Welcome Address of Hon’ble Secretary for the International Workshop on South-South Cooperation—Innovations in Public Employment Programmes for Sustainable Inclusive Growth 01-03rd March 2012, New Delhi

Hon’able Union Minister for Labour & Employment Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Hon’able Union Cabinet Minister Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Rural Development, Ministers from various developing countries, Dignitaries, Ladies & Gentlemen.

The world economic crisis has slowed growth of world output, growth & development. In the major advanced economies the recovery appears to have come close to a halt, with falling household and business confidence affecting both investment and job creation.

There are greater risks that high unemployment and under-employment could become entrenched. This makes for a highly uncertain outlook as to the timing and strength of a future recovery in employment. These issues have affected the developing & emerging economies also adversely. According to the ILO, after three years of continuous crisis conditions in global labour markets, there is a backlog of global unemployment of 200 million – an increase of 27 million since the start of the crisis. Youth are particularly hard hit by the crisis.

The strategies and actions geared towards global economic recovery should have the creation of employment at its core. Economic growth without employment increases the risk of not recovering the path to stability. Employment therefore, should be a focus to avoid a jobless recovery.

It is important to direct efforts so that the new jobs are jobs that contribute to stimulate demand, savings, and sustainable economic growth. Green Growth describes a path of economic growth which uses natural resources in a sustainable manner which is well recognized in the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in the form of Agenda 21, the blueprint for a Sustainable future. Green jobs also are a generator of development and a source of new jobs. However, it is necessary to adapt quickly to changes in this regard. Workers will need to acquire new skills, and the quality of the new jobs should be ensured. The Ministries of Labour and Employment have an important role to play identifying policies and strategies, for governments to contribute alongside employers and workers. Green Jobs are a potential area of creating quality employment opportunities as there are good prospects of Green Jobs generation in non-conventional energy sector and other emerging sectors. In the context of India, jobs generated under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are primarily under the category of green jobs.

Developing countries have to improve dialogue amongst themselves because our social and physical infrastructure not the same as developed nations. Our goals and priorities are shaped by our individual level of development, the diversities of our population and our resource base. Therefore, cooperation between us is the need of the day.
South-South cooperation has been historically used to describe the exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries, also known as countries of the global South. However, the idea of South-South Cooperation only started to influence the field of development in the late 1990s. Since then, South-South Cooperation has been successful in decreasing dependence on the aid programs of developed countries and in creating a shift in the international balance of power. The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) trilateral development initiative has been a major driver of South-South cooperation and exchange.

Over the past decade, India has launched some innovative employment generation and sustainable livelihood poverty alleviation initiatives such as Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Health Insurance Scheme (RSBY), Skills Development Initiative (SDI) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). Active labour market policies (ALMPs) in our country are recognized as an important strategy for providing immediate access to employment for less advantaged groups in the labour market. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India is the World’s Largest Single Public Employment Scheme. It provides at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to all households in rural areas whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.

Nearly 50 percent of total employment is benefiting women workers. More than half of beneficiaries belong to the socially disadvantaged groups and there is positive impact on the conservation of natural resources.

Industrial growth depends also on the quality of infrastructure and good governance. To accelerate the pace of infrastructure development and reduce the infrastructure deficit, the Government of India has initiated a host of projects and schemes to upgrade physical infrastructure in all crucial sectors. Despite several challenges, the positive results of the Government's initiatives are showing in many areas.

Bharat Nirman, an important programme for building infrastructure and basic amenities in rural areas, has six components, namely rural housing, irrigation potential, drinking water, rural roads, electrification, and rural telephony.

Human resources have to be strengthened in order to provide a healthy & qualified workforce. At present, India is going through a phase of demographic transition. GOI Government of India has formulated its National Skill Development Policy to meet the challenges of skill development and to meet the Target of skilling 500 million people by 2022.

Quality employment should include components of social security. We have taken several initiatives to safeguard the interest of unorganized sector workers. An important recent initiative of our Government has been enactment of the Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) provides smart card-based cashless health insurance cover of Rs 30,000 per family per annum to BPL families (a unit of five) in the unorganized
sector. The premium is shared on 75:25 basis by the Centre and State Governments. This has already covered 25 million families.

Labour Intensive Job Creation is important for labour surplus economy like India. We need appropriate technology for the creation of jobs in allied agriculture sector like food processing, manufacturing sectors like leather & footwear products, textiles, service sectors like Tourism, Construction, Personal Care, Health care and Hospitality Sector.

We must make efforts to ensure sustainable economic growth and creation of qualitative employment opportunities so that Future generations will thank today’s leaders for having used this opportunity to create progressively better jobs that will bring higher standards of living. We welcome you to this workshop and look forward to interacting with you over next three days, exchanging our best practices and learning from you about your programme & initiatives.

Thank You