



Check against delivery

ECOSOC Integration Segment
“Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”
CSocD perspective

March 31st, 2015

Dear Mr. Vice-President of ECOSOC,
Your Excellencies,

I am honoured to attend this session of the ECOSOC Integration Segment, as Chair of the Commission for Social Development. This year’s topic “Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all” is really timely and pertinent.

Productive employment and decent work for all is one of the three major pillars of social development, as identified 20 years ago at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. Eradication of poverty and social integration, based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights complement the vision of the Heads of States and Governments. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action recognise that productive work and employment are central elements of development, as well as decisive elements of human identity. Full, and adequately, and appropriately remunerated employment is an effective method of combating poverty and promoting social integration.

At the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen (1995), Member States committed to promote productive employment in their efforts to achieve social development. Promoting productive employment and decent work were considered both as goals and as means to combat poverty and promote social integration.

As the key UN body in charge with the follow up and the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the Commission constantly examines aspects pertaining to achieving employment. The priority themes of the 35th session, as well as the 45th and 46th sessions were dedicated to full employment and decent work – as a further recognition of the need for policies that adequately and efficiently combat unemployment and promote development.

The 53rd session of the Commission, held in February this year, was devoted to “Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world”. Member states highlighted the central role of decent work to achieve sustainable development. Discussions pointed out that inclusive, equitable and sustainable development can only be achievable through promoting employment and decent work opportunities for people living in poverty, and for other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Your Excellencies,

As you are well aware, since Copenhagen, the world did not reach the goal of full employment: there were over 201 million people unemployed in 2014. Nearly 40 per cent are between the ages of 15 and 24. An additional 280 million jobs need to be created by 2019 to close the global employment gap caused by the recent global crisis. These rates of unemployment remain unacceptably too high.

Furthermore, our efforts must also address those informal and vulnerable jobs, as these perpetuate the risk of falling back into poverty. In developing countries, more than a half of the population work in the informal sector, without social protection or decent working conditions. Even in countries with advanced economy, jobs have become less stable. Job insecurity and the rise of poorly-paid, precarious work have led to growing income insecurity.

The centrality of employment and decent jobs for people-centred sustainable development has been well recognized. Decent jobs enable people to gain income necessary to sustain livelihoods, to improve the quality of life and well-beings, and create a path to escape poverty at the individual level, while contributing to economic growth by enhancing labour market participation, and effectively addressing a major challenge of “low productivity traps”.

During the 53rd session of the Commission, speakers welcomed efforts aimed at prioritizing employment creation, including those aimed at bringing more women into the labour market. Member states also focused on the importance of adequately preparing workers for the labour market through life- long learning and through matching skills training with market needs. Among good-practice policies shared, member states referred to the promotion of small and medium sized enterprises, or the creation of green economy jobs. Creating jobs in the sectors that contribute to preserving or restoring the

quality of the environment (i.e., forest conservations, sustainable agriculture, water treatment and renewable energy in rural areas) not only sustain economic growth, but also reduce risks for further natural resources depletion and environmental degradation.

Your Excellencies,

Expanding decent work opportunities will create positive synergies among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Employment and decent work are critical to reducing poverty and fostering social inclusion. Therefore, achieving full employment and decent work for all must be considered as a major goal, as well as a means to achieve sustainable development in the post-2015 development framework. The issue of vulnerable jobs in the informal sector would require further attention in the work towards the post-2015 development agenda.

In addition, decent work would contribute to social and political stability, through social dialogue and participatory mechanisms for policy design and implementation. In this regard, ILO core labour standards need to be implemented in all countries.

In promoting employment and decent work, special attention should be given to vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups. Member states acknowledged, also during our session, that, in particular, youth high unemployment and underemployment remain some of the most difficult challenges and require special attention. If not effectively addressed, this will not only create a lost generation, but will also lead to social tensions and may threaten social cohesion.

Your Excellencies,

From the perspective of the Commission for Social Development, achieving the core objectives of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all, as well as achieving social integration based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights are cornerstones for the sustainable future we want. In this respect, policies must be coherent and people-centred if they are to produce the desired impact.

It is also important to bear in mind that, paraphrasing a famous quote and even more famous public figure, “social development is sustainable development, and sustainable development is social development, once and for all.”