



## **FOURTH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*New York, 17-19 June 2013*

**Statement of Mr Corrado Clini  
Director General  
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**Interactive exchange of views on  
“*Employment and decent work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture*”**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished co-Chairs,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have the honour to make this intervention also on behalf of Spain and Turkey, with which we are pleased to share the membership in this Open Working Group.

1. Employment and decent work is crucial to individual’s well-being and it is one of the main drivers for promoting inclusive economic growth, social cohesion and combating poverty. The slow progress in reaching full and productive employment and decent work for all indicates that business as usual cannot be considered as an option and urgent, effective and transformative change is needed.
2. The financial and economic crisis has been posing a significant threat to the development and sustainability gains achieved so far. The current challenges we are facing are a strong motivation to fully commit ourselves within a long term vision to a new development model that should take greater account of social and environmental goals and should rest on the core values of human rights, equality, equity and sustainability.
3. The transition to an inclusive green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development has a great potential for all countries, taking into account specific national circumstances. Millions of green jobs have been created across a range of sectors, and millions of additional jobs might be generated globally over the next decades, contributing to poverty eradication. Such transition might cause job losses or spill over effects in new emerging sectors that should be considered accordingly. In order to ensure that no one is left behind, this transition requires investments in quality education, efficient implementation of active labour market policies, vocational and technical training, lifelong learning, research and innovation,

social and health protection systems. It is also necessary to promote and support the dissemination of the positive impacts of green economy on employment to other countries.

4. The creation of full and productive employment and decent work for all should be considered as a fundamental objective. In our endeavour, we should continue addressing the potential trade-offs between the goals of environmental sustainability and full employment and decent work for all, in particular for women. Sustainable development goals should provide for innovative solutions as they pursue goals and objectives in a holistic and integrated manner.
5. Furthermore we have an urgent need to enhance employment and income opportunities for all, through the definition of forward-looking, macroeconomic policies that promote sustainable development and lead to sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Such potential measures could prevent the next generations from facing present unequal circumstances caused by inadequate income and weak access to basic needs and services. The traditional economic model should be reconsidered and our efforts should strive on moving towards resource efficiency.
6. Transforming informal or undeclared work into regular employment, improving synergies between the education and work sector, strengthening the linkages between wage and productivity are all initiatives that should be considered among others.
7. The private sector has an important role to play as one of the main employment providers and should, thus, recognize its obligations towards society. The quality of employment depends on the respect for framework conditions in the economic, social and environmental fields. Socially responsible behaviours of corporations, together with the improvement of occupational health and safety conditions, are essential to promote decent work.
8. The high rates of unemployment have worsened the quality of jobs. The lack of employment opportunities, the difficulties for unemployed older workers to re-enter in the labour market and the growth of atypical forms of employment are key challenges to be addressed, with a special attention to youth and women. Increased investments in youth employment, active labour-market support and public-private partnerships, and stronger synergies between schools and labour markets will improve the opportunities for young people to gain access to productive employment and decent work.
9. A common vision and overarching objective on employment and decent work for all should be at the core of our debate also during the next session of the OWG on SDGs, when we will be tackling the issue of macroeconomic policy questions.
10. Measures to stimulate growth and employment should be complemented by strengthened social policies that focus on improving access to public services, health and education, while addressing inequalities in income distribution. A special attention should be paid to the empowerment of women, youth and vulnerable groups through access to job opportunities education and training.

11. Social protection systems that address and reduce inequality and social exclusion are essential for protecting the achievements under the Millennium Development Goals. Promoting comprehensive systems of social protection that provide universal access to essential public and social services and social protection floors can contribute to consolidating and achieving further development gains.
12. Youth are the designers of a new model of society. Realising that today's youth is tomorrow's elders, young people should be granted the right to participate fully in shaping their future and should be engaged in policy development at all levels.
13. Youth is known for their mobility, dynamism and heterogeneity. These three, combined, can bring a unique point of view to sustainable development. Also, young people mostly have inherent capacity of networking, and this capacity is essential for the success of SDGs. In order to maximize youth's contribution to decision making processes, it is essential to strengthen the quality of education as well as to create effective mechanisms for public participation and dialogue. Sustainable development policies should consider the specific needs of youth population and at the same time benefit from them.
14. Developing a skilled workforce and promoting lifelong learning is crucial to respond to labour market needs. Initiatives such as skills enhancement and technical training programmes, vocational training and entrepreneurial skills development should be our guiding tools. Representatives of both employers and workers should be closely associated and fully involved with these initiatives. Small and medium sized enterprises have a key role in this endeavour.
15. While noticeable achievements have been made in the context of MDGs, there are still vast disparities between countries in access to schooling, equity and quality of education and in resulting levels of learning achievement. Analytical studies and international researches provide robust evidence that learning, rather than schooling, has a direct impact on growth and development.
16. Sustainable development requires quality oriented educational institutions and programs responsive to the needs of the labour market and to the continuing evolving challenges. Improving the quality and performance of educational systems at all levels, including secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and non-formal learning processes, are key to provide individuals, in particular youth, with the necessary skills and knowledge to access the labour market, to achieve their personal development, fully participate in economic, cultural and social life and at the same time to give their contribution to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Enhancing the efficient use of information and communication technologies (ICT), improving teacher training, updating curricula, creating flexible and dynamic methods of vocational and technical training are all fundamental elements of quality education.
17. Educational institutions, should lead the transition to sustainable development, contribute to discuss solutions for the global and local community, serve as contact points between young people and all other socio-economic actors. According to an interdisciplinary approach in research and curricula development, educational institutions should become laboratories for developing projects and proposals, serve as catalyser for research and innovation, promote democratic value, tolerance and peace. An ongoing dialogue between training/educational

institutions and green labour market should be ensured in order to reinforce mutual benefits of the nexus “education/employment/sustainable development”.

18. Cross-sectoral partnerships, including with private sector, civil society, and actors of informal and non formal learning processes, are useful tools to reinforce the role of education. Training needs, in particular for vulnerable groups and least developed countries (LDCs), and the development of skills on emerging sectors and new technologies should be duly addressed.
19. Building on the “unfinished business” of the MDGs and on the results of the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD), education and the role of youth should find an appropriate place in the definition of SDGs, with the long term objective to provide access to quality education for all, at all levels, and with specific targets dedicated to the strengthening of educational systems from early childhood to the higher education, in a lifelong learning perspective and on the basis of equality of opportunity. Considering the opportunity of a specific sustainable development goal on education for sustainable development coupled with the inclusion of education as key mean of implementation in different SDGs, could represent an appropriate way forward in order to support the urgent and effective transformative change needed.
20. People are at the centre of sustainable development and a greater emphasis on the cultural dimension of SD is needed to ensure a more inclusive and human centred model of development. According to the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. Culture, likewise the natural environment, is not an asset to be preserved or reproduced without continuously reinventing it. In this context the youth and women are crucial agents of change and a special attention should be paid to their role of “reinventing” culture.
21. The contribution of local and traditional knowledge and practices, the preservation of cultural, historical and intangible heritage, the promotion of the creative sector and the respect for human dignity and all forms of diversities should be taken into the highest consideration in policy making at all levels. Particular emphasis should be put on the role of locally embedded practices and knowledge in promoting new sustainable production and consumption patterns, as well as in the benefits gained from cultural activities and from the empowerment of society through the participation in cultural life.
22. Culture, combined with scientific knowledge, technology and innovation should be considered as key element of any successful SD policy or strategy at all levels. SDGs should provide an enabling environment for them to flourish and should pave the way for culturally sensitive approaches and culture-related programmes.