

**High-Level Segment of the UN
Economic and Social Council**

“Creating an environment, at the national and international levels, conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development”

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Contribution

by Mr Vladimir Špidla

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Mr Chairman,

If I may, I would first like to congratulate ECOSOC for including this topic on the agenda of the High-Level Segment. I would also like to mention the quality of the preliminary report drawn up by the Secretary-General, which acknowledges the importance of productive employment and decent work for the three pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Productive employment and decent work can make a major contribution to the alleviation of poverty and the fight against social exclusion, because they make it possible to maximise the advantages of globalisation and mitigate its adverse effects.

Productive employment and decent work constitute a positive element of development policy. Unfortunately, this potential was either neglected or underused in development strategies for too long, and it is largely absent from the Millennium Development Goals. On the other hand, the United Nations Summit in September two thousand and five (2005) stressed the need to promote productive employment and decent work, and it is in order to give concrete expression to that commitment that we are assembled here today.

The challenges are considerable: half of the world's workers earn less than two dollars a day, and half the world's population lacks any social welfare. Even though every country is confronted with the restructuring and adjustment which globalisation entails, not all countries are in a position to manage its consequences or capitalise on it. Developing the social dimension of globalisation therefore requires increased efforts in terms of both solidarity and governance at national and international level.

Last May, the European Commission adopted an important communication on the promotion of decent work. In that communication, the Commission stated its determination to help to promote decent work for all. This initiative also dovetails with our efforts to strengthen the social dimension of globalisation.

The international community and all the countries concerned must realise the aim of promoting productive employment and decent work. A reliable system of monitoring implementation must also be put in place.

The European Commission has proposed a strategy and guidelines for more effectively mobilising the internal and external policies of the European Union, particularly as regards development, trade, migration, and bilateral and multilateral external affairs. It also intends to strengthen its partnerships and dialogue with other bodies. It will actively cooperate with the international organisations in the United Nations family, including the ILO and regional organisations, the social partners, the business world and other actors in civil society which are also involved in development.

Generally speaking, non-state actors should be more closely involved in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of strategies and programmes of poverty reduction and development. The same goes for the coordination and programming of the external aid provided by the European Community, the United Nations and other international and national donors. The European consensus on development reached last December, which mobilises both the European institutions and the EU Member States, is consistent with this approach.

The European Commission believes that the objective of decent work requires an integrated approach based on four pillars: productive and freely chosen employment; labour law, including fundamental rules governing employment; social welfare; and social dialogue. The arrangements for these four pillars must also take account of the magnitude of the issues involved. The activities of the United Nations and other actors should reflect this integrated, multi-dimensional approach.

Like the Lisbon Strategy and the European Social Agenda, attaining the objective of decent work requires a coherent, holistic approach which combines economic, employment, environmental and social objectives. The approach towards decent work should, however, be sufficiently open for its implementation to take account of the specific characteristics and diversity of different economic and social conditions in the world.

The extent to which we succeed in attaining the goal of decent work will depend on how fully the countries and regions concerned can make that goal their own. The European Commission therefore supports the establishment and implementation of national decent work programmes, which should be incorporated into national and regional development programmes, poverty reduction strategies and the United Nations' outline plans for development aid. Those plans should reflect the needs and priorities of the countries and regions in question.

From our perspective, national programmes are a key indicator of efforts to promote decent work. The European Commission also believes that all countries should ratify and apply fundamental social legislation and other ILO conventions, such as the Labour Inspections Convention, the new Convention on the promotion of health and safety at work, and the Convention on maritime work.

The European Commission looks forward to cooperating with the United Nations and its specialised agencies, such as the ILO, to devise indicators for monitoring efforts in the field of decent work.

The Commission calls on all the relevant actors to make good on the commitments to decent work which they made at the September 2005 Summit.

We want to see major progress between now and two thousand and fifteen (2015), and we want an integrated action plan developed for the purpose in cooperation with the ILO and other actors.

I am confident that our deliberations will help to bring the process forward.

Thank you for your attention.