

CSD TODAY Wednesday 7 May 2008 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Intervention made by the Representative of the Workers and Trade Unions at the Thematic discussions on Agriculture and Rural Development

The issue of human resource is central when we are looking at rural enterprise development. We are glad that the 2nd panel speaker emphasized on the issue of improving rural incomes. Many rural enterprises in Africa have very poor working conditions and are often characterized by low wages, no health insurance and compensation for injuries, disease such as malaria and infections such as HIV&AIDS which are diminishing the capacity of our productive labour force. Unfortunately, these are illnesses that are preventable but workers are even dying because of lack of knowledge. Decent work is therefore an important aspect to consider in order to improve the lives of workers, their families and communities and to sustain rural enterprises. There is a need to integrate the ILO decent work agenda into the county programmes.

Rural enterprises have to be established to curb the problem of rural urban migration. Due to unfavorable working conditions in rural enterprises, adults are forced to migrate to urban areas in search of better jobs, leaving the children to fend for themselves. We all know that children provide the cheapest labor and are easily exposed to the worst forms of child labour, the issue of child labor is a big challenge that must be addressed.

Unfortunately, the record since 2002 shows little follow-through on Summit commitments, as levels of child labour have remained high, with many children condemned to the worst forms of work. *ILO 2006 Global report: The End of Child Labor: Within Reach* shows that 132 million children between the ages of 5 to 14 years – almost half of all child laborers – were employed in the agriculture sector. The trade unions wish to re-emphasise and underscore governments to respect the ILO core labor standards and ratify all the ILO conventions.