



BETTER WORK
Lesotho

For immediate release
3 December 2010

**Better Work Lesotho Launched:
First Better Work Programme in Africa Aims to Improve Working Conditions and Promote
Competitiveness in the Country's Garment Sector**

(Geneva/Maseru/Addis Ababa, 3 December 2010)—Senior officials from the Ministries of Labour and Trade joined the US Ambassador to Lesotho, Her Excellency Michele Thoren Bond, ILO Pretoria Office Director Vic van Vuuren, leaders of employer organizations and trade unions, and Better Work staff to officially launch the Better Work Lesotho programme yesterday.

This is the first Better Work country programme being implemented in Africa and is expected to help the country's garment factories improve compliance with national labour law and ILO's core international labour standards, while promoting the industry to international buyers and investors.

The programme has strong support from both employers and workers in Lesotho. The country's five garment sector unions stated collectively, "We believe that Better Work Lesotho will contribute to sustaining the industry and market Lesotho as an ethical sourcing destination." And Mr. Chin Yi Lin of the Lesotho Textile Exporters Association, a leading industry group, remarked that, "As the President of LTEA and Managing Director of Nien Hsing Lesotho, I would like to pledge my full support to Better Work Lesotho."

Following the public launch event, Better Work Global Director Dan Rees and Better Work Lesotho Programme Manager Kristina Kurths hosted a series of roundtable discussions with key tripartite constituents and stakeholders in the country. Representatives of the Ministries of Labour and Trade, the Association of Lesotho Employers and Business, the Lesotho Textile Exporters Association and the national garment trade unions met with international buyers to discuss critical industry challenges and identify ways to address them collaboratively.

A number of the buyers who attended the event—including Gap Inc., Levi Strauss & Co. and Wal-Mart—took the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the programme's goals and to participating suppliers. "Gap Inc. has collaborated with Better Works since its inception in Cambodia, and has supported its expansion into Jordan, Haiti, Vietnam, and now Lesotho," says Cathy Dix, Manager, Global Responsibility for Gap Inc. "We believe partnerships are key to improving global working conditions, and look forward to working with Better Work and other brands in Lesotho."

Better Work Lesotho will focus on the garment industry and will provide assessment, advisory and training services to participating factories. The goal of the programme is to have industry-wide implementation in the country, where garment factories employ approximately 40,000 workers, mainly women, and account for about 80% of Lesotho's manufacturing sector jobs.

Better Work is a unique partnership programme between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which seeks to improve labour standards compliance in global supply chains, both to protect workers' rights and to help enterprises become more competitive. The programme focuses on scalable and sustainable solutions that build cooperation between governments, employers' and workers' organizations and international buyers.

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