

Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development

Realizing Decent Work for Sustainable Development: Country Strategies

31st March 2015

On the occasion of Economic and Social Council Integration Segment 2015 on “Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”, the Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development convened a Ministerial meeting on 31st March 2015. Hosted by the Permanent Missions of Angola and Belgium as co-chairs of the Group of Friends, in cooperation with the European Union and the ILO, the meeting discussed the implementation of decent work targets, including main challenges and opportunities, possible policies, programmes and tools, financing instruments, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms.

In her introductory remarks, Mrs Benedicte Frankinet, Permanent representative of Belgium to the UN, invited countries and regions to share their perspectives on how they are planning to accomplish the decent work targets, and trying to detail and give concrete examples as much as possible in order to get a better idea of the different methods and strategies.

Mr Guy Ryder, Director General of the ILO, gave a useful overview of the venues where the ILO can contribute to the realization of Decent Work in the Sustainable Development Agenda. He highlighted six major tools: measurement in the form of indicators, monitoring through ILO’s mechanisms, labour standards and policy packages, building of partnerships, support regarding financing for development, and the soon-to-be-finalized ILO preparedness plan to support the implementation Post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Mrs Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Mobility, reminded the importance of social dialogue for the legitimacy and sustainability of employment policies. Reflecting on the wide diversity of European experiences, she affirmed that it is possible to successfully combine growth, stronger decent job creation and social protection policies.

Mr Luis Eduardo Garzon, Minister of Labour of Colombia, presented the framework of social dialogue that has been put in place in the country. This one of made of 5 agreements covering from eradication of child labour and creation of public employment, to formalization of the economy, youth employment and the elderly. However, he shared some of the challenges of a tripartite dialogue, where it is sometimes difficult to find credible and trustworthy partners.

Mr Hanif Dhakiri, Minister of Manpower of Indonesia gave a comprehensive overview of the employment-related policies put in place by Indonesia. He specially highlighted the mainstreaming of employment in macroeconomic policies, the creation of harmonious industrial relations, and the eradication of child labour, giving precise examples of policies and programs, roadmaps and objectives.

Mr Ebrahim Patel, Minister of Economic Development of South Africa focused his intervention on the youth employment challenge and potential. He reminded the disproportionate share of jobs lost by young people in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, and pointed out the role youth played in the building of South Africa's 'Youth Employment Accord'. Moreover, he stressed the importance of monitoring and measurement of youth employment.

Mr Radoslaw Mleczko, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Poland, on the theme of youth unemployment insisted on the importance of vocational training, as well as the need to have an integrated action from different ministers when it comes to building a youth employment action plan.

Youth unemployment rapidly emerged as one of the most important and pressing issues among policy makers in the room. Commissioner Thyssen presented the European "Youth Guarantee" scheme adopted in 2013, which aims to ensure that all young people under 25 get a good-quality concrete offer within 4 months of leaving formal education or being unemployed. Minister Garzon put the emphasis on the need to overcome the existing prejudice towards young people, where many are considered as unproductive due to their lack of experience. Minister Patel on his side insisted on including youth organizations in the social dialogue for youth employment strategies. Minister Mleczko reinforced this point saying that dialogue with the youth was one of the most important tools to build an effective action plan, and he explained how Poland adapted and amended a national act to the European Youth Guarantee with the contribution of youth organizations.

Concluding the discussion, Mr Ismael Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN and co-chair of the Group of Friends, stressed that the focus is and has to remain on creating decent jobs and getting economies to move and create opportunities.