



**High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly
“Africa’s development needs: state of implementation of various commitments,
challenges and the way forward”**

**Remarks by Juan Somavia,
Director-General, International Labour Organization
New York
22 September 2008**

Mr President,
Excellencies,

I want to begin by reiterating the commitment of the ILO and myself to Africa’s development. This conviction is deep and abiding—stretching from the Social Summit in Copenhagen to the African Union Extraordinary Summit in Ouagadougou.

Dear friends, this is a time of anxiety and turbulence. Repeated excesses leading to the current financial crisis are eroding confidence in poorly regulated markets. Inequality is widening everywhere. Skyrocketing food prices are hitting the poorest the hardest. And obviously we are off-track in meeting the MDGs.

The present course of globalization is not delivering for the majority - this is the whole meaning of the June 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

The African Union and NEPAD have pointed the way with a clear policy message to the world: if your commitment to Africa is real, then help us generate decent and productive jobs, not just through aid, but through fair trade and financial rules that can permit us to compete on an equal playing field.

It is essential to acknowledge what the leaders of Africa have stated during their Extraordinary Summit in Ouagadougou in 2004 - without decent employment, it will be impossible to reach the MDGs.

Realizing the “Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007-2015” is an opportunity for the international community to deliver its commitments to Africa:

- By promoting workers’ rights;
- By supporting sustainable enterprises for better employment and upgrading the economic activity of women and men in the informal economy;
- By developing social protection systems;
- And by encouraging voice, representation and dialogue.

Now is the time. We must place productive employment and decent work at the centre of economic and social policies: home grown decent work solutions for a vibrant Africa. By working together and joining forces, we can make change happen. Thank you.