded by Japan for the period March – December 2012, is designed to create and develop about 130 viable Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) owned by 2,500 young men and women who will be trained and engaged on labour intensive infrastructure sector as well as the use of “Cobblestone paving”¹ and “Do-nou” technologies², thereby contributing towards the provision of employment-based social protection for rural and urban poor.

The desired long-term impact of the project is framed along ILO/AU/IGAD Employment for Peace, Stability and Development Strategy, which calls for a holistic approach to employment as key to poverty alleviation. This project is also consistent with the TICAD process, a Japan-led initiative for Africa’s development. Within the framework of the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) held in 2008, Japan doubled its assistance to African countries to boost economic growth, consolidate peace and good governance and address climate change.

The project, namely “Youth Employment for Sustainable Development”, will also promote rights-based approach to ensure equal opportunities for men and women, workers welfare and safety as well as full participation of the community in the decision making process.

The youth owned MSEs will mainly take part in the rehabilitation and maintenance of rural & urban roads, urban walkways, private and public parking areas, access roads in parks, as well as the construction of rural markets /storage using the labour based approach. The MSEs in turn will create thousands of jobs through labour intensive works in Northern Kenya (one of the most affected areas by the drought), the Rift Valley area and Nairobi.

The project launch coincides with the ongoing ILO worldwide campaign of the Months, March and April 2012, of youth employment. Kenya has marked this occasion with a national event that was held on 4 April 2012. The youth of Kenya – aged between 15 and 30 – represents 32 % of the total population or about 11 million people.

¹ Cobblestone paving technology is new to Kenya and has vast potential in improving urban and rural infrastructure. Experiences of the ILO in the neighbouring countries have shown that the technology is a cheaper alternative to conventional paving techniques and is quickly being taken up by the governments and embraced by the private sector.

² Do-nou is a Japanese word which means wrapping soil in a gunny bag. “Do-nou” technology involves use of gunny bags filled appropriately with either sand, farm soil, gravel and the opening properly secured. Such Do-nou bags are laid in rows within the excavated sections of roads and compacted. <http://michibushinbito.ecnet.jp/Do-nou.html>

It is estimated that 64 % of officially unemployed persons in the country are young men and women facing limited opportunities to improve their livelihood. Just 1.5% of the unemployed youth have formal education beyond secondary school level and over 92% have no vocational or professional skills training and therefore have limited chances of fully participating in the labour market. Underemployment is significantly high.

Against this background, the project intends to empower young women and men to participate in addressing these socio-economic challenges in their communities through providing them with marketable skills, decent jobs and business opportunities in order to enter and remain in the labour market.

The Japan/ILO partnership program has identified four areas of focus:

- i) Development of youth owned SMEs
- ii) Strengthening training capacity of Kisii Training Centre through mainstreaming models for Cobblestone and Do-nou technologies
- iii) Capacity building for implementing agencies including the adoption of green jobs approaches (Ministries of Labour, Youth Affairs, Roads, and local authorities as well as Community Road Empowerment - CORE, a Japanese NPO specialised in Do-nou technology)
- iv) Strengthening programme monitoring and evaluation

The project will assist local partners to build planning and implementation capacity for infrastructure development programmes as well as strengthen training institutions in the Ministry of Roads. It will address both labour demand and supply, creating employment opportunities for youth as well as strengthening their employability by providing them technical and business skills training as well as advice on establishing and sustaining business.

The new partnership will also promote the level of women participation both as workers and as trained contractors to ensure adequate representation in the road works sector. Minimum of 30% and 40% of all jobs to be created and training opportunities will go for women and youth respectively.

All these interventions are in line with Kenya's Decent Work Country Programme priorities particularly employment creation, youth development, and expansion of social protection.

Poverty, unemployment and prevailing social imbalances are the most pervasive challenges faced today by Kenyans and through the creation of decent youth employment. The Japan- funded project will contribute towards the overall economic and political sustainability of Kenya, one of the leading recipients of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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