



**Meeting of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
United Nations - New York – 17-19 June 2013**

European Union and its Member States - Speaking Points on “Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture”

[These address the themes of session as well as the issues raised in the background briefs]

The EU and its Member States stress the need to **integrate the work on SDGs and on a “post-2015 development agenda”**. We promote a single overarching post-2015 framework that is universally applicable and recognises that poverty eradication and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing and interlinked. The following are preliminary ideas and we are committed to listen, consider, interact and assess proposals made by others.

We thank the Technical Support Team (TST) for the issues briefs which provide a good basis for discussion.

On Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth

• While great emphasis must be rightly placed on securing the conditions that will create growth and jobs, **decent work and social protection** are key elements for ensuring basic living standards and driving inclusive and sustainable growth. For people all around the world, they are essential to escape from poverty and they contribute to equality, equity, justice, peace and security. Against this background, we want to emphasize four key messages today:

1. First, “not all jobs are decent jobs”. There should be a thorough reflection on how the promotion of decent work could best be addressed in the elaboration of the post-2015 framework. In particular, we need a better understanding and measurement of the quality of work, taking into account pay, working conditions, safety and exposure to hazardous substances, form of employment and social security arrangements. We further emphasize the importance of paying wages that allow workers to live in dignity. We pay special attention to the ongoing ILO processes regarding the Decent Work Agenda and its work on measuring decent work. Consideration should also be given on how best to incorporate the respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work. Valuable lessons could be drawn from the World Bank’s World Development Report (WDR) 2013 on Jobs which looks at decent jobs as key drivers of development.

2. Second, many countries face worsening youth employment situation. Some 621 million young people worldwide are estimated to be neither employed, nor in school or training. We need to consider how best to address this issue. The EU's own response to this problem includes the promotion of youth guarantee schemes which ensure that all young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship. While being aware that the right policies depend on national context, we are ready to share our experiences with all interested parties.

3. Third, we emphasize the critical role that social protection plays. It is an investment in human development and inclusive sustainable economic growth, when social protection systems successfully promote higher labour market participation, both through active labour market measures and protection against vulnerability and social risk, which provide the level of social security that all people need in order to enhance their livelihoods. We reiterate that everyone has the right to social security, as stated in

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We should implement step by step the ILO Recommendation No 202 concerning national floor for social protection and consider this, among others important elements, in the elaboration of the post-2015 framework. We also wish to emphasise the role and relevance of health systems for social protection and well-being, as well as the commitments made with respect to universal access to health care.

4. Fourth, ensuring basic living standards for everyone goes hand in hand with addressing inequalities and ensuring that the benefits of sustainable growth and development are shared by all members of society. There are several ways of addressing inequalities and their root-causes. Tackling inequalities is closely related to eradicating poverty and this relation should be reflected in the poverty lines we define. For example in the EU, we use a three-dimensional poverty concept: 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion': this includes people living below a certain threshold of the median income (after social transfers) and/or people severely materially deprived and/or people living in household with very low work intensity. A related proposal recently presented by the World Bank and IMF focusing on fostering income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population in every country could also serve as an inspiration. In fact, GDP growth may translate into different household income dynamics in different segments of society. We must strive to leave no one behind, delivering progress for all social groups and income quintiles, and secure equality of opportunity. We welcome efforts to complement GDP with a number of measures including ones than reflect inequalities.

- Finally, it is key to keep in mind some **crucial cross-cutting issues** regarding the above points:
 - We believe that **gender equality** cuts across all social issues discussed today and ought to be appropriately reflected in the elaboration of the post-2015 framework.
 - The inclusion of **people with disabilities** should also be appropriately addressed.
 - We need to look at poverty, prosperity and well-being within planetary boundaries, from a **multidimensional angle going beyond the monetary income measure alone**. We welcome research undertaken to better reflect this multidimensionality in monitoring.
 - **Promoting decent work, social protection and addressing inequalities can also help enhancing global sustainability in its three dimensions, and vice versa**. For example, social dialogue and social protection if properly designed, can also contribute to achieving environmental goals. The promotion of social protection, decent green jobs and associated skills are central to the transformation to a sustainable and inclusive economy. This is also important for the agricultural sector worldwide which still provides approximately 50% of jobs.
 - **Governance, transparency and participative government** methods are also essential for ensuring that measures met the needs of citizens.

On Education:

- We need to address the challenges to ensure **equitable access at all levels** of education and **quality learning for all in a lifelong perspective**. We must **go beyond primary** education and promote a **balanced development of the whole education sector**, from early childhood interventions to vocational and tertiary education.

1.

- The elaboration of the post-2015 framework needs to address the **unfinished business** of the current MDGs. In education, unfinished business means getting the **over 61 million out-of school children** to primary school. This requires particular attention to children from marginalized groups, such as children in conflict affected areas, ethnic minorities and children and youth with disabilities (**equitable access**).
- **Gender equality** must continue to be a priority, with a particular focus on **access and completion of primary and lower-secondary** levels, ensuring that school is a safe environment for girls and promoting educational systems which do not reproduce gender stereotypes.

- Education is a fundamental tool to **protect children** from harm and exploitation, while helping to meet psychosocial needs of **conflict affected** and **displaced children** and **restore normality** and hope for the future.

- **On quality learning, we are committed to ensuring that by 2030 every child completes at least basic education and has basic literacy and numeracy skills.** Challenges related to **teachers** need to be addressed: approximately 8-10 million additional competent and motivated teachers are required to provide a full quality basic education for all. Teachers training, conditions and management, but also school leadership and governance are key issues.

2.

- **Education must be relevant: providing necessary skills to access the labour market** (not just technical, but also basic and transferrable skills). Quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) with functioning links to the labour market is an essential element in encouraging inclusive and sustainable growth and enabling countries to diversify their economies and provide decent work, especially in regions with a large youth cohort such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Adequate VET together with arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning should also address the realities of informal economy in providing young people whose livelihoods depend on the informal economy with the necessary skills to avoid poverty and benefit from and contribute to sustainable growth.

- **Adult literacy and second chance education** (including employment-related) should be better addressed in the future. **775 million** adults, two-thirds of whom are women, still **lack basic reading and writing skills**. Adult literacy is not only a problem in the developing world, as around 160 million adults in high income countries have very poor literacy skills, and therefore it needs to be tackled as a universal challenge. Youth and adults who by 2015 do not have basic reading and neither writing nor solid technical skills should have an opportunity to continue their education and training.

- There must be proper emphasis on monitoring and development of measurable **indicators** for learning both at national and international level (universality principle). All targets and indicators should be relevant, clear, disaggregated, measurable, simple and easily understood by a broader public.

- **Ensuring quality education needs long-term, predictable and sustainable financing** based on domestic resources and sometimes on international resources, and private sector and the business community can make a substantial contribution. **Accountability** is also a crucial element in order to ensure the development of education systems, which work for universal access and quality education.

- Education's **role in sustainable development** must be made explicit. The principles of sustainable development, as well as examples on how to adopt these principles in daily life, should be internalized in all levels of education to ensure that education strengthens people's understanding of sustainable practices.

On Culture and development:

- **Cultural sector and actors** have an important role to play as a **lever for human and social development as well as for democratic change.**

- Strengthening the cultural fabric of a community provides the basis for its **social and economic development**, while promoting values such as diversity and freedom of expression. Cultural dynamism creates an environment that facilitates dialogue between communities in fragile context as well as social cohesion and inclusion. It is a key element in ensuring effective ownership, empowering youth and women, and for enabling democratic transition, human rights and social stability as a whole.

- **Culture and the creative industries have an economic potential but also contribute to sustainable development** in a fast urban transition in most partner countries, both through heritage and cultural tourism, participation of local populations but also through environmentally conscious actors in urban planning and the better life it offers to citizens.