

Remarks by Ambassador David Roet, Israel Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, for the US/Canada/Israel Team, 4th Session of the SDG Open Working Group, on Employment and Decent Work for all, Social Protection, Youth, Education and Culture

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New York, NY

June 18, 2013

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Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.

On behalf of Canada, the United States and Israel, I want to first of all thank both Co-Chairs for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the panelists who fueled our discussions yesterday with important food for thought.

We listened carefully to these fruitful discussions, and heard a number of interesting ideas which will be very useful as we develop our thinking.

Mr. Co-Chair, employment and decent work are central to the Post-2015 Agenda and the vision of inclusive and sustainable growth that we believe is motivating all of us in this process. This is a powerful message from the UN's global consultations, we hear it every day in all of our countries, and it is also a prominent recommendation from the High Level Panel.

Our team sees different ways to reflect the centrality of the issues that are the focus of the first half of this session in a set of development goals, including a standalone goal, cross-cutting targets, or both. However we end up formulating our goals, we believe several considerations are essential:

First, we need sustained and strategic attention to what underpins enabling environments for inclusive growth— including the reliability and adequacy of infrastructure and the policy and regulatory framework.

Second, it is important to reflect the integrity of the concept of decent work which includes not only job creation, but also social protection, workers' rights, and social dialogue.

Third, fostering entrepreneurship is particularly essential, [as we heard emphasized many times yesterday]. Entrepreneurship drives economic development—creating jobs, invigorating markets, and expanding opportunities, particularly for women and youth.

Culture, as a source of creativity and innovation, is very important in this context. It is a valuable resource to address the many challenges we face and to find appropriate solutions to local contexts.

Fourth, our goal framework must emphasize gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite progress, large gaps remain when it comes to women's employment, labor force participation, salaries, and patterns of exclusion from certain jobs and economic sectors. Additional efforts are required to promote the employment of rural women, or women living in the geographic or social periphery.

Finally, more should generally be done to increase opportunities for more work among vulnerable groups – such as migrants, youth at risk, indigenous people and people with disabilities.

Mr. Co-Chair, people have the power to be drivers of social change and economic development. But in order to do so, they must be nurtured in a supportive environment. People need protection against the risks and shocks that can drive them into poverty. Social protection is integral to the concept of decent work—and social protection schemes are a critical component of the effort to enable people to integrate into the labor market.

In today's world, only 20 percent of the population has adequate social security coverage, and more than half lack any coverage at all. If we want to reduce poverty, if we want to address inequality, promoting social protection policies is fundamental. And as was emphasized yesterday, the impact of these policies is multi-dimensional—social protection not only addresses the symptoms of poverty, but also some of its underlying causes.

Mr. Co-Chair, I will now turn to education, another fundamental issue to our agenda. Investment in education clearly benefits individuals and societies in every corner of the world. We have learned a great deal from the MDG experience that tells us that

alongside continued attention to access, we clearly need much more serious attention to the quality of education and to learning outcomes. What are children learning? How are they learning? Are youth developing economically relevant skills? Are they equipping themselves with the knowledge and perspectives to be engaged and tolerant citizens?

Investing in pre-school years is crucial. Children need to receive a good foundation and pre-school education provides children with the tools and social skills to meet the challenges of higher levels of schooling.

A post-2015 education agenda must include finishing the unfinished business of gender-equal universal access to primary education and an objective that would encompass the lifecycle of a learner.

Schooling should provide students with transferable skills that will prepare them for today's global marketplace. Investments in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education are one of the most critical sources of transformation. It is equally important to ensure that entrepreneurial skills be taught as a core component of school curricula across all levels.

The SDG process must identify and address priority areas that contribute to the empowerment of youth. And in that context, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dynamic young delegate from the Netherlands, who really injected energy into our discussions. There are now more than 3 billion people under the age of 30; eighty-seven percent of them live in the developing world. In many places, the numbers continue to grow. As we work to establish SDGs, we must ensure that the voice of youth is heard and acknowledged.

Finally Mr. Co-Chair, one concluding remark. It seems that the importance of digital data has come up across the themes we have discussed—and it is clear that we need to take advantage of the data revolution to help monitor the progress of the goals we set and to ensure that 'no one is left behind.' We believe that the group could benefit from hearing more about data gaps and exploring how new technologies, among other means, can best help us fill them.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.

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