



EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Comments for Co-Chair meeting: “Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women’s empowerment”

Statement by Workers and Trade Union Major Group – joint statement by the International Trade Union Confederation, Education International and Public Services International and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) representing more than 250 million workers.

There is broad recognition that a major failure of the MDG framework was its indifference to inequality. Its successor global development framework cannot fail to address it.

Wage inequality explains a big part of income inequality, because the share of wages in total income declined over the last two decades in 70 per cent of countries, despite an increase in employment rates globally.

Most of the jobs created in the last two to three decades are short-term, part-time, temporary, casual or informal, and largely precarious. A majority of these lower paid, less protected workers are women.

To address and redress income inequality, the post-2015 Development Agenda must, above all, focus on employment, well-being and security. This means that it must also address gender inequity in the labour market and must address social policies.

This requires policies and laws to protect all workers, whether in the informal or the formal economy, and to ensure compliance, instead of impunity, of anti-discrimination and minimum wage legislation as well as core labour standards.

In addition, gender sensitive policies that take account of the constraints and the discrimination faced by women - and, especially, of the unpaid care work carried out by women - must be designed and implemented.

Trade unions play a key role in the fair distribution of both income and power and are at the forefront of policy debate related to social and economic inequality. The post-2015 Development Agenda must encompass objectives for labour including freedom of association, collective bargaining and minimum wages, which play crucial roles in reducing income inequality.

Free trade agreements and massive tax evasion by multinational companies and others have undermined the ability of states to implement public policies that increase the income position of low-income groups, because of international legal constraints and decreased government revenues.

To address economic and social inequality effectively, the post-2015 development agenda must provide an earmarked policy space for governments and social partners to define and then implement efficient policies for employment and for social transfer – at the same time as carving out public services from trade agreements.

But inequality cannot be addressed through economic and labour policies alone. The post-2015 Agenda must include a goal on the implementation of social protection floors as defined in the Bachelet Report, and the ILO Recommendation 202 that sets an international standard to be applied at national level.

To truly reverse growing inequality and strive to achieve equity, targets must be established for the basic social security guarantees that include universal access to essential health care and basic income security to protect standards of living when people are sick, unemployed, disabled and old, or cannot work when having to care for infants or sick family members. Inclusion in society is the only means to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As trade unions, we also demand:

1. A stand-alone sustainable development goal on gender equality that includes targets and indicators aimed at the gender wage gap, women's participation and leadership, the unpaid care economy and its impact on women's ability to fully enjoy their economic, social, cultural and political rights, women's access to education, information, land and credit, to stop and prevent violence against women and girls and fair portrayal of women in the media. The gender equality goal must be grounded in the existing international policy and normative frameworks.
2. A decent work goal with a target to increase the minimum living wage for women and men, and indicators regarding the number of women and men in formal waged employment in public and private organisations;
3. A stand-alone education goal to ensure universal free quality education through which girls and boys, and men and women can gain knowledge and develop the critical thinking abilities and skills that are needed to question, conceptualise and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, and actively contribute to the sustainable and democratic development of society;
4. The inclusion in the new framework of member states' responsibility for the provision of quality public services for a safe and sustainable future for all including services that are necessary to ensure the effective respect of all economic, social and cultural rights of women and men, such as the right to housing, food security, health care, social services, physical and sexual security and income security.