

**Informal Summary
Coordination Segment
of the Economic and Social Council in 2007**

Panel Discussion

“The role of the United Nations system in promoting employment and decent work agenda in national strategic frameworks: the case of Latin America and the Caribbean”

Palais de Nations, Geneva, 9 July 2007

Chairperson: H.E. Mr. Hilario G. Davide, Jr. (Philippines), Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

Panellists: **Ms. Rebeca Grynspan**, UNDP Regional Director
Mr. Nils Kastberg, UNICEF Regional Director
Ms. Marcela Suazo, UNFPA Regional Director
Mr. Philipp Egger, Deputy Director, Office of the Director-General, ILO

Key messages:

- **ILO’s Decent Work Country Programmes initiative was welcomed and the UN system organizations and partners were encouraged to join the effort. At the same time, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the programmes were encouraged.**
- **In the Latin American context, issues of gender equality, youth unemployment, child labour as well as migration were highlighted.**
- **The importance of integrating job creation in macroeconomic policies as well as having adequate social policies was underscored.**

H.E. Mr. Hilario G. Davide, Jr. opened the panel discussion by reflecting on the status quo regarding the decent work agenda and its implementation. Between 2001 and 2005 the ILO launched a number of pilot Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) in selected countries. To promote greater policy coherence at the country level, these programmes emphasized their integration into national development strategies. The 2006 ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration has invited all the UN system organizations and partners to take the DWCP into account.

Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, UNDP Regional Director, stated that without a doubt employment was the principal link between economic and social policies. She pointed out that the economy in the Latin American region is indeed growing at a rate of over 4%, which has led to some reduction in unemployment. However, the jobs created do not go hand in hand with social security. A higher participation of women in the labour force can be noticed. But the income gap between men and women is widening. This is

especially true for skilled labour. In addition to the four pillars, on which the objectives of the ILO's Toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work is based, **Ms. Grynspan** noted other issues, which deserve a special attention in Latin America, such as youth employment, equality and good governance. A focus was put on several pilot countries, which were chosen in order to study the experiences made in these countries. They would be compared with each other and the best practices would be applied. Furthermore, she informed the Council that the Indicator for Social Competitiveness (ISC) was introduced, which uses data about employment characteristics, such as: (i) absence of child labour; (ii) formality in the employment; (iii) access to health services; (iv) duration of the working day; and (v) absence of underpay.

Ms. Marcela Suazo, UNFPA Regional Director, stated that in terms of employment and decent work, there are three aspects, which are of fundamental relevance for Latin America: (i) the demographic trends; (ii) the migration process; and (iii) the conditions of inequality in the employment of women and youth. On demography, **Ms. Suazo** pointed out that the labour force is steadily growing due to the high number of youth in Latin America. Regarding emigration, she noted that about 4% of the population are migrating in search of work. The number of migrant women is rising. Due to this trend, the number of children growing up in their "core family" is declining. Concerning gender inequality, **Ms. Suazo** underlined the importance of establishing policies and programmes, which promote and expand the opportunities for women to participate in the labour market. She pointed out that women are still mainly employed in low-wage sectors and women in reproductive age face problems finding a job. Furthermore she highlighted the universal access to health services as a significant factor for the empowerment of women and the reduction of poverty, in particular for the youth and indigenous people.

Mr. Philipp Egger, Deputy Director, Office of the Director-General, ILO, underlined the need to find a balance between economic and social policies. The population's call for more social security and growing lack of trust in their governments should be answered with social dialogue initiatives. He pointed out that macroeconomic policies should put a special focus on the creation of employment. **Mr. Egger** underscored the importance of reducing child labour in order to give children the opportunity and the access to education. He also stated that the participation of women in the labour market will reduce gender inequalities. **Mr. Egger** further called for greater coherence of policies and programmes. Regarding the role of the UN system in raising awareness and influencing decision-making, he observed that reports often do not reach to the respective political levels where financing decisions were made.

Mr. Nils Kastberg, UNICEF Regional Director, stated that education is essential to prevent child labour since adolescent mothers are often responsible for sending their children to work. At the same time, lack of household income force the parents to send their children to work. He stressed that it is important to ensure decent work with fair and adequate wages for adults since it would help to dissuade parents from sending their children to work.

Discussion

The representative of **the European Union (EU)** underlined that the **EU** fully supports the ILO DWCP initiative and encourages the worldwide ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions. Identification of best practices and continuous evaluation of the DWCP are essential for future implementation of the programme. He asked if an overall evaluation of the country programmes has been done so far regarding Latin America and if so, what conclusions could be drawn. Furthermore, he asked if the pattern of the programme could be used in other regions, in particular regarding good practices on migration issues and efforts to promote better income distribution and social protection.

The representative of **Costa Rica** asked what role could the United Nations system play in order to create sustainable job employment.

The representative of **Mexico** pointed out the exploitation of migrant workers and stressed that economic growth in itself is not sufficient for development and should be complemented with public policies, highlighting that jobs need to be provided with social protection. Mexico asked how the UN agencies are planning to create jobs for vulnerable groups, such as indigenous people, migrants, youth or disabled persons.

The delegation of **Bolivia** noted that the accumulation of wealth is structurally contradictory to sustainable employment and decent work, since it is not possible to permanently accumulate wealth, while at the same time promoting decent work. **Bolivia** furthermore stated that in order to stay competitive, modern enterprises tend to exploit the natural resources without paying due attention to the consequences. He asked how the panellists see the connection between climate change and employment.

The representative of **El Salvador** underscored the situation of the youth in the region. He described that adolescents often come from broken homes with one parent, having emigrated to find work. The core family is not intact anymore. Being in this socially vulnerable condition, many of them engage in crime and violence. He emphasized that a joint strategy with the private sector is needed to include the youth in the work force.

The representative of **Honduras** stated that it is necessary to strengthen public policies and to cooperate with financial institutions to be able to provide micro-credit finance to the indigent. Bangladesh exemplifies the success of microfinance. Donor countries should be involved in a global microfinance network. It was furthermore noted that education and training were a pre-requisite for decent work. Moreover, he pointed out that the UN needed to enhance strategies for technology transfer to the developing countries.

The representative of **Indonesia** asked if the UN in collaboration with Latin American governments has a specific decent work programme for vulnerable groups,

such as youth, women or the handicapped. She also asked how the ILO's 21 indicators for decent work have been used throughout the programme.

The representative of **Barbados** stated that the social dialogue is a key element for development. Moreover, the importance of tripartite agreements between workers, employers and governments was underlined.

The representative of **Algeria** asked how the tripartite approach has been implemented in order to create decent work opportunities.

The representative of **Finland** pointed out that the need for policy coherence at the country level is paramount. The DWCP needs to be fully included in the respective countries' national development strategies. Moreover, **Finland** wanted to know how the UNDP sees the participation of international organisations to implement decent work.

The representative of **Sweden** underlined the role of the private sector in the issue. He emphasized that companies should further account for Corporate Social Responsibility in their undertakings, while governments also have a crucial role to play in this regard. Moreover, it was pointed out that trade barriers still hamper growth and productive employment in the developing countries and that gender discrepancies were on the rise.. **Sweden** asked if the panellists see prospects in reversing the situation of the youth and women on the Latin American labour market.

The representative of **Iceland** asked what is being done to reduce the informal economy, such as gangs, black market activities and drug trafficking in Latin America.

Regarding indicators to evaluate the DWCP's progress, **Mr. Egger** said that specific policy measures are the most practical. Concerning youth unemployment he pointed out that young people need a good education to later find decent work. In respect of the engagement of financial institutions, **Mr. Egger** noted that there are already different banks, such as the World Bank, regional and national banks providing micro-credit in Latin America. This has to be made more public and accessible and has to be coordinated better. Regarding question of the informal sector, **Mr. Egger** answered that many people engage in the informal sector because they cannot find a job in the formal sector. Quality job creation therefore helps reducing the informal sector.

Regarding migration, **Ms. Suazo** pointed out that UNFPA Technical Services Teams are already engaged in research on the topic. This analysis should be used later for adequate public policies.

Ms. Grynspan underscored that macroeconomic policies needed to be more transparent. Job creation should be considered an essential part of those policies. Economic growth is indeed creating jobs in Latin America but often adequate social security for the workers is not provided. Commenting on the challenges of curbing youth crime, **Ms. Grynspan** pointed out that progress has been made on local level. This has to be expanded to national and regional levels. Concerning migration, she noted that recent

work in this area concentrated on the issue of remittances. It was highlighted that studies should also focus on family separation and its social implications. On the topic of policy coherence, **Ms. Grynspan** acknowledged that substantial progress has been made among UN agencies and the Bretton Woods Institutions are participating in some of the programmes, too.

Mr. Kastberg stated that the issues of child labour and youth unemployment are connected. If children have to work, they cannot enjoy a sound education. To prevent child labour a broad approach is needed, beginning even before the child is born. Children of adolescent mothers are more often engaged in child labour. Regarding education, food sufficiency is a pre-requisite for a decent education. Malnutrition during pregnancy affects the learning capabilities of the child. **Mr. Kastberg** also pointed out the need for bilingual education in regions with an indigenous population. It was stressed that the middle-income countries increasingly feel left out and forgotten by the UN system. He noted that adequate measures should be taken by ECOSOC.