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ECOSOC
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Forum

Summary of Side

Event Business for a Sustainable Future: Addressing Poverty, Creating Jobs, and Ensuring a Just Transition

30 Jan 2024, 8:15 – 9:30 am EST

Background on the event

The Business and Industry Major Group, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Development Programme, hosted a virtual side event highlighting business contributions to SDGs, emphasizing poverty reduction, job creation, and a just transition. Discussions explored best practices and collaborative approaches, featuring voices from business, youth, SMEs, and international organizations. The aim of the discussions in 2 panels was to bring key issues and recommendations relating to private sector job creation

Key Issues discussed

The panelists discussed bottlenecks that impede decent jobs' accessibility and the challenges of the energy transition

- Employers' understanding: employers face challenges in gauging today's employees' changing needs and trends. This resulted in their limited knowledge of various types of contracts (part-time, freelance, etc.) needed to attract diverse needs of diverse people.
- Skills and size of talent pools: employees found tracking and acquiring skills relevant to the changing job market harder. Besides, with emerging industries such as high tech, clean tech and other sustainability-driven job categories facing few people with the qualifications companies require, new jobs in these sectors suffer from an insufficient workforce. People are often apprehensive about the term 'energy transition' as it is frequently associated with a pause in their current employment due to the time required for "better" (greener and bluer) jobs to come around. Therefore, this perceived delay and disruption contributes to people's reluctance toward renewables and the transition.
- Current infrastructure development and education inadequacies: the employee pools' quality can worsen if adequate access to education, mentorship, and apprenticeships to broaden their skills is not fostered. Also, with today's world being more interconnected, the public sector's slow development in digitization could result in the younger generations lacking the means to access opportunities.

Key recommendations for action

- **Fostering flexibility:** hiring should be skill-based, meaning employers should focus on skills over traditional qualifications in recruitment for emerging sectors or those needing an immediate workforce. Besides, employers could reach out to more potential employees by offering various types of contracts, such as part-time and freelance, that suit different types of talents.
- **Policy and infrastructure:** governments and corporate sectors should join hands to incentivize youths and create digital infrastructure. For the former, policies could be developed to shift the economy toward green and just practices, which would attract environmentally conscious and socially minded youth. Also, with support from the private sector, digitization and infrastructure investment could be made to supercharge technology that opens the door to new jobs and broader skill development.
- **Workforce Development:** as skills needed for the future evolve, there should be efficient systems for guiding employees and students toward evolving skill sets. This can be done by expanding education and training to increase access to workforce development programs, thus building a more extensive and more diverse talent pool. The keywords are “intergenerational” and “multi-stakeholder,” which center on integrating the networks of the private sector, the regulating power of the public sector, and the inputs from younger generations to spur workforce development initiatives. In addition, to ensure acceptance of a transition, and to foster a Just Transition, investing correctly is critical. That is investing in new quality jobs and in the training and education needed for workers to seamlessly step into those jobs and be productive right away.

From a broader standpoint and context, it is also imperative to understand how we, as Business and Industry and the main driving force of the economy, can shape the ecosystem to become a Strategic Fit for the Future, to tackle all challenges whether that be poverty eradication, job creation, or driving the energy transition. This can be achieved through the following “3 News:”

- **New Mechanism:** amidst geopolitical crises and climate challenges, the traditional role of the public sector as solely the regulator is deemed inadequate for addressing global issues, rather they must also become facilitators. Businesses advocate for a New Mechanism that fosters an interdependent relationship between the government and the private sectors, promoting inclusive growth and addressing poverty, job creation, and a just transition. This collaborative approach aims to bridge the inequality gap and achieve sustainable progress, emphasizing global cooperation and multilateralism as essential to the delivery of the 2030 goals.
- **New Business Model:** the business and industry community require a New Business Model emphasizing growth that integrates People and Planet achievements.
- **New Habit:** shifting the demand is essential for changes along the value chain. In an age where consumption rather than production dictates the future, fostering New Consumer Habits is crucial. This involves government and private sector collaboration to create a market favoring purpose-driven businesses, paving the way for a sustainable world.