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Mallikarjun Kharge Minister of Labour and Employment addresses the meeting of Ministers of Labour of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at Geneva

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“We reiterate the need for efforts by NAM countries towards improving the working methods of the Committee on Application of Standards which tend to focus almost exclusively on the developing countries. The work of this committee should reflect transparency, objectivity and clearly defined criteria in its functioning.” Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Minister of Labour and Employment, Government of India said this while speaking at the meeting of Ministers of Labour of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at Geneva on Monday 13th June 2011 on the sidelines of the 100th International Labour Conference Geneva 2011.

Shri Mallikarjun Kharge reaffirmed India’s unwavering commitment to the purposes and principles of the Non-aligned Movement in the meeting. He welcomed the reform package to improve the functioning of the ILO Governing Body and stated that a good structured consultation process in a tripartite manner within ILO will be helpful in restructuring the Governing Body of the ILO.

Minister of Labour and Employment (LEM) Shri Mallikarjun Kharge told the Committee on Application of Standards that it should ensure the genuineness of a complaint against any country by requesting a preliminary response from the government concerned. He further told the Committee to take into account the various institutional mechanisms and the judicial redressals available in the country while formulating its opinion on the merits of any case.

Shri Kharge appreciated the important role played by the ILO in tackling the recent global financial and economic crisis. The ILO can further help the Least Developed Countries in designing appropriate policies to address the several developmental challenges faced by them.

LEM also reiterated the imperative of co-operation among Non-aligned and other developing countries, both in our interaction with the industrialized countries in the United Nations and multilateral forums, as well as for fostering South-South Cooperation.

Shri Kharge stated that providing decent work to all is one of the basic objectives of India. He mentioned that the Decent Work Country Programme-India Document (DWCP-ID), the successive Five Year Plans, the draft New Employment Policy and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are aimed at promoting and providing the decent work agenda.

LEM concluded by emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts by the international community, the financial institutions and the development partners as well as strengthening South-South Cooperation for tackling the developmental needs and challenges of the LDCs.

Given below is the text of the Statement by Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Minister of Labour and Employment, Government of India, at the meeting of Ministers of Labour of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Geneva, 13 June 2011):

Your Excellency, the Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting of the NAM Ministers of Labour, Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. At the outset, let me convey my sincere appreciation to Your Excellency and other members of the delegation who are organizing this meeting and compliment you for maintaining the tradition of organizing the meeting of NAM Labour Ministers on the sidelines of the International Labour Conference. We take this opportunity to reaffirm India's unwavering commitment to the purposes and principles of the Non-aligned Movement.

3. We also welcome the reform package to improve the functioning of the ILO Governing Body. In this regard, a good structured consultation process in a tripartite manner within ILO will be helpful in restructuring the Governing Body of the ILO. We are hopeful that the proposed reform package when implemented would also be able to establish an integrated approach to setting the agenda of GB meetings, result in better clarity in preparation of documents, facilitate effective time management and streamline the working of GB.

4. We reiterate the need for efforts by NAM countries towards improving the working methods of the Committee on Application of Standards which tend to focus almost exclusively on the developing countries. The work of this Committee should reflect transparency, objectivity and clearly defined criteria in its functioning. The Committee needs to strike a balance on the issues it addresses, both in terms of the standards it focuses on as well as the countries it applies them to. Instilling transparency in its operations will no doubt enhance the credibility of such supervisory bodies. The Committee should ensure the genuineness of a complaint against any country by requesting a preliminary response from the government concerned. In this regard, the Committee should also take into account the various institutional mechanisms and the judicial redressals available in the country while formulating its opinion on the merits of any case.

5. We appreciate the important role played by the ILO in tackling the recent global financial and economic crisis and this role can also be mainstreamed with the role of the United Nations. The ILO can further help the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in designing appropriate policies to address the several developmental challenges faced by them. However, we also reiterate the imperative of co-operation among Non-aligned and other developing countries, both in our interaction with the industrialized countries in the United Nations and multilateral forums, as well as for fostering South-South Cooperation. In the current climate of the post global economic and financial crisis, such cooperation becomes all the more important.

6. Providing decent work to all is one of the basic objectives of India. We have been implementing the Decent Work Country Programme-India Document (DWCP-ID) in collaboration with the ILO for promoting the decent work agenda across all sectors and sub-sectors of the economy. Even the successive Five Year Plans in India have always stressed on realizing high rates of growth in all economic activities, with a view to generating additional employment for the unemployed, and also to create decent sustainable work for those already employed. Our draft New Employment Policy is basically aimed at working towards the goal of decent and remunerative work for all women and men seeking such work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is playing a very crucial role in providing and promoting decent work in rural areas. Steps are being taken by the Government to extend National Health Insurance Scheme, namely Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) to MGNREGA beneficiaries. Recently, Modular Employable Skills (MES) scheme under the Skills Development Initiative (SDI) provided basic training to the domestic workers to enhance their skills and employability.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need for collaborative efforts by the international community, the financial institutions and the development partners as well as strengthening South-South Cooperation for tackling the developmental needs and challenges of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

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