

## **Trade union response to the EC Communication on “A Decent Life for All: Ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future” COM (2013) 92 final**

We welcome the Communication from the Commission as a timely document which shows the EU’s willingness to put in place a proactive and integrated approach to the global debate on sustainable and inclusive development. The text recognises the need for a unified policy framework concerning poverty eradication and sustainability, which is something that the trade union movement has consistently called for. Such an approach recognises that we are facing multiple crises, which demand a radical change in “global governance” when it comes to employment policies, decent work, social protection, consumption and production patterns, just transitions to energy and resource efficiency economies, and redistribution in society. Such an approach cannot be based on market-based mechanisms alone, as markets are not virtuous in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. An integrated approach must be based on accountable frameworks, based on internationally agreed standards, dialogue and tax justice if we are to eradicate poverty while growing a sustainable economy.

We look forward to engaging with the Commission, member states and MEPs to push forward this integrated approach. This position sets out the trade union movement’s position on the proposed EU approach in more detail.

1. Firstly, we broadly welcome the Commission’s inclusion of decent work and social protection among the priority elements of the overarching framework, as well as, mentioning social partners’ involvement concerning country ownership and accountability. We feel that this approach could rectify some of the failings of the Millennium Development Goals framework, but this demands political will to deliver;
2. We call on the Commission to explicitly include social dialogue when referring to the main drivers for development and key mechanisms to support it. Social dialogue, between workers and their organisations, and employers and their organisations bilaterally and together with governmental actors in tripartite forum, is the key instrument to achieve redistribution, equality, equity, accountability and democratic ownership. Social dialogue should be seen as a key tool in addressing persistent in-work poverty and tackling the informal economy;
3. We welcome the reference to social protection and specifically to social protection floors to grant “basic living standards” and setting objectives of equal and universal access to social

protection (notably through the extension of coverage to informal workers). This recognises the crucial work undertaken in the ILO (particularly last year's Recommendation 202), we demand that the ILO be given a continued mandate to pursue the implementation of social protection floors;

4. We support the universal character of the future framework envisaged in the text: ending the North-South divide, supporting poverty eradication and sustainable development, and implying responsibilities for all countries. Therefore, we demand that the priorities identified will also be the central features of a renewed Europe 2020 strategy, promoting quality job creation, effective social protection, social dialogue and the transition to an energy and resource efficient economy;
5. In terms of the EU's development cooperation policy, we reiterate our concerns on focussing support on the least development countries (LDCs), following the EU's Agenda for Change. The exclusion of emerging economies, in which we remind the majority of the world's poor live, as potential beneficiaries of EU development cooperation, runs against the proposed global character of the framework, based on global challenges. "Differentiation" should not result in reduced support to civil society cooperation in middle income countries (MICs). On the contrary, civil society backup should be further strengthened by the EU development policies, being a crucial instrument to fight inequalities;
6. We warmly welcome the reference to a human rights based approach (HRBA) to development to address inequalities. In our view, this should be the founding principle of the future overarching framework, aiming at empowerment of people and institutional accountability, and based on internationally agreed human rights standards;
7. We note recognition of discrimination and violence against women. The international trade union movement has long advocated gender equality and empowerment of women and appreciates the emphasis on the need for action in this regard and welcomes EU initiatives on, and support for, mainstreaming gender equality and women's rights including protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive rights;
8. We also support the definition of global goals, among which we would highlight the importance of prioritising decent work and social protection, and we welcome the proposal that national targets respecting different contexts and country ownership should be developed. We suggest that this requires a renewed European sustainable development strategy, linked to national strategies and action plans. In yet at European level it is proposed that a sectoral approach continues;

9. The principles set out in the Communication for global goals should be mainstreamed throughout the EU's policies and actions reinforcing the horizontal clauses of the European Treaty (articles 8-11, TFEU). Goals of decent work and social protection at international level demand an EU application as well. Both a strengthening the EU's employment and social objectives, particularly as regards unemployment levels and working poverty, and the recognition of the importance of accessible and affordable public services, within the Europe 2020 strategy and European Semester are necessary to achieve this. However, we are witnesses to the fact that on the contrary, the Annual Growth Survey and current country specific recommendations demand both further labour market deregulation and the liberalisation of public services. The position of the EU is totally inconsistent and this must be rectified;
10. We support the willingness to include specific indicators related to the targets. These are key to address inequalities, and should focus on fair and progressive taxation systems (including fight against tax havens), redistribution mechanisms, employment rates, social public spending rates, minimum wage , collective bargaining and social dialogue coverage, ILO Conventions and standards , and industrial democracy;
11. More generally, we strongly support the development of alternative measurement methodologies going beyond the use of GDP, including "qualitative" measures such as "well-being index", or the human development index. We propose the creation of an independent International Panel on Sustainable Development, charged with developing these indicators (and similar in structure and rigour to the IPCC). The trade unions as social partners can constructively participate to the development of the indicators;
12. Although still general in many respects, we welcome the Communication's emphasis on social justice, job creation and the Just Transition towards an energy and resource efficient economy. However, we insist on the need of a global framework that is based on standards, including the existing human rights standards (including labour and gender), as well as environmental and development standards (Paris, Accra, and Busan principles). This framework must have independent and binding accountability mechanisms keeping development partners to their commitments;
13. We are deeply concerned by the limited reference to policy coherence in the Communication. This is crucial to avoid unintended consequences and ensure that all EU

policies are pursuing these goals. Without policy coherence, key areas such as the impact of international trade policies and flows on sustainable development and poverty eradication will be missed. It should be noted that this aspect has received much attention already in the OECD/DAC and others have highlighted the importance of policy coherence for effective development impact. Therefore, we strongly recommend the strengthening of institutional mechanisms to ensure implementation and monitoring on policy coherence for sustainable development, both at the EU level but also at the UN level, thus contributing to a new global governance;

14. Finally, there is little reference to the financing framework which will be needed to achieve the new global development goals. At this stage, we reiterate the need for all countries to develop fair and progressive taxation systems, and our call for a global Financial Transaction Tax as a potential to be a major source of development financing in the future. We look forward to contributing further to the development of the EU's policy in this regard.



*The Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN), an initiative of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), bringing together affiliated trade union organisations, solidarity support organisations, regional ITUC organisations, the Global Union Federations (GUFs), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC)*