**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE SIERRA LEONE LABOUR CONGRESS AND SIERRA LEONE EMPLOYERS’ FEDERATION (WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ILO) LAUNCHES SECOND GENERATION OF DECENT WORK IN SIERRA LEONE.**

**VENUE:** Raddison Blu Hotel, Aberdeen, Freetown

**DATE:** Thursday, 25th May, 2023

**TIME:** 10:00AM

With support from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, together with its social partners; the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) and the Sierra Leone Employers’ Federation (SLEF); has officially launched the Second Generation of the Sierra Leone Decent Work Country Programme (SL-DWCP2).

The occasion was graciously attended by representatives from both the public and private sectors.

Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) are the ILO’s main vehicle for delivery of its supports to Member States, and they are formulated within the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA). The ILO’s DWA is achieved through the implementation of its four strategic objectives; with gender equality being a crosscutting objective.

Giving a background of DWCP in Sierra Leone, the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Honorable Alpha Osman Timbo, explained that the Government of Sierra Leone signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the ILO to implement the first phase of the programme (DWCP1) in 2010.

“With support from the ILO, the government, in collaboration with its social partners (SLLC and SLEF), commenced implementation of Sierra Leone Decent Work Country Programme (SL-DWCP1) in 2010 and ended in 2012”, the minister explained.

He said that the SL-DWCP1 was designed to address three priority areas;

* Public and Private Investment
* Increased socio-economic stability through basic social protection and safer workplaces, and
* Strengthened ILO constituents

He said that a review of the SL-DWCP1 was done in May 2012 to examine progress made in the implementation and to identify challenges and strengths, with a view of using the findings to inform and guide the preparation of the successor phase, that is, the SL-DWCP2.

He outlined the priority areas of the SL-DWCP2 which are;

* Employment creation
* Expanding social protection, and
* Enhanced social dialogue that facilitates productivity and advances decent work in Sierra Leone.

The minister said that the SL-DWCP2, which will run from 2023-2027, will help to address key issues of the labour market such as;

* Equal pay for work of equal value
* Balancing of care responsibilities and work
* Violence and harassment at work
* Eliminating discrimination and child labour
* Equality of opportunity and treatment, and
* Promoting inclusive labour protection mechanism for migrant workers.

He observed that the priorities perfectly aligned with the Government’s objectives of the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023, adding that decent work is a cardinal pillar of the United Nations 2030 Agenda which calls for “promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goal 8.”

Mr. Timbo pointed out that the lack of decent and productive employment and unemployment are major challenges in the country’s economy. However, he said, the President Bio-led Government has undertaken many actions and achieved considerable results in different areas of its development and transformation to address the unemployment challenges.

“The finalization of the SL-DWCP2 is timely and the programme remains a relevant programming tool to addressing social and economic issues, as well as, a key element to achieving job-rich inclusive and sustainable growth,” the Minister stated.

The ILO Country Director for Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia and Ghana, Madam Vanessa Phala, said that the importance of decent work in promoting inclusive growth cannot be overemphasized as it had been aptly captured in the UN SDG 8.

In addition, she noted, decent work is central to achieving the “Abidjan Declaration, the AU Agenda 2026 and other development frameworks including the ECOWAS Policy on Labour and Employment.”

She described the DWCP as a “forward-looking document” and expressed hope that its implementation will assist Sierra Leone to not only achieve the UN SDG 8 but also the other inter-related goals inclusive.

“The DWCP being launched is therefore a tool to address social and economic challenges facing the country and to ensure job-rich inclusive and sustainable growth,” she reiterated.

The ILO Director stated that the success of the SL-DWCP2 will require the collaborative efforts of all relevant stakeholders, including the trade union and employers’ organization, and called on all partners to “build a strong partnership and support the efforts of the government in promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth through productive employment.”

Secretary-General of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, Mr. Max K. Conteh, said that he was proud “to align the Trade Union Movement in Sierra Leone to the decent work approach of the DWCP.”

He said that the recently enacted revised labour laws takes keen note of their importance, adding that the tripartite constituent is very formidable, active and willing to address the decent work strategic objectives.

He pointed out that the Trade Union Movement has over the years collaborated with employers and the government to mitigate challenges of decent work, adding that they have together worked on strategic Policies and Acts that promote decent work in Sierra Leone.

As a Trade Union movement, Mr. Conteh said that the SLLC believes that the DWA is a laudable move in the right direction “as the Government of Sierra Leone puts human capital development as a key component in its agenda.”

However, the SLLC scribe made an appeal for practical inclusiveness in the implementation process.

“Let me also appeal that in the concept of leaving no one behind, workers in the informal economy should be of utmost importance in the implementation of the DWCP,” he pleaded.

Vice President of the Sierra Leone Employers’ Federation, Mr. Allieu Tamba Kokobaye, applauded the ILO for its support to Sierra Leone in ensuring the rights and safety of employers and employees alike.

He said that the SL-DWCP2 is a step in the right direction as it gives hope to both employers and employees that their life and security at work are being properly covered, and it assures social protection for all.

As a key partner of development in the workspace, Mr. Kokobaye said that the SLEF remains committed to the process of tripartism and promised that correct educative messages would be preached to employers so that they all will understand that the SL-DWCP2 is for the benefit of all, be you an employer or an employee.

“We look forward to further working together as we strive to make decent work a reality for all Sierra Leoneans,” the SLEF Chairman committed.

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ILO, Government and the social partners (SLLC and SLEF), for the implementation of the Second Generation of the Sierra Leone Decent Work Country Programme-phase two climaxed the event.