International Conference on South-South Cooperation – Innovations in Public Employment Programmes for Sustainable Inclusive Growth, 01st-03rd March 2012, New Delhi:

Speech of Hon’ble LEM For The High Level Panel Discussion for Labour Ministers
(1st March, 2012 – 11:15 A.M.-1:15 P.M.)

Hon’ble Ministers of participating countries,
ILO Regional Director Ms. Sachiko Yamamoto,
Mr. Salazar, Executive Director ILO,
Labour Ministers of various States,
Secretary (L&E), Dr. Mrutyunjay Sarangi,
Ambassadors of various countries,
Representative of Central Trade Union Organizations and Employer bodies,
Officials from various Central Ministries and State Governments,
Representatives of UN bodies,
Friends from Media,
Ladies & Gentlemen.

It is a privilege to chair this high-level session alongwith the representatives of Brazil and South Africa. I firmly believe that the ensuing discussion and debate shall pave the way for furthering South–South Cooperation in employment and social protection centred development strategies which may lead to innovation in Public Programmes for Sustainable Inclusive Growth.

The workshop is taking place at a very critical period when the global economy is struggling to tackle the repercussions of the recent global financial and economic crisis, particularly in the area of job-recovery, job-creation and allied matters. To address these issues effectively, there is an emerging need to go beyond the traditional and conventional approach of development for creating an enabling environment for inclusive growth. However, to create and sustain such an enabling environment for inclusive growth world over there is a need to further South-South Cooperation.

As developing countries, we are facing similar problems in many aspects of employment and social protection. South-South cooperation has become more visible in recent years with the intensification of technical, cultural, economic and political exchanges between countries.

Let me also share briefly about the key features and roadmap of cooperation under IBSA more particularly in the areas of employment and social protection. Government of India has in the recent past developed a National Skill Policy in collaboration with ILO and we can share our expertise in this area. The Declaration of
Intent signed with ILO along with Brazil and South Africa is for furthering the Decent Work Concept on an expanded canvas.

From our experience of South-South Cooperation through IBSA, I would like to suggest that enhanced South-South Cooperation will create synergy which will be mutually beneficial to all. I would like to share in this high-level panel discussion that we were least affected by the recent global financial and economic crisis because of our flagship programme of public employment, namely, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and other proactive measures. Likewise, Brazil, South Africa and many other developing countries have innovative public employment programmes. In fact, I am very keen to know about the impact of such programmes.

In India, Active labour market policies are pursued to generate both wage as well as self-employment. Employment opportunities are also being created in rural infrastructure and housing and urban infrastructure sector through Bharat Nirman, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission and other employment intensive programmes.

Providing social security to workers is an important component of social policy in India. Various kinds of social security schemes are already in operation for workers in organised sector. These facilities for organised sector workers vary from adequate paid leave to health insurance and pension schemes. However, unorganised sector workers lack facilities of such schemes. An important recent initiative to safeguard the interest of unorganised workers has been enactment of the Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008.

In the new economic environment, I feel that sustainable inclusive growth through innovations in public employment programmes will be more effective in a world where there are no trade barriers and no restrictions in the movement of labour. Protectionism may bring short-term illusory gains but in the long-run it will boomerang affecting job-creation, job-recovery and job-dynamics across the global economy.

I would like to once again re-affirm the commitment of Government of India in promoting South-South Cooperation for achieving sustainable inclusive growth that benefits all specially the vulnerable sections of the society. I hope this high-level panel discussion will pave the way for a fruitful discussion in this regard.

Thank you!