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PRESS RELEASE

European Union joins hands with Punjab Government and ILO to hold three day "South Asia Labour Conference".

Islamabad, 23rd April, 2014: The Provincial Government of Punjab with the support of the European Union, the Federal Government of Pakistan and ILO is convening a three day Ministerial level "South Asia Labour Conference" in Lahore, 24th - 26th April 2014.

The "South Asia Labour Conference: Strengthening Regional Cooperation to Promote Decent Work in South Asia" aims to enhance cooperation among South Asian countries to improve labour market management and labour market policies. The conference is expected to promote regional cooperation and strategies for labour market management and help identify common gaps in labour market governance, labour productivity and compliance with international labour standards in South Asia.

The Chief Minister of Punjab will inaugurate the Conference. Representatives of the concerned Ministries from the Federal Government and Labour Ministers and other key labour market stakeholders from SAARC countries will also be attending. From the European Union Ambassador Lars-Gunnar Wigemark will speak at the opening, while the Head of Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Mr. Nicolas Gilbert-Morin will address the closing session.

Working sessions on labour laws, labour productivity, labour market information, labour migration, occupational safety & health, social protection and vulnerable labour groups will be held. The conference is expected to facilitate sharing of best practises from across SAARC. An industrial exhibition will also be organized to showcase SAARC/local products and at the conclusion of the conference, a joint statement of commitment will be adopted, identifying areas of common interest and modes of collaboration.

On this occasion Ambassador Wigemark said:

"I am pleased that the EU has been able to support this very important Conference organised by the Government of Punjab and the ILO. Employment and job creation are key issues facing the countries of South Asia. There is a pressing need to improve productivity and competitiveness while better integrating women and youth in labour markets across the region. Labour market policies must meet international standards for decent work, occupational health and safety and social protection. This is not only a moral imperative; it is also good business sense, since it will improve productivity. Regional cooperation on labour issues will be central in meeting these challenges and I hope that the Conference can make an important contribution in this respect."

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