

Opening Remarks Ambassador Wittig on the occasion of the
Special Panel Discussion on
“The Youth Employment Crisis: a call to action”
hosted by the Permanent Missions of Germany and Tunisia with ILO

on 30 May 2013 at the United Nations, NY

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure to welcome all of you on the occasion of this panel discussion on the crucial subject of youth employment.

The ILO estimates that 73 mio. young people are unemployed in 2013. The unemployment rates were highest in the Middle East and North Africa at 28.3% and 23.7% respectively. Youth **unemployment** is mostly a problem of developed countries. In developing countries – where 90% of global youth population live – most people just can't afford to be out of work. So there, it is the creation of **stable quality employment** is the most important issue. .

Germany decided to co-host this briefing together with colleagues from Tunisia and the ILO, because we wanted to bring the findings of ILO's "Global Youth Employment Trend"-report to your attention. It deserves a lot of attention and it deserves a lot of discussion. The report and the headlines of the news remind us these days one more time of two things:

First, youth employment is not a problem of certain individuals. It is a serious problem of societies, economies and nations as a whole.

And second, youth employment problems have to be addressed quickly. We need quick tangible results from measures that show lasting positive effects. We cannot afford to lose a whole generation of young people.

The German government is convinced that early integration in the (regular) labor market ensures that young people can make a decent living and have a positive perspective for their future.

Looking at the report, we see that there is hope. Not all countries are facing the same problems and some have made considerable progress. The recipes are not simple. We are facing multi-layered problems. Germany supported the "ILO Call for Action" that will be presented later today with its multi-layered approach from the very beginning.

The “youth employment crisis”- in the sense of underemployment- is not limited to developing countries. Many developed countries are also facing a rising number of young unemployed people. The report points at the EU with an average of 22.6% in 2012.

Allow me some remarks on my own country and the experiences we made. Germany managed to half the youth unemployment rate from 15.7% in 2005 to 8.2% in 2012. Together with Austria, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland we are among those so to say “lucky” countries with one-digit youth unemployment rates.

One important element for this success is our dual system for technical and vocational training in combination with the “vocational training pact”. This pact that is now being introduced at the European level as well, was concluded between the government and the employers associations. Every young person who is willing and able to undertake vocational training is to be offered a training contract. And we have proven that we can deliver: 600,000 new training contracts were offered on average every year for young people leaving the school. We know that this system as a whole cannot be replicated anywhere else totally, but we are ready to share our experiences so that elements can be taken up elsewhere.

Germany is also pushing for quick responses on the European level. 6 bn. Euro will be devoted in Europe for the fight against youth unemployment from 2014 – 2020 in regions where unemployment exceeds 25%. Credit lines will be linked to the creation of decent and stable employment for youth (the so-called “New Deal for Europe”). And we also welcome that youth employment and unemployment continue to be topics on the G20-agenda.

In supporting our partner countries, we have achieved positive results through a couple of measures:

- first, measures such as vocational education and training directed at enhancing employability and labor supply,
- second, labor demand interventions such as private sector development to create new jobs,
- third, active labor market policies and instruments to help new entrants in the labour market through measures like youth social work or mentoring schemes by senior entrepreneurs and
- last but not least overall economic policy measures ranging from macroeconomic policies to health or infrastructure creation that help to create an enabling environment.

One example where we tried to take over some of this approach was Sierra Leone. There it seems to work very well. More than 20'000 rural jobs for young people – many of them former civil war combatants- were created or improved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight for youth employment is a central inter-generational challenge that every government has to face at the national level. It addresses governments, social partners and the international community in their respective areas of responsibilities. There are no quick fixes. That we know. And there are no magic one-size fits all solutions. But the ILO Call for Action analyses the situation in different regions of the world and gives indications for specific recommendations that can be taken up by individual countries. The most recent figures from the ILO “Global Employment Trends for Youth” that were released on 8 May in Geneva and this panel discussion today will give us an idea where we stand and what we have to do next so that we do **NOT** lose this generation.

Thank you very much for your attention.