Mr. Chair,

The dual challenge of creating millions of new jobs to meet the demand of the growing labour force while also addressing the negative effects of climate change, is more acute than ever.

Climate change and the excessive use of scarce resources are prompting calls for a shift towards more sustainable development patterns. The creation of green jobs is an important part of that transformation. Green jobs are decent jobs that contribute to reducing the environmental impact of economic activities, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, increase the energy efficiency of natural resources, and protect and restore ecosystems.

ILO research finds that millions of green jobs have already been created across a range of sectors and there is significant potential to create more decent work opportunities, including for young people. The transformation to a greener economy could generate 15 to 60 million additional jobs globally over the next two decades and lift tens of millions of workers out of poverty and delivering improved livelihoods.

The Rio+20 outcome document emphasized that job creation, particularly for youth, is a top priority for action to achieve sustainable development. A special focus on youth may prove to be an important accelerator for making progress on all three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, economic and social.

The 102nd session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2013, agreed on a strong common vision and key guiding principles for achieving a just transition to a greener economy. The resolution and set of conclusions adopted by the Committee on Sustainable Development affirms, “the greening of economies presents many opportunities to achieve social objectives: it has the potential to be a new engine of growth, both in advanced and developing economies, and a net generator of decent green jobs that can contribute significantly to poverty eradication and social inclusion.”

Following up on the ILC Conclusions, the ILO Governing Body adopted last a Green Jobs Strategic Action Plan which will help guide future ILO work. The Plan is based on a number of key principles including:

- The recognition that enterprises need an enabling policy environment for greening their business models and to spur innovation. Support for entrepreneurship development in new green sectors and value chains will help the creation of new business, among others by youth.

- Workers need to have access to relevant training opportunities to adjust to labour market changes. Mechanisms for strengthening social dialogue and improve the quality of jobs need to be made effective. This can be done for example, by taking measures to promote occupational health and safety, while improving the environmental performance of enterprises.

- Sound and sustainable social protection floors and comprehensive social protection schemes form an integral part of a strategy for transitioning to a sustainable development pattern, built on principles of decent work and social inclusion. Such schemes would provide workers displaced by technological change or those affected by natural disasters with income support, access to health care and basic services during the transition.

- Future ILO work will also include expanded policy support. Acknowledging that changes will differ across economic sectors, the ILO will support the implementation of specific sectoral policies, particularly in those sectors that combine environmental and employment challenges, like agriculture, construction and waste management.

Given its unique focus on employment and social inclusion, the ILO is strengthening its collaboration within the UN system, notably with UNEP, UNIDO and UNITAR. In this context, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), supported by a multi donor trust fund, is becoming an important vehicle to scale up the combined technical assistance of the Agencies to countries interested in developing green economy policies that also create jobs and reduce poverty. The first Global Conference on the Partnership will be held in Abu Dhabi, in March 2014.

Lastly, the ILO acknowledges the unique challenges Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face in the context of job creation, sustainable development and coping with the vulnerabilities posed by climate change. The ILO looks forward to contributing to the preparations for the Third International Conference on SIDS that will be held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa.

I thank you.