

ILO comments on the MOPAN Report and Conclusions

1. The ILO thanks the nine donors who participated in MOPAN for having selected our Organisation for the 2006 review, and for the positive and constructive feedback received. The report is very timely in the context of worldwide and UN system-wide preoccupation of making the UN into a more coherent, more effective and better coordinated system. The main points covered in the report coincide with areas already identified by the ILO, where there is a need for organisational performance to be enhanced in areas such as results-based management, strategic focus, visibility and advocacy, communications, country programming and more effective integration with, and links to UNCT programming and coordination.
2. The ILO has been invited to comment on the findings of the report and has a number of general and specific remarks, which were shared with several MOPAN donor representatives on 27 November 2006 in Geneva. We have organised our comments around three main themes.

Visibility of ILO country partnerships

3. One conclusion strongly emphasised in the report relates to the uneven visibility of the ILO in multilateral partnership processes, depending on whether or not the ILO has a resident country office. This element is being seriously considered by the Office as part of its forthcoming field structure review in 2007, requested by the Governing Body. The purpose of the exercise is to ensure that the ILO field structure can better respond to the challenges of implementing the Decent Work Agenda, in the light of the conclusions of the UN World Summit Outcome in September 2005; the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration in July 2006; and against the background of the High-Level Panel Recommendations on UN reform.
4. It is clear that at this time the ILO is not in a position to create a large number of new country offices. The Office is considering more cost-effective options, such as attributing additional coordination and responsibilities to technical cooperation staff, as well as gradually creating national coordinator positions which could then be attached to UNDP or UNRC in countries where the ILO is not represented by a resident office.
5. It should be borne in mind that, for several reasons, the ILO's technical cooperation programme is smaller than that of a number of international organisations, UN funds and Agencies. On the one hand, technical assistance is only one means of action of the Organisation, which also has an important and historic standard-setting and advocacy responsibility and a substantial agenda in the area of research. The MOPAN methodology focuses on the development cooperation role of the agencies under review and does not necessarily capture other components of their mandates.
6. On the other hand, ILO technical assistance focuses on the transfer of know-how and capacity building, rather than on large scale operations carried out by agencies involved with humanitarian relief or investment projects. This may explain why ILO presence in countries may be more discrete than other organisations e.g. those that were reviewed in 2006.
7. Another reason for the ILO's small share of multilateral ODA may be the insufficient attention paid in the past by the development community to decent work and employment as the most sustainable way out of poverty. The issues of employment and decent work have not been very visible on the MDG agenda, or on national development frameworks

like UNDAF and PRS for a long time. Traditional international strategies for poverty alleviation have focused on increasing people's access to food, water, health and education, as well as to promoting economic growth through a mix of economic, trade, fiscal, monetary and investment policies. The underlying assumption was that economic growth would generate adequate jobs and income as an inevitable by-product.

8. Empirical research does not corroborate an automatic and inevitable correlation between economic growth and decent employment as we increasingly witness growth without job creation or with the creation of poor quality jobs. On the other hand, investment in education, health and productivity of the workforce will allow countries to play a meaningful role in the international division of production and trade. Only recently have these misperceptions been addressed as the UN World Summit and ECOSOC placed Decent Work at the core of the international development agenda.
9. The number and volume of ILO operational programmes in a country has an inevitable impact on the ILO's visibility. So has the voice and empowerment that is granted to its national constituents, namely Ministries of Labour and Employers' and Workers' Organisations. We trust that that the MOPAN country coordinators who perceived ILO's country role as insufficient, will offer their much-needed political and financial support to mainstreaming employment and decent work issues on national development agendas so as to pave the way for a stronger and more effective ILO presence.
10. Finally, it appears from the report that the ILO should further invest in disseminating and publicising its work to a wider range of national development actors, beyond immediate partners and recipients of its technical cooperation programmes. This point has been well received. In future, ILO offices and field staff will shall clearly engage in more frequent and intensive dialogue with donor embassies and missions to enhance their knowledge of the ILO's contribution to development. At the same time, while the report states that in Africa the ILO was less proactive in sharing information, some MOPAN country coordinators have not been proactive in seeking ILO information either, according to reports received from ILO field offices concerned. This may have a bearing on the overall findings of the report, which do not do full justice to ILO activities in a number of countries.

Working with civil society

11. Another important set of considerations contained in the report concerns the role of the ILO in dialogue with, and support to, civil society. Here it should be emphasised that the ILO, with its tripartite structure, is the only UN agency that incorporates civil society – namely Employers' and Workers' Organisations – in its decision-making process. This determines a hierarchy in the way that the ILO relates to civil society: employers' and workers' organisations are ILO constituents and are institutional partners and recipients of ILO's assistance, both globally and in countries. From this point of view, the ILO's involvement with civil society is institutional and mandatory, whilst other civil society organisations, such as NGOs, may indeed be considered as occasional partners and recipients.
12. The effectiveness of ILO support to building the capacity of employers' and workers' organisations depends very much on a variety of national factors, including the structure of the economy and the labour market, the state of freedom of association, the maturity of social dialogue processes and institutions. It also depends on the level of resources that the ILO is able to mobilise for direct support to its constituent organisations. In addition to

capacity building, the ILO systematically associates employers' and workers' organisations with the planning and monitoring of its own technical cooperation programmes and favours their active participation in consultative processes together with other civil society actors on national development priorities.

Inter-agency coordination and harmonisation

13. The ILO recognises that the existence of permanent country offices also has an implication on its capacity to effectively participate in national coordination processes. The arguments made in paragraph 3 of this paper on the scope of the forthcoming review of the ILO field structure are also relevant. The review may also wish to consider the level of decentralisation of the decision-making authority and resource allocation, bearing in mind that the ILO, as a global public organisation, has to ensure consistent standards in relation to the effectiveness of its working process and accountability.
14. The ILO is currently in the process of establishing Decent Work Country Programmes as the overall framework and organising principle of ILO action at the country level. Decent Work Country Programmes focus on a limited number of objectives and outcomes shared with and owned by the ILO's tripartite constituents. The launch of Decent Work Country Programmes represents not only the translation of the principles of result-based management principles to field activities, but also the channel for mainstreaming the Decent Work Agenda in national development processes.
15. In all the countries under review, the ILO is elaborating, and in some cases has already finalised, Decent Work Country Programmes, based on a thorough assessment of the needs and priorities of its constituents and solidly anchored in national development priorities as reflected in UNDAF and PRS. The report does however make reference to the ILO's insufficient participation in local coordination mechanisms in some countries. This is not surprising since the ILO is neither a funding nor a coordinating agency. In fact the ILO actively participates in the work of the UNDG on these issues, aimed at developing a common UN system policy and approach.
16. Two additional elements are also necessary to enhance the ILO's contribution to local coordination and harmonisation processes. The first condition is that the values and concerns of the ILO's tripartite constituency be adequately reflected in government-led national priority-setting exercises. The second condition is that mechanisms for inter-agency cooperation be streamlined and clarified, including the respective roles of the UNDP and Specialised Agencies. This issue is also highlighted in the report of the High-level Panel on UN Reform.