

## First meeting of the Policy Working Group on Assessing and Addressing the Effects of Trade on Employment (ETE)

The first meeting of the Policy Working Group on Assessing and Addressing the Effects of Trade on Employment (ETE) was held on 13 October at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Ghulam Hossain, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment. Mr André Bogui, Director, ILO Country Office for Bangladesh delivered the welcome speech.

Mr Bogui, during his welcome remarks emphasized on trade and labour policy coherence which, he said, is essential to establish a clear and strong linkage between existing and potential tradable sectors and employment. He congratulated the PWG members for initiating the policy discussion and thanked the co-chairs for their tremendous support in this regard.

Mr. Ghulam Hossain, Co chair of the PWG and the Secretary, Commerce said that the country needs to create a trade regime conducive to employment. For this, he mentioned, import and export policy and others monetary and fiscal policies should be harmonized. In the present world having comparative advantage in one or products is not enough instead economy should have competitive advantage to reap the benefits from globalization- he mentioned.

Mr. Shafique Alam Mehdi Co chair of the PWG and the Secretary of Ministry of Labour and Employment discussed different aspects of employment and trade related challenges faced by the country such as unemployment, underemployment, skill mismatch, narrow export baskets, limited linkage between trade and labour market policies, inadequate infrastructure etc. He hoped that The PWG would be a good opportunity to discuss about all the challenges and to find out possible policy solutions to reap the benefits of trade liberalization.

Invited speakers Dr Selim Raihan, Associate Professor, Dhaka University and Dr Mahfuz Kabir, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) presented findings from two ETE researches titled 'Employment Effects of FTA Agreements: The Perspectives from Bangladesh' and 'Effects of International Trade and Foreign Direct Investment on Employment in Bangladesh: A Survey of Literature' respectively.

Ms Hasina Begum, National Project Coordinator of the ETE Project shared the updates of the project while Mr. Khondaker Mostan Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment spoke about the significance and relevance of the PWG in formulating coherent policy recommendations.

The meeting gathered representatives from Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labour and Employment, General Economics Division, Bangladesh Bank, Export Promotion Bureau, Ministry of Industry, EC Delegation in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Employers' Federation and National Coordination Council for Workers' Education (NCCWE) to speak on different aspects of trade liberalization and its effects in labour market. The discussion pointed out that the country should harmonize its trade, fiscal and labour market policies to reap the employment opportunities created from increased trade liberalization.

