

PRESS RELEASE



DJIBOUTI

**STATEMENT BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON BEHALF OF
THE AFRICAN GROUP**

**ON THE THEME: "EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT
WORK FOR ALL, SOCIAL PROTECTION, YOUTH,
EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

**DURING THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

NEW YORK, JUNE 17, 2013

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Co-Chairs,

1. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the African Group. The Group associates itself with the Statement delivered by the Permanent representative of Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China.
2. The Group acknowledges the presence of Mr. Greg Vines, Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform, International Labour Organization (ILO). I would like also to take this opportunity to thank the Technical Support Team (TST) for preparations and the presentation of the "issues brief" that we find useful.
3. At the outset, the African Group would like to underscore the interlinkages between employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture.

Co-chairs,

4. Productive employment and decent work are essential elements in achieving the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities and the respect of human dignity. Employment objectives need to become central to global actions and mechanisms. Therefore, a development agenda which gives priority to productive employment creation, especially for youth, is of the utmost importance for the African Group. A global strategy on youth and employment needs to be conceptualized within the broader objective of full employment, decent work, and dignified livelihoods. The capacity behind employment generation is fundamentally linked to reviving and enhancing productive policies, through adequate finance, investment, technology and trade policies.
5. The Group is of the view that job growth requires a structural transformation of African economies through industrialisation that induces value addition and economic diversification. Industrialisation is a powerful tool to generate inclusive and sustained economic growth, create productive employment and decent work and lift millions of people out of poverty.
6. According to the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa, "More than 70 per cent of Africans earn their living from vulnerable employment as economies continue to depend heavily on production and export of primary commodities. Investments remain concentrated in capital-intensive extractive industries, with few forward and backward linkages with the rest of the economy. Wider diversification from primary commodity production is therefore needed, as is intensified value addition in commodity sectors".

7. In that vein, the African Group refers to The MDG Report 2013: Assessing progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals, co-authored by the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and UNDP. According to that report, it is critical to reduce inequalities in Africa and one of the causes of those inequalities is the current structure of African economies. The reports states that, I quote: "Inequalities result in part from the enclave structure of most African economies, which concentrates economic activity in the extractive and commodity-producing sectors. With limited spillover to other sectors, such production patterns generate few jobs, concentrate wealth in resource-rich sectors, encourage inequality and sow the seeds of social unrest". End of quote. To achieve the transformation of African economies, the report recommends the promotion of industrialization and structural transformation, through *inter alia* economic diversification and value chains linking raw material producers to end-users.
8. Industrialisation will help developing countries, especially African countries, to address the issues of unemployment as well as employment quality, including underemployment, informality, vulnerability and working poverty. It will also strengthen, through wealth creation and taxation, the mobilization of domestic resources which, in turn, can help to achieve other development goals and targets, including education and social protection.
9. To conclude on this aspect, the African Group would like to express its attachment to a stand-alone goal on industrialization, employment and decent jobs.

Co-Chairs,

10. The transformation of developing countries economies through, *inter alia* industrialisation and economic diversification, will require more skilled workers. In that sense, it appears necessary to revisit our ambitions in terms of education and training. Clearly, education and training policies should be aimed to support economies transformation and to prepare citizens to productive employment based on requirements of new labour markets. They should meet the specific needs of women and youth. Better education for women is likely to improve the gender composition of employment especially in nonagricultural sectors.
11. Education, which should remain a stand-alone goal, should go beyond primary school and even secondary school to encompass vocational and tertiary education. It is of critical importance to broaden the scope of the goal on education. Indeed, capacity-building and technology transfer, essential tools in the implementation of SDGs, cannot be guaranteed by narrowing down education targets to the sole primary education. This one, of course, should remain on the agenda, with both quantitative and qualitative targets.

Co-chairs,

12. Social protection has the potential to contribute to poverty eradication. It can also play an important role in the achievement of goals on food security and nutrition, health, education, inequality to name a few. As such, social protection appears as a cross-cutting issue and could be incorporated as a target across several goals. Targets related to social protection should be based on ILO standards. However, their implementation will be costly.

13. The African Group is of the view that productive employment and decent work, in the context of industrialisation and economies diversification, remain one of the best ways to achieve social protection by providing income, cutting working poverty and vulnerable employment and by reducing the scope of regimes such as cash transfers or school feeding programmes. By putting more people in decent and productive work, countries will be in better position to define their national floors of social protection and to extend social security vertically (providing more comprehensive services and benefits) and horizontally (extending coverage to a greater number) to cover all groups.
14. With regard to culture, the African Group recognizes its potential to contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development, as “enabler” and “driver”. The Group will consider, as appropriate, the possibility to define it as a separate goal or as a cross-cutting issue.
15. In the meantime, the Group would like to underscore the need to respect cultural diversity as well as the importance to incorporate issues related to the protection of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions in the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you.