

Good afternoon. Thanks to UN DESA for inviting me to speak at this special session on SDG 10.

I represent the WIEGO network – a global network that works with the working poor in the informal economy and has helped build a global movement of informal workers: 1000 organizations in 90 countries with 5 million members

Key Facts – first-ever global estimates (2018) show that 61% of all workers globally, 90 % of all workers in developing countries are informally employed – a total of 2 billion workers; most are self-employed but some are wage employed working in formal firms and households not just in informal enterprises

Most are poor and from ethnic or racial minorities, In many countries, more women workers than men workers are informally employed

Key Messages – # 1 - Compared to formal workers, informal workers suffer greater deficits in Decent Work (deficits in opportunities, rights, protection and voice) and in Decent Living (deficits in housing, basic infrastructure services, social services)

Unlike formal enterprises, the owners of capital, the informal self-employed are stigmatized, penalized and even criminalized for trying to earn an honest living. And then, to make matters worse, informal workers are blamed for being non-productive –

# 2 - we cannot reduce inequality so long as informal workers are stigmatized and penalized rather than recognized and valued for their contributions to the economy, to HHs, to society and to the environment

Consider the case of two groups of urban informal workers: street vendors and waste pickers

Both groups are harassed, have their goods confiscated, face evictions and arrests

Both groups need secure workplaces – public space for vendors, sorting-storage sheds for waste pickers + basic infrastructure services at these workplaces

Good Practice Examples -

Street Vendors – India (SV Zones & TVCs) + Durban (shelter, infrastructure, legal services)

Waste Pickers – Brazil + Colombia + India

These good practice examples are the result of negotiations between organizations of informal workers and local and national governments – they involve in other words the intersection of SDG # 16 (inclusive institutions) + SDG # 8 (on decent and productive work) and SDG # 11 (on inclusive and sustainable cities) – leading to SDG 10

To sum up, in order to reduce inequality we need to embrace, rather than stigmatize, the working poor in the informal economy. And we need to change the legal and policy environment – which currently privileges those at the tip of the economic pyramid - to support and protect the informal workforce at the base of the economic pyramid - by involving organizations of IWs in the reform process

Two guiding principles - No One Left Behind + Nothing for Us Without Us