

## UN CSocD panel on Emerging Issues: the social drivers of sustainable development

Interactive debate

Presentation by Rudi Delarue, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

14/2/2014

### Summary points

I would like to thank the UN secretariat for the interesting background Note for today's discussion. It reflects an integrated and forward looking approach to social development and to strengthening the interplay of the social pillar with the economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

The moderator has asked the panellists to illustrate how different players try to put this integrated approach and the social drivers of sustainable development into practice. I will therefore use some concrete illustrations of EU internal and external policies and actions that can be of use for the debate. The moderator also requested to identify possible critical gaps or additional issues that panellists consider as essential.

It is encouraging that the need for an **integrated approach** to development, capable of addressing the multidimensional needs and expectations of people in today's world, confronted with social and economic uncertainty, growing inequalities and environmental degradation, is reflected in more and more initiatives by the international community. Both industrialised and developing countries have to do their part of the homework. International surveys show that the concerns of people in terms of jobs and social protection figure very high in rankings of concerns and priorities that matters.

The ongoing efforts by the UN system and all stakeholders to work out an integrated "Post 2015 framework" are very important in this context.

The note rightly highlights that the future Post 2015 framework will have to ensure that the 3 pillars of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental stewardship - are treated more equally than has been the case so far. The social dimension will have to be developed in a more comprehensive way addressing not only poverty reduction in all its dimensions but also e.g. enhanced productive capacity, decent work, social protection floors, inequalities, discriminations and empowerment.

The Note also underlines that development strategies need to promote **inclusive growth and prioritise employment and decent work** as primary development objectives. Economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to reduce poverty and inequality and to improve living standards. Employment-centred economic policies are very important in this context (see e.g. also Global Jobs Pact, G 20).

It is very interesting that the UN secretariat Note includes conditions that can shape process of change and highlights key issues pertaining to social drivers of sustainable development and

relates this to social structures and capacities for individuals, groups and institutions to influence change.

It is indeed necessary but not sufficient to develop a coherent narrative that is shared by all, both in developed and developing countries. It is equally important to identify and launch **actions and initiatives** pursuing notably the empowerment of individuals and groups, the strengthening of their capacities, realise human rights and improvement of social and economic governance at all levels.

Inclusive sustained growth, employment and decent work are not just specific components or silo issues. They have a strong **transformative capacity**. Decent work transforms the contribution of productive capacity into income generation, social inclusion and opportunities for workers, women en men, and their families. Inclusive sustained growth, decent work and social protection floors require social structures, institutions, capacities of individuals and groups as well as social normes and values. At the same time inclusive sustained growth, decent work and social protection floors strengthen the capacities and functioning of individuals, groups and institutions.

The challenges of inclusive growth, underemployment, unemployment and inactivity/resignation, in particular of youth, decent work deficits both in the formal and informal economy, the transition towards a green economy with green and decent jobs and the need for extending social protection coverage should be addressed in the future post 2015 framework.

### Illustrations

- An integrated approach to development (employment, social, economic and environmental objectives) is pursued by the main EU internal and external objectives and policies. I would like to refer to the EU 2020 strategy on smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with its 5 interrelated headline targets and in the EU renewed development cooperation policy (Agenda for change on inclusive growth and sustainable development).
  - This is important for EU policy coherence when operating at international forums and in bilateral relations (sustainable development chapters in EU trade agreements, cooperation with EU partner countries on employment and social policy).
- The EU has also taken initiatives on the strengthening of the social dimension of the European Economic and Monetary Union in the context of social and economic governance as a response to very significant impact of the global financial and economic crisis and in particular the sovereign debt crisis.
- The initiatives on strengthening the social dimension of EMU covers also anticipation and corrective dimensions as well as better involving social partners at EU level and in the EU Member states (eg. the scoreboard with 5 employment and social indicators, joint employment report, support of EU Member states reforms by EU funds). Other steps in strengthening the social dimension of EMU are still under reflection and debate.

- The social and employment situation in EU, including analyses and measurement such as on inclusive growth, inequalities, poverty and social dimension of EMU, is e.g. part of the annual European Commission flagship publication " Employment and Social Developments in EU".
- Universal social protection: social protection floors – horizontal and vertical dimension:
  - part of EU social model even if systems are different between EU MS, recent EU social investment package, social protection and inclusion strategy, EU MS have ratified international conventions related to SP (ILO, CoE).
  - EU external assistance and EU external relations promote social protection, EU actively contributed to adoption of ILO Recommendation 202 and has adopted a communication on promoting social protection in EU development cooperation within 3 months after the adoption of the ILO Recommendation.
- Green employment: The EU is also working on how to generate decent work in sectors and production systems that do not degrade and harm the environment:
  - EU 2020
  - EU employment package
  - Upcoming initiative on green employment
  - Agenda for change
- Participation: social dialogue part of EU treaties and actions and EU involves also wider civil society in e.g. social inclusion.

### **Critical gaps or additional issues**

Global supply chain issues: Goods and services are more and more produced and delivered through global supply chains. Recent events in e.g. Ready Made Garment sector has illustrated important decent work deficits (e.g. health and safety at work, living wages, rights at work, lack of social protection) that should be addressed.

Transitioning from informal to formal economy: in many developing countries up to 90% of the workers and business operate in informal economy with lack of career perspectives, limited or no skills development, no or very limited social protection and access to services and no or very limited contribution to taxation. International community is developing new initiatives and future EU external assistance will also deal with this. Within the EU there is the fight against undeclared work.