

**Conclusions of the High-Level Round Table on Promoting Full Employment,
By the Chair, Mr. Aart-Jan de Geus,
Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, the Netherlands**

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Ten years ago, in Copenhagen, we committed ourselves to promoting full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work.

The High-Level Round Table (HLRT) on Promoting Full Employment met yesterday. It reviewed the implementation of commitment three of Copenhagen on full employment. A lively, inspiring and thought provoking exchange of views took place. Participants from all over the world shared the view that the promotion of full, productive and freely chosen employment should continue to form the centre of our social development strategies.

It is an honour for me, as Chairman of the Round Table, to present the following conclusions.

The High-Level Round Table on Promoting Full Employment recognized and recommended actions in four main areas.

1. Focus on the potential of the global labour force

The Round Table recognized the world's growing labour force as a strong potential for economic growth and poverty reduction, with young people constituting the overwhelming share of this potential.

The Round Table therefore recommended:

- To strengthen the link between education and employment, so that people become more "trainable and employable"
- To develop the skills potential of workers so that they can be qualified for jobs in new and emerging sectors

2. Make employment the cornerstone for development

The Round Table recognized that providing decent jobs is the best way to get people out of poverty. Decent work is the engine of economic growth and a prerequisite for poverty eradication and fostering social integration. It also recognized that a large part of the world's unemployed are young people. In this regard it stressed that youth should

be seen as an asset, not a problem. Youth employment should be a starting point for an international strategy on employment. The Round Table further recognized that full employment is a prerequisite for better and more equally distributed economic growth and development.

The Round Table therefore recommended:

- To build upon the Youth Employment Strategy contained in the MDGs, as a first step in strengthening and broadening the focus on employment-oriented development strategies.
- To increase participation in the Youth Employment Network, including through fostering partnerships.
- To respect fundamental labour standards of the International Labour Organization.
- To transfer technology and know-how as a means for building employment and fostering education and skills development.

3. Global initiatives on enhancing full employment

The Round Table recognized the importance of advancing global initiatives that strengthen policy coherence both nationally and internationally, especially with regard to the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions. It also recognized that the centrality of employment to poverty reduction and development is lacking in international policy discussions: the overarching goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment, with full respect for core labour standards is currently absent from the Millennium Development Goals. It further recognized that globalization and international trade are closely linked to the employment situation in developing countries. Increased market access will lead to job creation, particularly in the agricultural sector. In the same vein, macroeconomic policies should incorporate employment creation as a key objective. The Round Table recognized the importance of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the recommendations contained therein.

The Round Table therefore recommended:

- To enhance interagency co-operation and coherence of policies. This is not only a challenge for the international organizations. Coherence of policies should also be enhanced at the national level. Member States should speak with one voice in the international fora.
- The promotion of full employment should be the bridge between Copenhagen, the Millennium Development Goals, the ILO and the International Financial Institutions (IFI's).
- To incorporate the goal of decent work for everyone in the review of the Millennium Declaration and the MDG's.
- To strengthen the Commission for Social Development within the overall framework of UN reform

4. Recognition and recommendations: Develop national action plans

The Round Table recognized the need for national action to develop employment plans that support the promotion of full, productive and freely chosen employment. This includes special attention to the informal economy which represents the majority share of the labour force in many developing countries.

The Round Table therefore recommended:

- To create national employment plans which fully respect fundamental principles and rights at work,
- To intensify efforts to “formalize” the informal economy, including initiatives to extend regulations and labour protections to informal workers, as well as provide credit to small and micro enterprises to build up their businesses.

Mr Chairperson,

I hope and trust that participants in the High-Level Round Table on full employment will go home invigorated and inspired to continue to implement our Commitments of Copenhagen. Because it is at the national level that action is most needed. Each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development. National action plans on employment need to be developed and strengthened, with particular emphasis on specific groups, such as women and youth. Ten years after Copenhagen there is still a lot of work to be done.