jobsforafrica

LAUNCH OF THE JOBS FOR AFRICA FOUNDATION

GENEVA, 3 NOVEMBER 2016

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Chair: Mr Jamal Belahrach
Moderator: Mr John Sibi-Okumu

Opening Remarks

Mr Frederick Muia, IOE Senior Adviser and Secretary of the Jobs for Africa Foundation (JfA Foundation) introduced the moderator, Mr John Sibi-Okumu[1], a renowned Kenyan broadcast journalist with moderating experience at UN General Assembly level, whose role would be to guide the panellists and participants through the launch as it traced the African growth story and explored ways and means of translating sustainable economic growth into jobs, especially for Africa's youth.

Mr Sibi-Okumu recalled that the JfA Foundation was an initiative of the African employers' organizations, who, together with their social partner counterparts, had come up with a Blueprint for Jobs in Africa[2], the operationalization of which would be implemented via the Foundation. In short, the Foundation would pave the way for the realization of the shared objective of sustaining growth and accelerating the pace of job creation.

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1 A short biography of the Chair, the Moderator and many of the panellists may be found here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03__JfA_Launch_Speaker_Bios__final_.pdf.

2 The Blueprint for Jobs for Africa may be accessed here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-04-15__C-427_Blueprint_for_Jobs_in_Africa_-_web_version.pdf

He introduced the Foundation's President, Mr Jamal Belahrach, who began by thanking ILO Director-General Guy Ryder for the role he had played from the outset three years earlier, when the African employers had launched a task force to seek solutions to the challenge of Africa's unemployment situation, especially youth unemployment. The blueprint referred to above had been an outcome of this work and now the task of actively addressing the challenge was at hand. In outlining the way ahead, Mr Belahrach was keen to point out the inclusive nature of the Foundation and the need to view it as a partnership of stakeholders that included the IOE, the ILO, Business Africa, the trade unions, the European Commission, and private enterprises, among others.

In her opening remarks, IOE Secretary-General Ms Linda Kromjong stressed that the launch marked the beginning of a new phase in the initiative – earlier phases had included the 2015 Casablanca Declaration, followed by the Blueprint for Jobs in Africa[3]. She looked ahead to a bright future for the initiative with the support and engagement of all the participants[4]. Key to success would be the establishment of an effective governance structure, which would be assured by a multi-stakeholder board.

Speaking for Business Africa, Secretary-General Ms Jacqueline Mugo affirmed the organization's support for the spirit and idea behind the JfA Foundation. The expressions of commitment at this launch were important, she noted, as the beginning set the tone for the future, which should also be characterized by inclusivity and robust governance. Ms Mugo echoed Ms Kromjong's good wishes for success.

The final remarks in the opening session were delivered by Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, who conveyed the appreciation of his organization for the initiative, underlining that the validity of any initiative in the name of development depended on its ability to generate gainful employment, especially for younger people. He underlined the importance of "policy coherence and convergence" regarding the "Double 30", which meant targeting opportunities for the under-30s, and supporting organizations with fewer than 30 employees. He called for recognition of the responsibility to invest in human development.

The moderator invited the first panellists, Mr Amine Tazi-Riffi of McKinsey Global Institute and Ms Azita Berar Awad of the ILO, to the podium while explaining the three-chapter format of the event[5], which would also allow for interventions from the participants.

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[3] Idem

[4] A list of registered participants may be found here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03__Jobs_for_Africa_Foundation_Launch_-_3_Nov._2016__list_of_participants_.pdf and at Annex II.

[5] The Programme may be found here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03____JfA_Launch_Background___Programme__final_.pdf

Panel I: **The state of African economies and the employment challenge**

Mr Tazi-Riffi began by recalling the McKinsey Global Institute's work in Africa of five or six years earlier encapsulated in **Lions on the Move I**, which he described as having taken place in "very different times" - there had been a lot of interest around African growth and the continent was being "rediscovered" after two lost decades. The 2000s had gone well and the McKinsey Global Institute had worked to understand the underlying factors behind that growth, its quality and potential for sustainability, and for job creation in the formal sector.

He noted that today's scenario was different. In September, following one year of research, McKinsey Global Institute had published their updated perspective with **Lions on the Move II**[6]. The new cycle was post Arab-spring, post the super peak in the commodity boom – the growth figures were just not the same and the macro-economic situation was deteriorating. This posed a problem for the Jobs for Africa Foundation in Mr Tazi-Riffi's view, as "we cannot be talking about jobs… if we are not talking about growth". The key was therefore first to secure the foundations for growth.

The impact of this new reality on the African continent would, he predicted, be "very nuanced and very differentiated", with dual deficits developing. He cautioned that it would be very hard to rebalance these unless the fundamentals were fixed. Impacts would be differentiated depending on exposure to hard currency, but also across sectors.

6 Lions on the Move II may be accessed here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03__McKinsey_Global_Institute_-_Lions_on_the_Move_II.pdf

He noted that the job-creating sectors were not necessarily those that sustained long-term growth. For example, manufacturing may create some jobs, but its primary objective was to secure hard currency through exports or import substitution and support the current account, but the service sector may create a lot of jobs right away. Without the support of hard currency, when things went well, there may be a return to an "eighties-like" scenario that required structural adjustment.

Mr Tazi-Riffi went on to point out that a lot of the job creation realised over the last ten years had been in services and consumer-facing industries. However, given the new macro-economic cycle, the McKinsey Global Institute's view was that this was not truly sustainable unless sources of export, other than raw materials, could be found. This was why industry as a whole - and not just manufacturing - was so important; without hard currency, the growth corridor of the continent would be limited and job quality would not follow.

The current situation could be viewed with both optimism and caution – optimism, for the long-term growth corridor given that the engines for growth were still present, and caution with regard to hard currency and macro-economic stability. On the plus side, Africa's position in the global economy continued to reinforce itself (despite the impact of slower growth in emerging markets) and there continued to be traction domestically that was linked essentially to urbanization, and growing banking, telecommunications and technology sectors. Mr Tazi-Riffi called for vigilance in keeping the important parameters in check to avoid shocks down the line – particularly with regard to hard currency.

At the end of the day, he recalled, what really created jobs was companies. The new McKinsey Global Institute publication had tried to focus more than its predecessor on African champions ("the lions") – those up and coming companies that would structure the new space. While a lot of growth would be generated by SMEs and very small enterprises, in his view, quality jobs would require a major driver and the McKinsey Global Institute had tried to identify and understand who the winners and the losers would be. Among both countries and companies, the reformers and quality-seekers would grow faster.

The winners – the real engines of growth - would be the companies that refocus today on fundamentals, on the right set of strategies, that do not over-diversify geographically or in terms of their business portfolio. These companies would create real management platforms and skills – not just at the top, but all the way to the bottom; they would truly invest, move away from cronyism and paternal capitalism and reinvent themselves in a flight towards quality.

The second speaker for this topic was Ms Azita Berar Awad, Director of the ILO's Employment Policy Department. Ms Berar Awad began by congratulating the stakeholders for arriving at this point after a few years of planning. What was important now was to move towards implementation. She noted that her presentation[7] would be made available after the meeting.

[7] PowerPoint presentation by Ms Azita Berar Awad may be accessed here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03__JfA_Launch_Ppt_Azita_Berar_Awad__ILO__Africa_Economic_Outlook.pdf

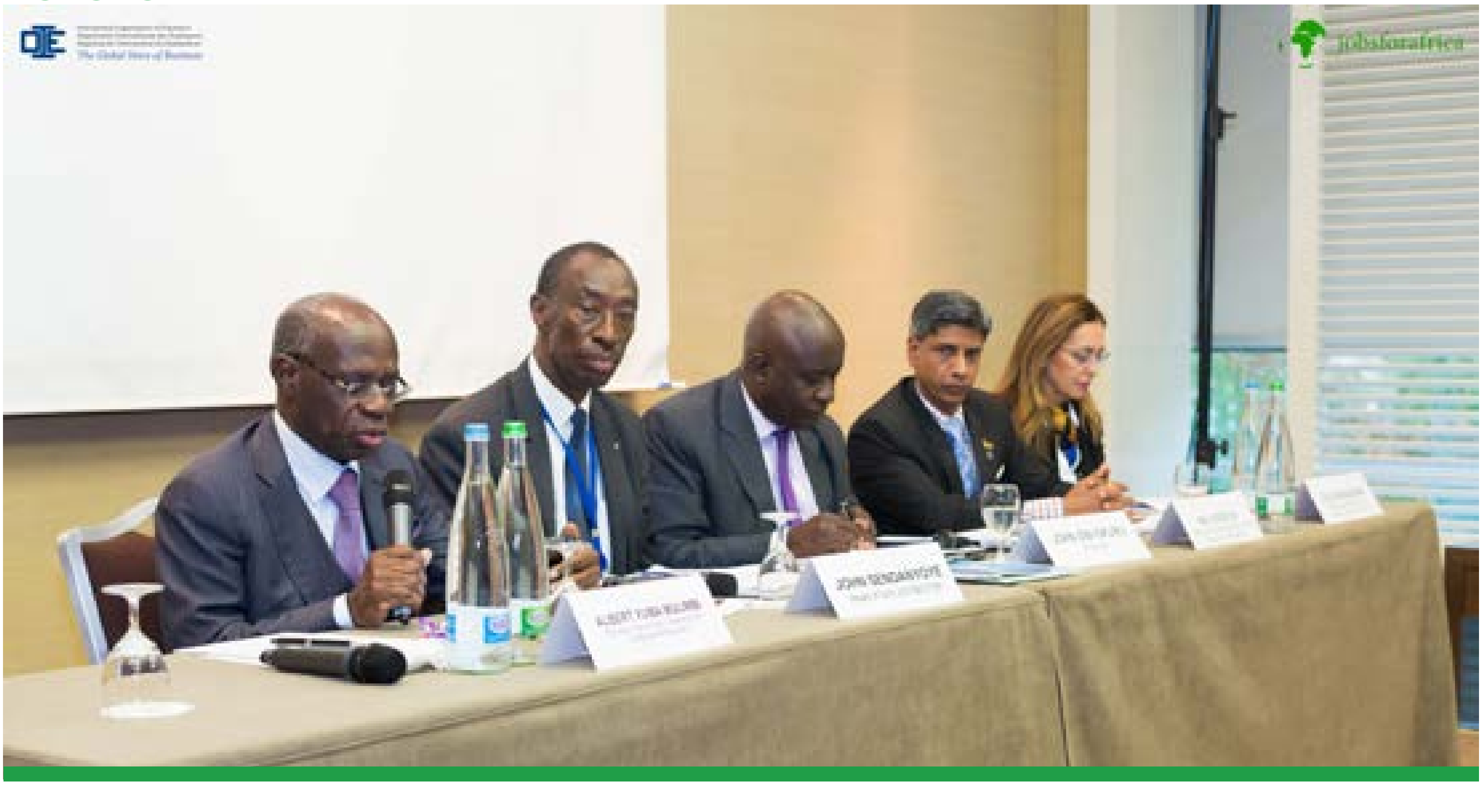
Ms Berar Awad continued by recalling Africa's positive growth story, as well as the attractiveness of the continent in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), and, even if a decrease in FDI had been recorded in more recent times, the reduction of extreme poverty was something to be proud of.

She said that the ILO's work on the continent - the research into countries, sectors and companies - had documented many success stories of job creation and productivity gains. The question here today was whether growth could become more inclusive.

Unlike the previous speaker, Ms Berar Awad felt that ensuring growth was not enough – the focus needed to be on securing patterns of inclusive growth that led to quality jobs.

It was important, she went on, to view Africa's youth not as a burden but as a dividend, with potential to be tapped. For this, it would be necessary to ensure macro-economic frameworks for job creation; to examine the most successful models and consider what investments needed to be made in the different industrial sectors, as well as in agriculture and in manufacturing. Despite Africa's youth being better educated than their parents, there also had to be an examination of the skills and competences needed by the labour market given the current mismatch. It was not just a matter of investing in education and skills, there was also a need to invest in, and promote, quality job creating opportunities.

For Ms Azita Berar Awad, there was also a need to better connect the growth story with the jobs story. One way of doing this was by taking a sectoral approach, including focussing on agriculture.



Panel II: Transforming African economies: the critical role of investments in key sectors

Mr Sibi-Okumu encouraged the speakers to consider the role of investment in transforming African economies, and particularly the critical role of investment in key sectors.

Mr Albert Yuma Mulimbi, President of the Board of Gécamines and of the Federation of Congolese Enterprises, took the floor.

He began by noting that investment was the key to economic development, the very engine of the economic system. It was clear that to build roads, energy sources and manufactured goods, you needed investors and money. It followed that a structured banking system was required and this was sadly lacking in some African countries.

Coming from the mining sector, Mr Yuma was mindful of the importance of foreign investment but noted that overseas investors often repatriated their profits. This meant that when we talked about investment in Africa, we had to create the conditions for local investment so that the profit generated would benefit local communities.

Progress was already being made; Mr Yuma referred to the support of France in the form of a guarantee fund to smaller investors in the banking sector, which would greatly favour those structures that supported local investment and reduce reliance on foreign investment.

It was also important that investment be selective and he pointed to two important sectors for Africa. Emphasizing that employment was a human, security and moral issue, he said that it was especially important to invest in employment for youth, and especially young women. Two sectors were important: agriculture and industry. Tied to the second was the need for effective vocational training to enhance technical expertise in the industrial sector.

The third area for investment was public administration. Mr Yuma highlighted a stable context and legal certainty as pre-requisites for investment, which required training and paying public administrators appropriately, as well as recognizing and valuing the work that they were doing.

The next speaker, Mr John Sendanyoye of the ILO's Sectoral Policies Department, expressed his agreement with much that had gone before. He underlined that the drivers of African economies were diverse. This meant that it was important to consider the comparative advantages of different countries in different sectors and to identify which sectors were most likely to generate employment. Having said that, he was keen to point out one major constant across all the African economies: 70 per cent of the African population was under 30 years of age and most Africans remained rural. We could not therefore consider key sectors in most countries without also considering agriculture.

The focus today, however, had to be on modern agriculture supported by other activities and growing agri-processing capacity in the rural areas. This would increase rural incomes, reduce international migration and enhance urban security by providing opportunities for young people in rural areas.

Investment, Mr Sendanyoye continued, was also required in contiguous supportive infrastructure, both physical and social: roads, healthcare, education and training that produced the skills required by the labour market, energy etc., as well as the rule of law and national security. Investment was also needed in social dialogue and Mr Sendanyoye took the opportunity to highlight the key role played by social dialogue in achieving the Blueprint for Jobs in Africa and to be played in the work of the JfA Foundation going forward.

On behalf of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Ms Leila Mokadem took the floor to set out the Bank's approach to investment at a time of transformation of the organization's business model to better respond to Africa's emerging challenges, the need to scale up job creation and productive employment, especially in the light of the growing youth unemployment crisis.

Ms Mokadem began with some key statistics: 70 per cent of the African population is under 30 years' old; every month, one million young people enter the job market; every year the working population grows by about 18 million and 80 per cent of jobs are in the informal economy. The question was how could structural transformation of African economies reverse the trend?

She noted that Africa had to take a long-term view, saying "the future belongs to those who prepare for it today". It was important for Africa to catch up with the world as it went through the fourth industrial revolution and not to miss out. This meant a shift to digitalization, material sciences, biotechnology and artificial intelligence, and a move away from over dependence on commodities and extractive industries. This would require African governments to invest in and reward engagement in inclusive economic growth and productive employment in energy, agriculture, manufacturing and other industries with potential for higher growth and value added.

For its part, the AfDB was refocusing activities towards the "High 5" – the five main channels for the Bank to deliver its work and improve the quality of growth in Africa: feeding Africa; lighting up Africa; integrating Africa; industrializing Africa and improving living standards. Three months before, the AfDB had launched its Jobs for Youth in Africa Initiative, a flagship programme designed to stimulate the creation of 25 million jobs with the next ten years.

Three billion dollars of support would be mobilized towards youth entrepreneurs with a focus on business incubation and skills enhancement.

In partnership with the European Investment Bank, the AfDB would soon be launching the Boost Africa Initiative, providing 80 million euros to more than 2,000 entrepreneurs, allowing them to create around 7,500 direct jobs and 500,000 indirect jobs. In parallel, the AfDB was developing a youth employment enabling index.

In terms of sector, the Bank was refocusing investment towards the agricultural sector to enhance opportunities for both school leavers and graduates in urban and rural areas. The view was that agriculture should be treated as a business rather than a way of life, which would make it more appealing for young people. In addition, the Bank had launched a special programme to build entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector, called "Empowering novel agri-business-led initiatives", which would help create 1.5 million jobs in the food and agri-business sector in Africa, projected to be worth one trillion dollars by 2030.

Ms Mokadem concluded her intervention with a call to action, saying "Time is not on our side…job creation for youth employment has to be handled urgently and through building strong partnerships among key players and financiers." She said that the launch of the JfA Foundation offered common ground for such partnership and affirmed the AfDB's commitment to act together with the other players.

The participants welcomed HE Mr Raj Sookun, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, who would present[8] the economic miracle of his country.

His Excellency began by providing the historical context of Mauritius for the country's journey to success. Having passed through Portuguese, Dutch, French and finally British hands, Mauritius had gained independence in 1968. The country had no indigenous population, and so could be considered the only African country that had been built on migration. Today, Mauritius was composed of a multi-cultural, multi-religious, population from around the world, leading its government to adopt the motto "Unity in Diversity".

In 1968, the GDP of Mauritius was only 250 dollars per capita. The country had no minerals and few natural resources; the volcanic island could support only the cultivation of sugar cane. There had been high unemployment, a poorly educated population, some ethnic and political tensions and cyclones. Nobel-prizewinning economist James Meade of the London School of Economics had predicted that Mauritius was doomed to fail for its reliance on a single crop: sugar.

However, thanks to visionary leadership and the right policy choices, Mauritius had turned the challenges into opportunities and invested in its biggest resource: its people. Free education, exam fees, healthcare and pensions, and a law enacted to make education compulsory until the age of 16 all contributed to progress. But the single most important step had been to diversify the economy by investing in manufacturing and tourism, among others.

His Excellency concluded by urging other African nations to take inspiration from the success of Mauritius and to implement the right policies to make success a reality.

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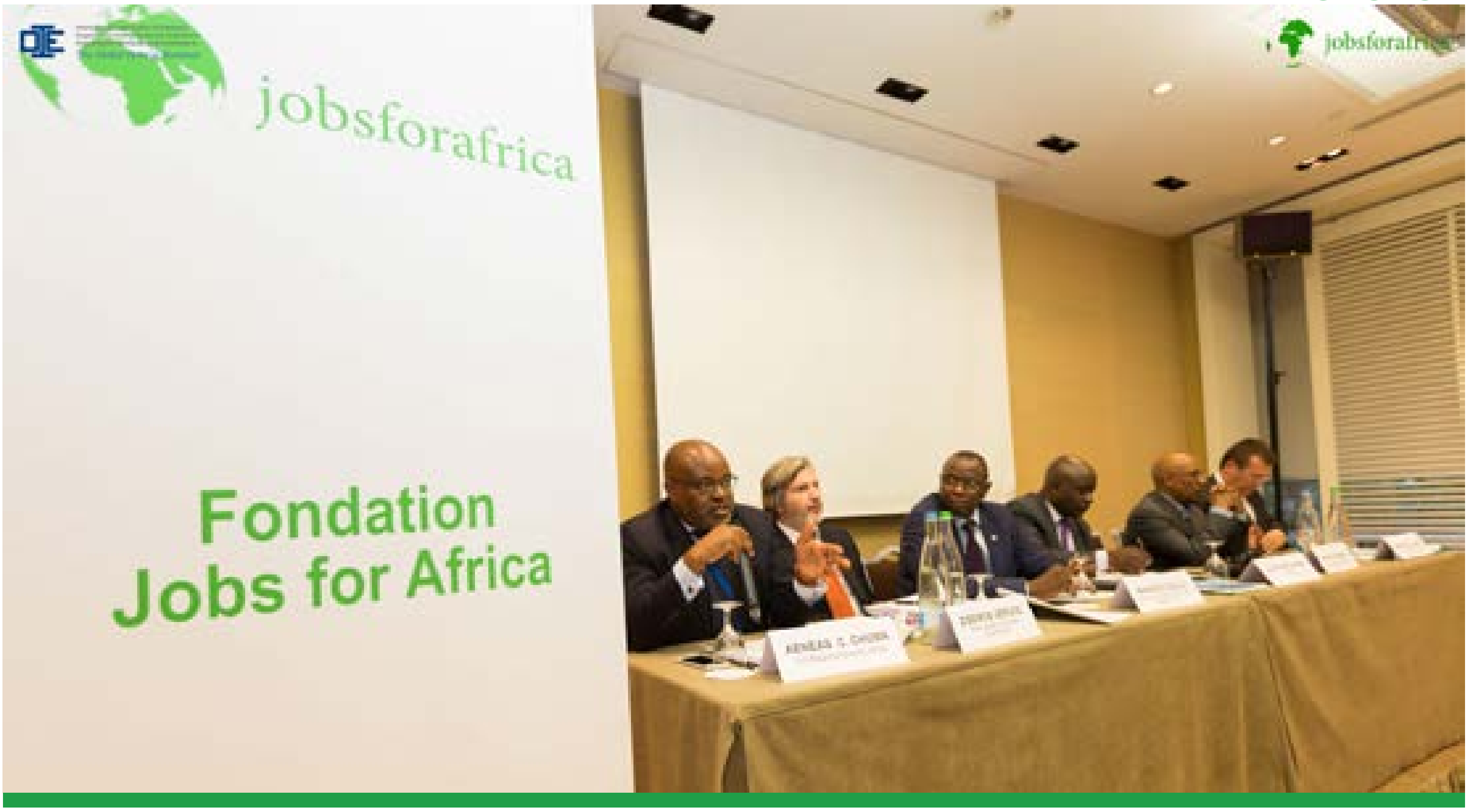
8 PowerPoint Presentation by HE Mr Raj Sookun may be accessed here: http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/ioe_documents/publications/Working%20at%20Regional%20Level/Africa/EN/_2016-11-03__Ppt_Presentation_HE_Raj_Sookun_-_Mauritius_Economic_Miracle.pdf



Panel III: **Building partnerships for employment and skills in Africa**

The ILO's Regional Director for Africa, Mr Aeneas Chuma, took the floor. He began by stating his agreement with many of the previous observations and wished to make a particular point about growth.

While it was clear that, over the last 10 - 20 years, African economies had grown, it was also clear that insufficient numbers of jobs had been created to absorb the large numbers of young Africans entering the job market each year. That growth had, however, been accompanied by inequality. The real debate was therefore not about growth – the importance of macro-economic growth was a given - but it was essential to be clear on the type of growth being targeted. For Mr Chuma, growth was needed that generated decent jobs with decent incomes.

How to arrive at that was also an important question. To date, the growth of African economies had been based on the trade of primary products with no value addition or beneficiation. It was essential now to target the beneficiation, the value addition, of industrialization. As an example, rather than export coffee beans, Africa had to move to exporting coffee.

To achieve this, Africa had to address three challenges. The first was modernizing, updating and expanding infrastructure, including reliable, accessible and affordable power generation, without which the shift to value-added industrialization would be impeded. The second challenge was the size of African economies – integration was essential to make the smaller countries attractive to investors with expectations of accessing larger regional markets. The third was the issue of skills: the jobs were not there to absorb young people with skills and at the same time there was a skills mismatch.

These three challenges needed to be addressed for progress to be made in terms of creating decent jobs. But, he went on, no discussion about jobs would be complete without recognition of the role of entrepreneurship – it was unlikely, given the advances in technology and productivity, that economies would ever be able to generate enough jobs to absorb the numbers of job seekers. Partnerships were important, he concluded – with the AfDB, the Economic Commission for Africa, among others, to encourage the creation of local conditions that favoured risk taking and entrepreneurship, as well as investment in added-value production.

Speaking for the European Commission, Mr Zissimos Vergos, Team Leader, Private Sector Development Policy, began by emphasizing the role of social inclusion in economic development. He referred also to the experience of Mauritius in developing its value chains as one to be inspired by.

Mr Vergos went on to highlight the 2030 Development Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a breakthrough for its recognition of the need for a triple bottom-line economy, noting that countries that managed their financial, social and environmental advances were the ones that would progress in a sustainable way.

He applauded the JfA Foundation as a marketplace of ideas to make African economies more proactive in attracting investment, adding that recent history had shown that once the framework conditions were right, investors moved in. This was why the EU external investment plan was working to put together a big risk capital and guarantee facility to boost investment patterns in line with the philosophy of the SDGs, with Africa as one of the focal geographic areas.

Mr Vergos was followed by Mr Mamadou Diallo, Director of Human Rights and Trade Union Rights for the ITUC. Mr Diallo began by thanking all involved in the JfA Foundation, and especially Mr Jamal Belahrach, for the work on the project which had moved it to this point of implementation. Both “sweet and sour” discussions between the parties in the past had nevertheless concluded with a firm commitment from all sides. The partnership was one founded on social dialogue, which must remain central to both the initiative and Africa’s future going forward.

Echoing previous speakers, Mr Diallo highlighted the problem that growth had not been inclusive. On the plus side, however, was the potential of Africa’s youth – 420 million young people, which must be harnessed though productive quality employment.

Mr Diallo welcomed the JfA Foundation as a platform for proposing answers. In his view, a sectoral approach was important – this meant a firm focus on agriculture, with 70 – 80 per cent of the population engaged in this area. The second focus must be on industrialization, with the transformation of Africa’s raw materials taking place internally. Agreeing with other speakers, Mr Diallo said that Africa could not be developed “from the outside”. This was why both investment and partnerships – the themes of the day’s discussions – were so important. This included public-private partnerships.

In his capacity as Deputy Director, Mr Emmanuel Julien spoke for the ILO's Enterprise Department. Mr Julien began by congratulating the IOE and Business Africa for the timeliness of the JfA initiative. The view of his department was that there could be no jobs in Africa without a strong private sector. While FDI and remittances were important, Mr Julien said that what Africa needed more than anything was self-generated growth and enhanced empowerment through value chains, which were becoming increasingly intra-regional. Jobs meant training, self-confidence and opportunities. Furthermore, he went on, they meant individual and collective development and social stability. For Mr Julien, acknowledging the causality chain was core to the development and implementation of the ILO's programmes in Africa: there were no jobs without enterprises, no enterprises without workers and no workers without entrepreneurs.

As a tripartite organization, the ILO was a natural partner of the JfA Foundation, itself based on tripartism and partnership, and he committed the support of his department for the project in light of its coherent approach. With the aim of supporting the creation of a favourable context for the creation and development of business and companies, he highlighted the ILO's SCORE programme[9] for SMEs, which was based on a collective approach that gathered all the actors together with a view to promoting SME productivity and job creation.

The final speaker for Panel III was Mr Mthunzi Mdwaba, the IOE's Regional Vice-President for Africa and a representative of Business Unity South Africa. As Chair of the Productivity Institute of South Africa, also a tripartite organization, Mr Mdwaba took up Mr Julien's point about productivity. The involvement of worker representatives was important, he noted, as you could not talk about productivity and wages separately. When you talked about the productivity dividend, said Mr Mdwaba, this dividend had to be shared.

He went on to raise South Africa's reliance on FDI, which, while important for growth, had to be viewed realistically – it often did not stay, and South Africa was not investing sufficiently in itself. He recalled Mr Julien's remark about the need for self-generation.

With the theme of the panel relating to building partnerships, Mr Mdwaba criticised the "silo" mentality. In addressing the youth employment challenge in particular, it was important for policymakers to bring young people into the conversation.

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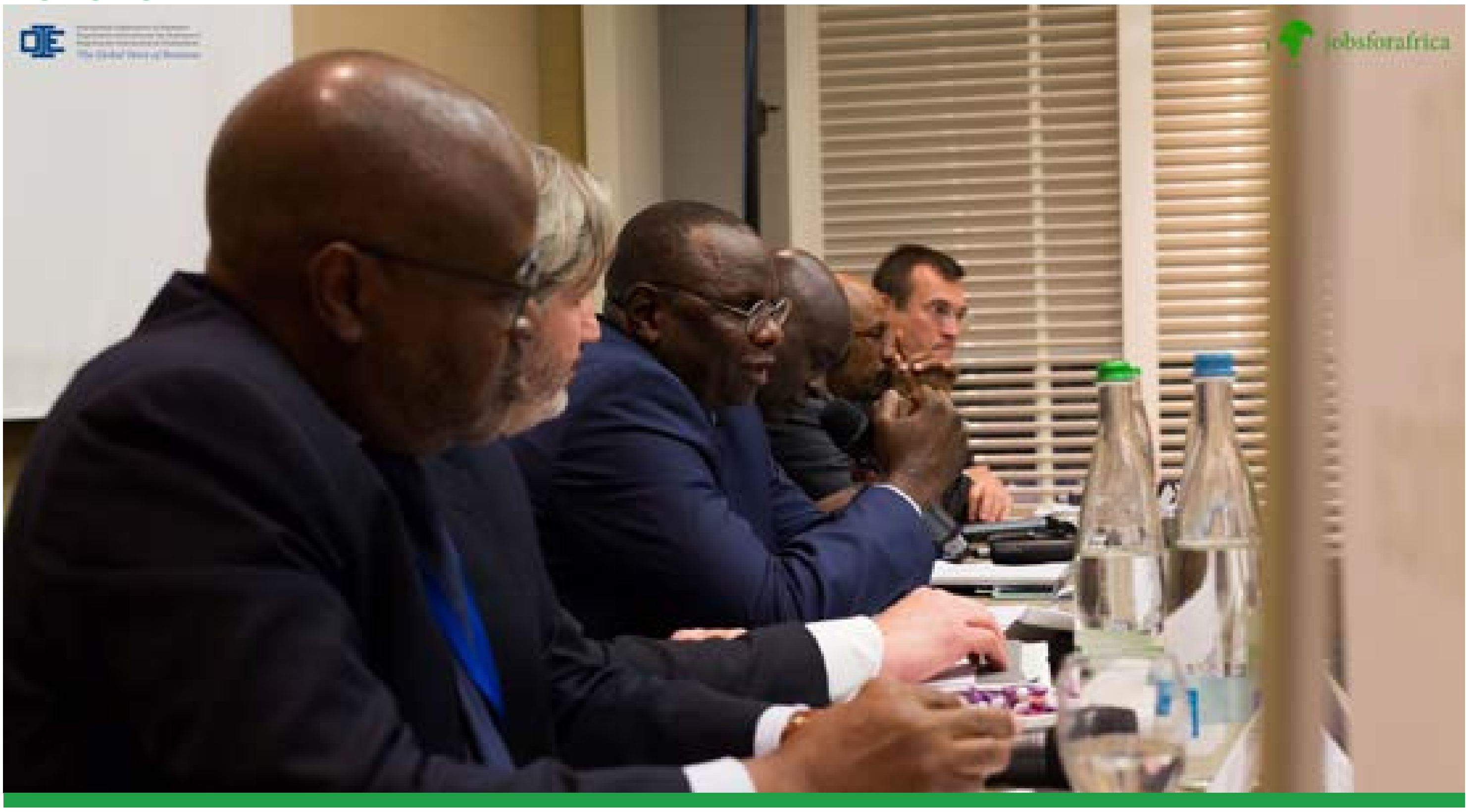
[9] Information on the ILO's Score Programme may be accessed here: http://www.ilo.org/empent/Projects/score/lang--en/index.htm



Open Discussion

Mr Sibi-Okumu opened the discussion session, posing the first question himself as he reverted to Panel I on the state of African economies, asking whether it was more important to secure growth per se, or patterns of growth.

Ms Azita Berar Awad acknowledged that growth was important, but that patterns of growth saw macro-economic frameworks in terms of their potential to achieve the crucial objective of promoting employment, productivity and economic stability.

A member of the audience reiterated the matter of Africa's re-industrialisation as crucial to creating sustainable jobs, as well as diversification.

The moderator asked HE Raj Sookun how long it had taken to achieve Mauritius's economic miracle and how this had been achieved. The response was that it had taken 15 years and had involved diversification beyond sugar production into manufacturing, tourism, EPZs, financial services, ICT, among others.

Mr Sibi-Okumu returned to the matter of effective administrations as a pillar for supporting investment. Mr Yuma noted that one of the constraints to his own country's development was a lack of training and education, which created a barrier to the efficiency of administrations and investment in the country.

Deputy Minister from Ghana, Baba Jamal, took up the question of education as it related to agriculture and said that it was not enough to give farmers tractors; they needed to be equipped with knowledge and training to be able to put modern production methods in place. Ms Mokadem described the financing and capacity-building work of the AfDB, training farmers to work together, to improve production and storage, and linking farmers to agri-businesses – in short, the AfDB was taking a holistic approach to supporting agriculture.

Kenya's Principal Secretary of Labour, Ms Khadija Kassachom, raised the fact that the average age of a Kenyan farmer was 61 years' old. The educated youth, and the bulk of those without jobs, had in fact rejected employment in agriculture. However, with agriculture a mainstay of the Kenyan economy, this was a problem. The question was how to make agriculture an interesting employment prospect.

John Sendanyoye recalled the intervention of Leila Mokadem, noting that agriculture had to "stop being anything but a business". With the overwhelming majority of the population still rural, and migrations from rural areas both overseas and to internal urban areas, one response would be to increase the number of jobs in agriculture by industrializing productions – not just through large enterprises, but with small, and medium-skilled agro-processing plants providing food for urban centres in Africa.

Moving to the topic of the third panel: building partnerships, the moderator invited further questions.

Mr Thomas Seghezzi of Rainbow Unlimited, a private sector enterprise implementing hotel management schools in Africa, took up the topic of investment in skills development.

While African youth may well be better educated than their parents, he noted that education systems inherited from the UK and France had tended to direct school leavers to universities. He made an appeal for the uptake of the Swiss model, with its emphasis on vocational training via apprenticeships, as a means to making African youth more employable, particularly in the job-intensive tourism sector which was currently undergoing strong development on the African continent. Mr Seghezzi invited partnerships for supporting students with subsidies to fund vocational training in job-rich sectors.

Ms Sheila Mweemba, Director of the Secretariat for the Convention of Cluster Munitions, highlighted the challenges of infrastructure development in areas contaminated by conflict.

BIAC chair Phil O' Reilly was particularly interested in hearing about developing dialogue with trade unions around productivity-wage trade-offs and asked Mr Mdwaba what the big productivity issues were in South Africa, assuming they would be different to the ones experienced in developed countries.

On the matter of infrastructure, Mr Chuma emphasized the importance of social infrastructure – the quality of education, schools, training. He further noted that many conflicts in Africa were perpetrated by young people without skills and jobs, who were also vulnerable to manipulation. It was therefore important to invest in labour intensive infrastructure investment to give young people productive employment and skills as an alternative to idleness. He referred to ILO work in Liberia and the Central African Republic that had involved peace building and infrastructure rehabilitation. The big challenge remained the skills mismatch. The ILO was working on this by undertaking labour market information surveys, and surveys on school-to-work transitions, and using the findings to respond to the challenges.

Regarding Mr O'Reilly's question on factors impacting productivity in South Africa, Mr Mdwaba gave a concise response given the time constraints, noting lack of competitiveness, labour rigidity, issues with a bloated public sector, lack of re-investment in the country, lack of competitiveness, and lack of trust between the social partners that impacted the ability to implement decisions.

Closing Remarks

ILO Director-General Guy Ryder was invited to give the first concluding remarks.

He began by saying how important it was for him to be present at the launch of the JfA Foundation, given the ILO's support and involvement from the outset three years earlier. He underscored the importance of the collaborative nature of the initiative and added that the launch marked a turning point where commitment would become operational: “Now, we really do have the responsibility to work together to deliver on this massively important agenda.”

With the challenge of unemployed youth “a priority of priorities”, he said that Africa was young, talented and endowed with enormous potential and called on the stakeholders to keep in mind the international context provided by the 2030 Sustainable Development

Agenda. Many of the issues raised at the launch: industrialization, infrastructure, agriculture, inequities, institution-building and job creation, were also taken up in the 2030 Agenda, an agenda that was also business orientated.

Guy Ryder went on to note that when the world had come together in Addis Ababa in July 2015 to discuss the Financing for Development Agenda – an integral part of the 2030 Agenda – it had been clear that, while international development aid was important, as was FDI, the "heavy lifting" would need to be done by domestic resource mobilization and that meant the private sector, enterprises working and developing, the State taking its fair share of tax revenue, and using it efficiently and honestly through good administrations and institutions.

He commended Mr Belahrach for his outreach to the social partners in bringing the JfA Foundation initiative to life, underlining that social dialogue was the only way of making a reality of what Mr Mdwaba had spoken about: ensuring productivity gains were shared and used for job creation in Africa to the benefit of everyone.

But the final word was for JfA Foundation President, Mr Jamal Belahrach, who thanked everyone in the back office for their work in organizing the event. He also thanked the ILO, as well as Business Africa and its trade union counterparts, and private enterprises, for all their support and commitment from the outset. He acknowledged the European Commission too for their support and contribution. Mr Belahrach was very keen to emphasize the inclusivity of the initiative.

Africa's youth, continued Mr Belahrach, should want to stay on their continent to fulfil their life's dream, and the Foundation had been created to show that this could be a reality.

He underlined the interdependence of social and economic progress and for the need for all parties to be united around the common objective of sustaining growth and accelerating the pace of job creation.

In his concluding words, Mr Belahrach had three key messages: the JfA Foundation had the ambition to address the problem of youth unemployment; it had to raise awareness that unemployment was not only a social and economic problem, it also impacted security, and lastly, that the next steps would consist of taking action to implement the recommendations of the Blueprint, country by country, region by region, with the support and involvement of all the partners in a spirit of common endeavour.

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