

Statement by the Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body,
Ambassador Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo

ECOSOC – Roundtable “Towards a UN comprehensive response to
climate change”

Geneva, July 14th, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, let me say that it is a pleasure for me to participate in this roundtable and present some of ILO’s views on how to promote decent work in the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy.

The importance of labour-related issues to climate change cannot be overstated.

Labour markets are – and will continue to be – affected by the creation and consolidation of greener patterns of production and consumption. In this process, new jobs will be created, old jobs will be substituted, and some jobs will be eliminated.

The task before the ILO and the international community is to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon world offers new economic opportunities for workers, employers and Governments.

A world with less carbon emissions should be a world with more opportunities: workers should be trained to perform innovative environmentally sustainable jobs; employers should facilitate access to

greener technologies; and Governments should share experiences and best practices related to the promotion of decent work in an environmentally sustainable economy.

The current economic crisis, however, present major threats and challenges to decent work and to the environment.

- Around 1.3 billion people in the world are struggling to survive with income under 2 dollars per day (and this is more than 43 per cent of the global workforce). Millions are unemployed and 5.3 billion are without any social security coverage.

- Climate-related disasters, pollution, water and food shortages, loss of biodiversity have affected millions of people and have even created the so-called environmental refugees and displaced people.

But let's be clear: environmental protection and economic growth are not irreconcilable. They are complementary. The economic crisis imposes the need to create jobs, but also offers an opportunity to build **new and more sustainable** patterns of production and consumption.

-In Italy, last week, the G8+6 agreed to reduce in 80% greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. To achieve that goal, economic recovery is important, ~~but~~ ^{and} green jobs are imperative. ^{sustainable}

And the ILO is already doing its part.

The need to enhance green jobs and increase the investment in green technology has been recognized in the "Global Jobs Pact" as part of the strategy leading to a sustainable recovery.

Together with the UNEP, the International Trade Union Confederation and the International Organization of Employers, the ILO has also launched “*The Green Jobs Initiative*”, an instrument to discuss and promote concerted efforts and coherent policies leading to a green economy with decent work for all.

This partnership has produced a first report, which illustrates that clean development can be an efficient way to achieve economic growth and environmentally sound jobs with social inclusion.

This report shows that green jobs are found in many sectors of the economy: from energy supply to recycling; from agriculture and construction to transportation.

Through high-efficiency strategies, these green jobs can help cutting consumption of energy, reducing the waste of raw materials and water; diminishing greenhouse-gas emissions; and restoring biodiversity.

The development of new alternatives of energy supply is a powerful example of high-efficiency strategies. ILO’s report shows that renewable energy creates more jobs than fossil-fuel power plants per unit of installed capacity, per unit of power generated and per dollar invested.

The Brazilian experience confirms that the production of biofuels can play a particularly prominent role in the creation of green jobs in the agriculture and energy sectors.

"The German Alliance for work and Environment", a partnership between the Government, building employers and trade unions to retrofit and replace obsolete equipment in buildings and reduce greenhouse gases emissions has created thousands of green jobs in the **construction sector**.

Over 1 billion people worldwide live in urban slums and lack essential facilities. The construction of insulating buildings and investments in solar energy for social housing has also been a significant source of new jobs.

South Africa is engaged in a project to upgrade housings while reducing energy demand and emissions. The implementation of this project has contributed to create green jobs in the **construction sector** (and, in this case, it has benefited unemployed and underemployed people in the targeted communities).

In many other areas, the creation of jobs that contribute to preserve and restore the environment can be stimulated.

As a major consumer of fossil fuels, the transportation sector is key to the transition to a greener economy. The production of vehicles which are fuel-efficient, hybrid, or use alternative fuels has been a source of new opportunities for workers and employers.

The development of activities which take advantage of products naturally produced by forests has also proved to be a viable and profitable economic activity. It adds value to natural products, creates jobs and preserves the sustainable use of Nature.

In the lead up to the Copenhagen Climate Conference, it is important that the real economy - employers, workers and Governments – shows the political will to protect the environment while promoting economic growth and social inclusion. This will certainly help the negotiators to close the deals and the agreements necessary to strike the right balance and to present a **UN comprehensive response to climate change.**

As a tripartite Organization, the ILO has joined in this effort with its decent work agenda, the Global Jobs Pact and the Green Jobs Initiative.

I thank you.