

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

Briefing on the Future of Work

10th July 2015

Taking the opportunity of the recent conclusion of the 104th International Labour Conference in Geneva, the Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development and the ILO Office in New York organized a briefing on the Future of Work on July 10th at the UNHQ in New York. The event addressed two of the important topics discussed at the ILC, namely the Future of Work report of the Director-General and Recommendation No. 204 concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, and linked these to the Post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 8.

Hosted by the Co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Decent Work, H.E. Ms. Benedicte Frankinet, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN, and H.E. Mr. Helder Lucas, Deputy Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN, who delivered opening remarks. As we approach the final negotiations on the Post-2015 development agenda, both representatives emphasized the need to think about its implementation, mainly by investing in concrete tools, platforms and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Mr. Lucas pointed out the role of the Group of Friends as mobilizer of political capital, and suggested to start by creating a global multi-stakeholder partnership that supports the delivery of SDG8 focusing on the areas of informality, safe work and child and forced labour. Further, Ms. Frankinet assured that the Group of Friends had been delivering on its goal of making sure decent work was well placed in the Post-2015 agenda, while a final effort was still needed regarding strengthening of decent work references in the political declaration. Mr. Lucas noted that inclusive growth and decent work were two sides of the same coin the combination of both under one goal had transformational power. The promotion of decent work made growth more inclusive and could strengthen business development and tax collection.

Mr. Raymond Torres, Director of the ILO Research Department, focused his presentation on the reasons that make decent work central to sustainable development when looking at future challenges. He referred to fundamental transformations in the world of work such as new technologies, digitalization and the fragmentation of production. Mr. Torres further elaborated on the three main implications of these transformations:

- First, the ability to create jobs. New jobs will need to be created in new areas and new opportunities will need to be seized, and in this process the decent work agenda will be crucial to facilitate adjustment.

- Second, the employment relationship. Permanent employment, own-account work and mobility may be changing already. These developments were occurring alongside increasing inequalities. Mr. Torres emphasized the need of securing the employment relationship while seizing new opportunities.
- Third, policies. The policy response should adapt to a transforming work environment, in particular with regard to protection, tri-partism and keeping decent work as a central part of the sustainable development agenda while these changes keep happening.

Mr. Torres further explained that the Future of Work project will aim to adopt a set of policy instruments, including the role of labour standards and tripartite institutions at the ILC in 2019.

The event also welcomed two discussants as part of the tripartite constituency: Ms. Ronnie Goldberg representing the United States Council for International Business, and Mr. Peter Bakvis of the International Trade Union Confederation. In view of this year's ILC, Ms. Goldberg highlighted four subjects: the adoption of Recommendation No. 204, the work on the role of SMEs in development as engines of job creation and sustainable growth, the review of ILO's work on social protection, and the thematic discussion on the Future of Work report by the Director-General. She also stressed the need to shape change and be flexible in policies and workplaces.

Mr. Bakvis shared his concerns on the future of employment: growing inequalities, increasing worker exploitation, the global jobs gap, the risk of imposed flexibility, among others. He drew attention to the need for new forms of regulation, updated mechanisms of collective bargaining, and the adaptation of labour laws to the technological transformation. Mr. Bakvis also addressed informality and stressed the importance of facilitating the transition to the formal economy by focusing on social protection measures, workers protection, registration procedures and taxation, as well as access to financing.

As a conclusion, Mr. Vinicius Pinheiro, Deputy Director of the ILO Office for the UN, referred to the final draft of the outcome of the Post-2015 development agenda and pointed out areas in which decent work was well-positioned as well as others where further improvements would be beneficial.