

This statement was not delivered in Plenary due to time constraints.

## **Workers and Trade Union Major Group Closing Statement 19 July 2014**

The Workers and Trade Union Major Group welcomes the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The agreement on a set of sustainable development goals is a notable achievement, particularly given some very difficult points of divergence. We commend the co-chairs for their work and their efforts to facilitate meaningful participation by the major groups and civil society throughout the process.

We broadly welcome the content of the agreement, though there is of course, some grounds for improvement and we would have wanted to see a higher level of ambition, particularly on those issues that are priorities for the Workers and Trade Union Major Group. Nevertheless, we hope that Member States will work to both defend and improve this set of recommendations when the intergovernmental negotiation process begins in earnest.

It would be a major disappointment if the efforts of this group were to be lost amongst other inputs, which do not enjoy the legitimacy of having been agreed at intergovernmental level, with input from major groups and civil society. Indeed, we believe the OWG's recommendations should serve as the baseline from which further negotiations can continue. We, therefore, wait with great anticipation for guidance on the process through which the Post 2015 development agenda will be agreed, including the mechanisms for major groups and civil society contributions.

With respect to the adopted text, there is much which we commend, support and defend, and there are areas where we feel the text can still be improved. We will highlight these areas briefly.

We support Goal 4: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.* The first target on completion of free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education is ambitious and truly transformative. We welcome the emphasis on quality education and the inclusion of specific targets on early childhood, vocational and tertiary education as well as education for human rights, global citizenship and sustainable development. The target on safe and non-violent learning environments is particularly important.

However, we call for a higher level of ambition in target 4.c; the minimum here must be to ensure that all students are taught by qualified, professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers. Target 4.2 should be strengthened to reflect the fact that education, not just development, begins at birth. Finally, we regret the exclusion of a financing target under the means of implementation for education, as none of the proposed targets can be achieved without adequate investment in education.

We support Goal 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.* We are especially pleased with the inclusion of target 5.4 on unpaid care and domestic work since Member States' efforts to reach this target will impact positively on gender equality in a broad sense, including through increasing girls' access to education, as women and girls are freed from the burden of unequal care and domestic work.

However, we feel the target could be more ambitious, therefore, we support the call from other civil society and major groups for the target to be reworded as follows: *By 2030, recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid domestic and care work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection, and the promotion of shared responsibility between men and women.*

We support Goal 8: *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. We maintain, however, that the two issues should be addressed independently as separate goals, though this formulation is also workable if it maintains an appropriate balance between the two components of the goal in the associated targets. The current list of targets is satisfactory and with an appropriate balance but could still be more ambitious.

We are disappointed that some governments were uncomfortable including a reference to ILO Norms and Standards under Target 8.8, yet these have been ratified by the majority of governments in the world. These are the eminent standards when it comes to labour and workers' rights, and it is frankly perplexing that any government would take issue with including them as a target in a framework that is intended to be aspirational.

We believe that at least one of the targets under this goal should include a reference to setting appropriate wage policies and minimum living wages. The post-2015 Agenda must also include a goal on the implementation of social protection floors as defined in the Bachelet Report, and the ILO Recommendation 202 that sets an international standard to be applied at national level.

We support the many governments who asked for the inclusion of a reference to social dialogue under this goal.

We also miss any target addressing the environmental pillar as it relates to employment. This must be addressed during the intergovernmental negotiations in a way that all Member States can support.

We fully support the inclusion of Means of Implementation target 8.b related to employment under this goal.

We support Goal 10 *Reduce inequality within and among countries*, and especially target 10.4 highlighting wage and social protection policies. We maintain that a target promoting labour market institutions is necessary under this goal—the target would highlight minimum wages, collective bargaining coverage, employment protections and social dialogue.

Other important missing elements under this goal are tax justice and progressive taxation. We call for ending tax havens, tax avoidance and corruption, and to bring in progressive tax systems that are properly resourced and enforced. Tax justice enables public spending for the common good, and provides the means for economic self-sufficiency for municipal, regional and national governments. Reforming national, regional and international tax systems and removing counter-productive tax incentives will lead to substantially increased budgets for countries to finance the post-2015 agenda and pay for improved public services including social protection floors and the expansion of social protection systems and specifically healthcare, education, clean water and sanitation, energy, housing, transportation, and development initiatives. This also means addressing race-to-the-bottom tax incentives and tax competition policies on a regional basis.

We are deeply disappointed that some governments were uncomfortable explicitly including the fundamental freedoms—freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly—under Goal 16 (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*). It is rather unthinkable that a goal which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies does not recognize inalienable human rights such as these.

Finally, we would express our concern in relation to universal access to quality public services, which is fundamental to building just and equitable societies. Market mechanisms have their place, but they have proven incapable of ensuring universal access, especially in countries/regions where there is not enough wealth to provide the 'risk-adjusted rates of return' of private corporations.

However, we see a massive private interest lobby at work, both in countries and in the UN. This lobby has identified public services as the next big target for profit maximisation. The vast majority of privatisations and public-private partnerships do not deliver. We are also aware that the increasing returns to capital and the decreasing returns to labour mean that public services have an even greater role to play in social and economic stabilization and for reducing inequality. We want to see a stronger commitment to the delivery of public services, which is now lacking in the document.

For true social, economic and environmental transformation to be possible, the sustainable development agenda must address structural and systemic issues, and fully reflect the breadth and depth of human rights standards and instruments. The right to development continues to be undermined by structures of inequality; the new development agenda must ensure that the most marginalised enjoy the same rights as the least marginalised. We call for an agenda for change that is not simply concerned with sustainable development but that is energetically and aggressively pro-poor.

We look forward to elaborating these and other Worker and Trade Union priorities as the process moves forward.