

Informal Summary  
**2012 High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council**  
**Annual Ministerial Review**  
**National Voluntary Presentations by Kenya, Mauritius and Qatar**

3:00 – 6:00 pm

3 July 2012

The National Voluntary Presentation session was chaired by **H.E. Miloš Koterec**, President of the Economic and Social Council. The moderator for the session was **Mr. Edward Carr**, Associate Professor, Department of Geography at the University of South Carolina, United States.

**National Voluntary Presentation of Kenya**

**H.E. Mr. John Munyes Kiyong'a**, Minister of Labour of Kenya, presented his country's report (document E/2012/57), saying Kenya's "Vision 2030" policy aimed at creating a globally competitive country with a high quality of life. It was anchored on the existence of a skilled, productive and adaptive human resource base able to meet the challenges of a rapidly industrializing economy. A number of gains had been made, including the development of micro and small enterprises, which provided opportunities for 74 per cent of employed people. Some 1,984 such enterprises had been helped to participate in local trade fairs, while 698 had participated in regional exhibitions.

In terms of productivity, he said the draft national policy on productivity had been created this year, while the National Productivity Centre, established in 2002, supported productivity in public and private sectors. Such efforts had led to increased profitability of firms by an average of 10 per cent, reduced waste by up to 20 per cent, and increased employment by up to 50 per cent. Meanwhile, the 2012 draft employment policy and strategy aimed to create more than 500,000 jobs annually and increased access to affordable credit mainly from banks, enterprise funds and microfinance institutions. Key labour market institutions had been created, such as the National Labour Board and Occupational Safety, Health and Injury Benefits Authority.

As for strengthening the links between education, training and industry, he said Kenya had developed the National Training and Attachment Policy (2012) and an online portal to promote industrial training and attachment systems. Some 36,106 trainees had been placed on industrial attachment. Social protection included Kenya's incorporation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its Constitution in 2010. Kenya also had implemented interventions such as cash transfers to orphans and food subsidies for the urban poor.

Turning to policy challenges, he said Kenya was slow in attaining some of the Millennium Development Goals, notably Goal 1 (extreme poverty and hunger), which had been hampered by high unemployment and the slow adoption of appropriate technology, among other factors. Goal 3 (gender equality and women's empowerment) had been slowed by gender gaps in the access to and control of resources, and discriminative cultural and traditional practices. To speed the achievement of the MDGs, Kenya was implementing an agriculture strategy 2010-2020 to create a competitive, modern industry. It also was creating enterprise funds for women and youth, as well as devolved funds, to promote equity and community participation in development. Kenya had set up a Joint Assistance Strategy in 2007 to harmonize external funding with its long-term development strategy.

The Minister saw other emerging challenges in coping with the impacts of climate change, the effects of continued economic and financial slowdown, high population growth and piracy along the Kenyan coastline. Actions Kenya would take to deal with those issues included a national climate change action plan to mainstream those considerations into its budgeting, and partnership development among the Government, private sector, civil society and regional organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD).

The first NVP friend, **H.E. Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri of India**, said Kenya had laid down a solid policy framework for accelerated economic development. He commended the broad array of initiatives to create jobs and enhance productive capacity. Poverty and high unemployment were among Kenya's most persistent problems, and India shared commonalities in trying to overcome them. India shared the need for investment in education, skills training, and women's empowerment. He looked forward to hearing about plans to improve agricultural productivity and strategies that had strengthened productive capacity.

In response, **Mr. Kiyong'a** said Kenya was trying to envision itself as an industrialized country, but it needed resources, especially to support youth job creation, and micro and small enterprise development. Kenya wanted to build information and communications technology parks for people to understand and use various technologies. On agriculture, he said the Government had devolved control over agriculture to the county level, which it hoped would benefit Kenyans. Infrastructure was poor and resources from friends were needed.

Kenya also was working to improve its cash transfer system, so that someone in Nairobi, for example, could more easily send funds to a relative in any village.

The second NVP friend, **Mr. Arthur S. Kafeero**, Minister Counsellor of **Uganda**, said Kenya faced poverty and unemployment challenges. Lessons learned could be carried out to improve policymaking and achieve the Millennium Goals. The East African Community (EAC) countries of Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda were deepening cooperation through the creation of a common market. A key challenge in combating poverty was that unemployment continued to rise; a problem that should be reversed through national and international efforts.

In response, **Mr. Kiyong'a** reiterated that the new Kenyan Constitution would help the country emerge from extreme poverty. A Bill of Rights had been enshrined in the constitution for the first time. Challenges such as piracy or terrorism required international support.

The third NVP friend, **Mr. José M. Salazar-Xirinachs**, Executive Director, Employment Sector, **International Labour Organization**, said the new Constitution was a step forward, as was the "2030 Vision", which had been translated into concrete strategies and actions. He wondered where jobs were going to be created and how growth could be made "more jobs rich". Fundamental issues included competitiveness and productivity promotion. He also asked what performance criteria had made the strengthening of labour market institutions and introduction of performance-based management in the public sector best practices. He enquired what Kenya was doing to tap the full potential of the East African Community.

In response, **Mr. Kiyong'a** emphasized that trade and employment were growing in the East African Community, as seen in the East African Protocol, which allowed for the free movement of persons and labour. That was a good start. Strong bilateral agreements had supported various regional activities. EAC support for infrastructure had led to further

investment in the region, which in turn, had created jobs. In the past, Kenya had operated without a strategy in areas such as occupational safety and health. That had changed, he noted.

### **National Voluntary Presentation of Mauritius**

**H.E. Dr. Hon. V. K. Bunwaree**, Minister of Education and Human Resources of **Mauritius**, began the National Voluntary Presentation by saying that the absence of such resources as oil and gold had always kept Mauritius “on its toes”. Today, Mauritius had a per capita GDP of \$7,500, versus \$260 in 1968, at the time of its independence. The key ingredient of its success was the historic 1977 decision to make education at the primary and secondary levels free. The goal was to have a large pool of highly skilled labourers, as well as a high-productivity, high wage economy. Schools had been built in deprived areas to increase access to and improve pre-primary education,. Special needs education, multilingualism and alternative learning methods had also been a focus.

In terms of social welfare, Mauritius provided free health care and assistance to vulnerable groups. Orphans, widows and people with special needs also received a non-contributory monthly pension. Government spending on social security and welfare had risen from \$323 million in 2004/2005 to \$587 million in 2010, an 82 per cent jump. To support job creation and employability, Mauritius continued to invest in training, with a regulatory framework that promoted decent work. Since 2006, Mauritius had created an average of 9,400 jobs annually, and supported people through training, “re-skilling” and “multi-skilling”. The Minister noted that there was a skills mismatch that undermined efforts to create high quality decent jobs for all. Mauritius was accelerating the placement of students aged 15 years and older in companies, and introducing entrepreneurship education as a subject in secondary schools.

Turning to productivity, he said the labour productivity index had improved from 103.1 in 2001 to 137.9 in 2011, showing a 3 per cent annual average growth. To address climate change, the “Maurice Ile Durable” programme aimed to reduce dependence on fossil fuels through efficient energy use and increased use of renewable energy. As for the future, the Minister stated that Mauritius was continuing to diversify its economy, noting that it was consolidating manufacturing, tourism and agri-industries and promoting financial services and real estate. It would make the most of untapped marine resources and develop a “blue economy”. Future challenges included slow population and workforce growth, and an ageing population. External economic, social and demographic forces were more likely to shape the challenges and opportunities for job creation.

In sum, **Dr. Bunwaree** said that Mauritius would continuously prepare its workforce for a changing labour market, develop creative methods for education and training, balance social and economic development, fight poverty, and develop high quality, decent jobs for all.

The NVP friend, **Mr. Thomas Selby Pillay**, Minister Counsellor, **Seychelles**, said Mauritius, a small island developing State like his country, had done a “remarkable” job of managing youth unemployment in the wake of the global financial crisis. He asked for more detail on how that had been accomplished.

**Dr. Bunwaree** stated that Mauritius had carried out socioeconomic and labour law reforms, whereby measures now protected laid-off workers. When the crisis started, employees and employers were supported. The “work fair” programme provided subsidy or allowances during a one year transition period. Monetary policy also had been used to help the private sector move “fairly easily” through the many challenges it faced. Job creation was maintained in several sectors, including information and communications technologies.

## Further Discussion

**Mr. Carr** asked both the presenters from Kenya and Mauritius about gender issues.

**Dr. Bunwaree** said the latest legislation before the National Assembly outlined that one third of candidates for elected posts must be women. There was also a quota system in place that favoured women in small enterprises. From an education point of view, there was absolute gender equality. Girls performed significantly better in primary, secondary and tertiary education. One difficulty Mauritius was working to correct was in the area of equal pay for equal work.

**Mr. Kinyong'a** said Kenya had institutionalized support for women, especially in control of resources and in education. He then turned the floor over to **H.E. Ms. Naomi Shaban**, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development of **Kenya**, who was seated in the audience. Ms. Shaban stated that her Ministry had been created 10 years ago. The Constitution was unique in that not more than two thirds of either gender should occupy any elected body. In the area of economic empowerment, the Women Enterprise Fund and the Youth Enterprise Fund were established to ensure that women were prioritized, a deliberate effort by the Government to enable access by women to commercial loans.

**Ms. Stephanie Kage** of **Germany** questioned whether foreign direct investment played a positive or negative role for employment in both countries.

**Dr. Bunwaree** responded by saying that foreign direct investment had progressed well through the years, including through the financial crisis. All policies were geared towards attracting foreign investment. There was a dynamic programme for road, airport and port infrastructure, as well as strong regulatory institutions.

**Mr. Kiyong'a** responded that foreign direct investment was creating employment, promoting trade, and supporting information and communications technologies. There were no negatives.

**Mr. Carr** then asked both presenters about climate change adaptation, and how the countries were diversifying their economies.

**Dr. Bunwaree** responded that Mauritius was promoting climate change adaptation in all primary and secondary schools. Children today were teaching their parents new lessons, including about "rain harvesting" and composting. There was also an ambitious project to install photovoltaic fuel cells on school rooftops.

With respect to economic diversification, he said Mauritius had initially started its development several years ago with import substitution and then moved to creating new pillars of the economy. For example, Mauritius transformed the sugar industry into the cane industry, as sugar could no longer be produced in the same way. A new focus on the information and communications technology economy also took shape. The most important challenge was addressing a mismatch in skills and demand for labour.

For Kenya, **Mr. Kiyong'a** said that the challenge was in moving away from agriculture to a more industrialized economy. Another key question centred on how to exploit Kenya's newly discovered oil resources.

## National Voluntary Presentation of Qatar

**Mr Saleh bin Mohammed al-Nabit, Secretary General, General Secretariat for Development Planning**, provided the National Voluntary Presentation of Qatar. He began by stating that his country had witnessed very rapid growth, averaging 16.2 per cent in real terms between 2004 and 2010. It had the highest per capita GDP globally, propelled by the strength of its hydrocarbon industry.

Qatar's national development strategy 2011-2016 was comprised of sector strategies, as well as ministry and agency strategies. It focused on education, training and labour reforms as vehicles for social and economic transformation. Continued economic success would be based on Qataris' ability to compete globally, therefore, modern health care and education systems needed to be created. The challenges to developing human capital included underachievement in math, science and English, as well as an under-awareness of the value of education, and capacity constraints in teaching and research.

As a result of this educational underachievement, the Qatari population often lacked skills to take advantage of employment, and like elsewhere, young people had been most affected by unemployment. Qataris also left the workforce early, possibly due to a pension system that favoured early retirement. Another challenge was to attract a qualified labour force. Qatar sought to improve the living and working conditions to keep qualified workers in their jobs, notably by guaranteeing residence to migrant workers meeting certain eligibility criteria. The country also sought to create an environment conducive to women's participation in the labour market.

**Mr. al-Nabit** stated that Qatar had a new long-term national plan, named "Vision 2030", based on the four pillars of human, social, economic and environmental development, which were considered in an integrated fashion. It had sought a phased change to a competitive economy, and education and training were essential to meeting that aspiration.

The first NVP friend, **H.E. Mr. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain**, Minister of Labour and Employment and Minister of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of **Bangladesh**, noted with appreciation that Vision 2030 was based on the four pillars mentioned and defined broad future trends. He asked how Qatar was addressing the needs of a rapidly growing school-age population. He also asked about the main obstacles to supporting productive participation in the labour force, while attracting qualified expatriate workers in all fields.

The second NVP friend, **Mr. Nejmeddine Lakhel** of **Tunisia**, said that, while recognizing the importance of the energy sector, Vision 2030 had foreseen the transition to a knowledge-based, diversified economy, with an emphasis on education, transportation, financial services and manufacturing. He asked about matching the skills of young people with the labour market, which was a critical concern for many Arab countries, wondering how Qatar was overcoming those challenges.

**Mr. Enriguillo del Rosaioo Ceballos**, the representative of the **Dominican Republic**, noted that the focus of the national development strategy on education and health-care initiatives, while respecting Qatari culture and traditions, was a correct one. He inquired how Qatar would ensure that economic investment would lead to a more educated, healthy and "more developed" population, and also asked about women's inclusion in the national productive sector.

In response to the question on education challenges, **Mr. Al-Nabit** stated that the education system had faced a number of obstacles, including a lack of awareness about

education or the need to choose specializations. Another challenge concerned a lack of teaching capacity to ensure follow-up throughout the educational path. Qatar had studied those shortcomings and subsequently developed solutions. Under the national development strategy, one project targeted schools in small communities, and worked to encourage students to continue with their studies.

Regarding women's participation in the labour market, he described a programme to increase women's participation to 40 per cent by 2016. Qatar's legislation met international norms and standards, but needed to be modified to address a number of shortcomings. Women's participation in the private sector was still very low. In this regard, an institute was created to help small- and medium-sized enterprises with support from Qatar's central bank.

As for the health-care situation, he said Qatar had emphasized infrastructure and ensuring prevention, providing primary health care and raising awareness about the dangers linked to certain types of conduct. As a final note on education, he said that a more positive vision of education was needed to change perceptions.