

8th PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS
AFRICAN EMPLOYERS FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

(Dakar, 10 - 12 May 1999)

Delegates at the 8th Pan-African Conference of Employers' Organisations on "**African Employers Facing the Challenges of the 21st Century**" met in *Dakar, 10 -12 May 1999*.

Discussions focused on the following themes:

1. building up competitive economies;
 2. mobilising financial resources;
 3. developing human resources;
 4. strengthening employers' organisations.
- Following the presentation of various papers on *Africa against the background of a globalised economy, challenges and prospects*, participants, tackling the **FIRST THEME**, focused their interventions on the following key issues:
- **Globalisation has become an irreversible process** with in-built **opportunities** which we have to seize and develop, as well as **risks** that we have to minimise. In this regard, the African economies have to be built within a framework of strengthened internal and external competitiveness, based on equally competitive enterprises, in order to promote their integration into a globalised market.
 - African economies are facing **multifaceted challenges** that call for **sustainable and audacious solutions** to achieve this objective of competitiveness.

Therefore, it is necessary:

- to improve the productivity of production factors (both technical and human);
- to promote market opening through rational policies, mainly on liberalisation and privatisation of market activities;
- to work out coherent and efficient schemes for economic integration;
- to ensure **good governance** based especially on intangible rules of transparency, equity, democracy, social justice, and on capacity- building

for organised structures (particularly administrations, employers' as well as employees' organisations to promote a balanced tripartite system and efficient social dialogue);

- to create, based on the afore-mentioned, the most favourable conditions to attract capital, in order to increase the volume of productive investments, enhance the development of private initiatives and creation of productive jobs.
- finally, to establish a **balanced and efficient partnership** between governments and the various elements of the national private sector on the one hand, and between these national private (modern and informal) sectors, on the other, mainly through sound networks of exchange of information and competencies, and the development of sustainable joint-ventures.

➤ The SECOND THEME focused on mobilising financial resources for sustainable development. In this regard, the roundtable organised on investment promotion and partnership development was a good opportunity to review the structural constraints that hinder the development of productive investments, institutional (and other) levers that can be mobilised to reach a critical volume of productive investments. In this case, the respective responsibilities of public and private decision-makers, as well as international co-operation partners, have been defined in order to ensure an efficient partnership that can promote a sustained and balanced development of African economies.

As a result, participants have highlighted a number of constraints, among which:

- the quality of public service;
- the instability of the macro-economic framework;
- the low profile of investors;
- the cost and quality of technical production factors;
- the security of investments;
- the narrowness of domestic markets;

- the quality of basic infrastructures;
- the financial instruments that have to be adapted to the needs and capacities of SMEs/SMIs;
- the financial earnings.

That is why participants have come to the conclusion that these bottlenecks must be eliminated, via an increased stability of public institutions and macro-economic framework, the improvement of economic integration schemes, the implementation of investment-attractive liberalisation policies, a close co-operation between governments, employers' organisations and bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies, the creation or development of support, promotion and funding institutions in order to improve the attractiveness of national economies, In this context, it was proposed to organise regular fora in Dakar convening heads of enterprises in order to promote investments in Africa.

- As for the THIRD THEME, the valorising of human resources was unanimously identified as a priority for future activities on employers' organisations. For this reason, during the course of the discussion participants emphasized the need to enhance competencies and competitiveness. In this regard, the papers presented laid emphasis on the need to do away with the Tayloran approach to labour organisation and give priority to skills, competencies, staff mobility, intra-entreprise dialogue, matching employment with training, prospective management of personnel, search for consensus and improved communication within the enterprise.

The need to rationalise training structures was emphasized in order to ensure a qualifying training, further involving Employers' Organisations in the governance of training institutions, whose flexibility will allow for adaptation to permanent changes stemming from enterprise demands and guaranteeing continuous personnel employability.

- The FOURTH THEME on Employers' Organisations was an opportunity to take stock of developments in the sector and to define the new profile of organisations through a process of strategic planning. This strategic planning has become necessary due to the

evolution of demand from internal as well as external environments of Employers' Organisations, it subsequently calls for a strengthening of their capacities so as to allow them to be proactive, to remain negotiation forces that can secure the confidence of members and partners. Thus, recommendation was made, in line with this objective, to strengthen the management and self-financing capacities of Employers' Organisations, in order that they ensure an efficient service provision that is diversified and matching changing demands from present and potential members.

In addition, emphasis was laid on the need to strengthen the membership base, through an improved territorial coverage of countries and an integration of traditional and emerging membership needs.

They also called for an active solidarity between organisation members, between organisations themselves, especially through efficient and sustained regional and sub-regional groupings that can give appropriate and rapid responses to the wide range of challenges facing employment.

Once again, the usefulness of developing **strategic alliances** to that effect was unanimously acknowledged.

National Employers' Organisations have been invited to join the programme covering the 2 years, following the year 2000, in order to turn the African Enterprise into the driving force behind **economic growth, the main generator of wealth, income and jobs.**

In this regard, participants have expressed the wish to see the ILO and the IOE gear their future co-operation initiatives towards the concerns raised during this conference, and which are set out in the priorities defined by the new Director General of the ILO.

They noted with satisfaction the relevance and quality of programmes developed these past years by the ILO in favour of Employers' Organisations, mainly through the Bureau for Employers' Activities.

They express their thanks to the Senegalese authorities who provided their full support to the organisation of this meeting, and wish to congratulate the organisers, the ILO, the IOE, the PEC and the CNP.

