

Employment and Decent Work for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

23 September 2014 - 3.00-6.00 pm at Ford Foundation

17h50 : Statement by Minister Labille (*Launch of Friends of Decent Work and Sustainable Development*)

Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's seminar has shown that **public policy makers and private business leaders** alike have very similar views on the importance of decent work as an underlying principle of inclusive development. We all understand that humanity as a whole is diminished if so many people – especially youth and women – are denied opportunities to develop their skills and competences, or are obliged to work for sorrowful wages or in unsafe conditions. Not only will they be unable to provide for themselves and their families, their talents will be wasted.

From a human rights and social stability perspective, this is something our societies simply cannot allow. But there is more. There is a **growing consensus that reducing morally unacceptable levels of inequalities is indeed** also good economics. How hollow would a vision of sustainability be, if it would be built on exclusion and discrimination?

I believe that the concept of decent work should be fully recognized and reflected in the global sustainable development agenda that is in the making. **Employment, labor conditions and social protection** are key issues and they have been reasonably well captured in the debate so far, in particular in the proposal for sustainable development goals. However, there should not be a trade-off between economic, social and environmental targets. Any new development agenda that fails to

integrate these aspects will simply not work. Therefore we must be **vigilant that decent work and social protection are not weakened** in the negotiation processes.

This is why Belgium and Angola, supported by the ILO, decided to create a “Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development”. It is my privilege, together with our Angolan friends, to officially launch this group today. Our aim is **to be the advocates of decent work** and to build partnerships among like-minded countries from North and South. Our methods will be open-minded, informal and pragmatic. We will strive to mobilize political support for the furthering of decent work in the post-2015 agenda. We will give advice and guidance on goals and targets concerning these issues and act a platform for regular exchange.

We **will meet** in New York on several occasions: the publication of the so-called synthesis report of the Secretary-General later this year, the session of the Commission for Social Development in February 2015 and the session of the Integration Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council in March 2015, the theme of which is : “achieving sustainable development through employment and decent work for all”. We will invite experts, stimulate debate and build alliances. All member states are invited to participate actively in this group in order to ensure a broad ownership. **The Missions of Angola and Belgium, and the ILO Office, are at your disposal for further information.**

I thank you for your attention.