

TALKING POINTS

OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: “Employment and Decent Work for all, social protection, youth, education and culture”

Co-chair,

Thank you very much for giving me the floor. I have the honour to make this intervention on behalf of Bulgaria and Croatia. The issues we are discussing today are numerous and can be discussed from different perspectives so I won't go for a comprehensive analysis but I would like to underline some aspects that Bulgaria and Croatia find of particular importance.

Employment and decent work

- Employment and decent work is a complex issue, which requires synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions. Addressing this issue is essential to escape from poverty and contribute to equality, equity, justice, peace and security. Employment and decent work should be considered in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth, social protection, youth and education.
- The future SDGs should address employment and decent work through the prism of creating international common standards regarding Decent Work. In this respect the ongoing work on this issue in ILO could be of help. It also needs to ensure the creation at national level of adequate legislation creating favorable conditions for investment, and environmentally responsible businesses while ensuring respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work.
- Addressing youth employment is key – without proper framework ensuring a smooth entry of youth to the labor market any economy would be doomed. Unemployed youth would later turn into unemployed adults and that subsequently would turn into a burden for the whole society.

Social protection

- Social protection is a cross-cutting issue and is directly linked with employment and decent work and it needs to be addressed within this framework. An adequate social protection system would contribute to creating resilience and building the necessary capabilities of societies to manage crises. It would help overcome challenges faster.
- It is a human right and should be considered as such. In other words, special legislation and policies should be creating ensuring that that right is recognized and respected. This includes provisions for guaranteeing equal opportunities, good governance, respect for human rights and green economy, and eradication of poverty
- The international community needs to commit to implement at national level internationally developed recommendations on this issue.
- Individual approach but based on international common standards is needed. Bulgaria, for example, has developed a National Strategy for poverty eradication and social inclusion 2012-2020, which has been successful in addressing simultaneously many issues, such as labour market issues, salaries, education and training and the integration of vulnerable groups.

Education and culture

- Education is without question key to the sustainable development and therefore merits being a separate SDG. There needs to be a clear linkage and coordination between the education programs and job market demands. Education should be accessible to all and there should be measureable learning outcomes.
- Education addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development – it needs to be focused on skills creation but also on the promotion of culture of dialogue, tolerance, respect for human rights, environment and cultural diversity.
- The inclusion of culture in the post-2015 framework and in the future SDGs is key to ensuring their success. Culture is a cross-cutting issue and it is present in every aspect of life and encompasses all three dimensions of sustainable development. As we have established that there is no one-size-fits-all formula, in order for goals and policies to be effective they

should incorporate culture. Culture means diversity but it also means tolerance – through creating culture awareness, we can also contribute to building peace and security. Culture has also proven to be an instrument for job creation and a contributor to economic growth. It is a true enabler of sustainable development.

- Culture should be either a separate goal or a sub-theme in the SDGs but the future post-2015 agenda cannot do without acknowledging its role. All SDGs should also address this issue.
- A clear set of indicators that are measurable and implementable is needed. Such indicators could include: 1)creation of adequate legal framework at national level based on international agreed common standards – access to education for all, taking into consideration equity, gender equality, measurable learning outcomes, and greater focus on skills and learning; 2)ensuring coordination between supply of education and demands of the job market; 3)incorporating culture in all policies related to development; 4)creating favorable normative framework that would enable development of culture-related project thus attracting investments and boosting job creation.

Youth

- Youth should be included as a sub-theme in all SDGs. Youth has a crucial role to play and we should not forget that today's youth will be the one fulfilling the SDGs that would be set. Therefore, we need to ensure that they are adequately equipped for that important task by providing them with the best possible instruments, e.g. education, access to employment and decent work and by setting the right mechanisms for social inclusion.