

2nd Joint OECD-DAC and Trade Union Forum: “Donors and labour movement strategies to implement the UN 2030 Agenda”

Paris, 14 December 2015

Meeting report and joint conclusions

Trade Unions and Donors discuss development and UN 2030 Agenda

At the September 2015 UN General Assembly, Heads of State adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The agreement has set an ambitious set of sustainable development objectives for the next 15 years, which include many top level priorities for the trade union movement and the world of work. With the Agenda 2030 now adopted, the focus turns to the implementation and monitoring.

The 2nd Joint OECD-DAC and Trade Union Forum, organised in Paris by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) and the Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) addressed the potential for labour and donors to engage on shared strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda and its goals and targets. The meeting served to share innovative approaches and policies that have proven effective at country level to reduce inequalities and to sustain country-led development.

Following up the [conclusions from the last OECD/DAC-Trade Union forum in 2014](#), this meeting gave particular attention to the social dialogue as a means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and more widely as an important instrument to define and deliver sustainable development strategies. The Forum was attended by OECD DAC national delegates and Trade Unionists from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific. The outcomes of the debates offered concrete recommendations and policy actions with a view to establishing possible future partnerships on these themes.

Summary of discussions

High-level panel: The developmental relevance of social dialogue at country level

The opening High Level Panel offered practical experiences, from a range of perspectives and in different contexts, about how social dialogue can support long term sustainable development objectives. The panel also highlighted some of the elements needed for social dialogue to be function successfully.

Over the course of the panel, emphasis was placed on the ability of dialogue channels to allow for greater equality with economic growth. Social dialogue was emphasized in particular as a means to achieve agreements on issues such as the distribution of income and wealth. Successful social dialogue requires institutional support as well as an understanding that this benefits everybody. Further, that the institutional support must be underpinned by a respect for the fundamental freedoms and in particular Freedom of Association.

Also important is mutual understanding and respect across partners, or a culture which supports cooperation and collaboration. This starts with recognition that conflicts will exist but can be effectively channelled through and ultimately resolved through the social dialogue.

In recognition of the importance of social dialogue as a driver of development and Decent Work, Prime Minister of Sweden, Stefan Löfven, has launched an initiative, the Global Deal, which has at its core the promotion of the social dialogue.

Panel 2: National Strategies for Youth Employment and the role of social partners

The second panel looked at national employment strategies, focusing on youth in particular, not least because the 2nd High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, will touch upon the issue of gender and youth economic empowerment.

Employment issues need to be at the heart of economic policies, since current trends have led to economic growth without employment creation. Underemployment, precarious employment and informality were all highlighted, and as a result national development strategies need job creation at their core. These strategies must be participatory, multi-sectoral and innovative, engaging informal sector, new kinds of industrial policies and public employment schemes.

There was particular emphasis on Africa: half of the increase in the global labour force between now and 2030 will come from Africa, but is a continent that experiences huge sectoral productivity gaps. To address labour supply constraints for the youth, in particular, quality education could be promoted, as well as skills enhancement (apprenticeships, internships and better synergy between education and industries).

The role of the social partners in developing national youth employment development strategies was emphasized given their negotiation and collective bargaining role in setting those strategies at country level. Consequently, it is important to strengthen the capacity of those sitting around the table.

Panel 3: How donor policies are contributing to decent work creation through private sector development cooperation programmes

The panel started with a recognition that the private sector will need to contribute to achieve SDG 8, but the contribution is not limited only to economic growth. It will be necessary to factor in the human rights dimension, decent work and gender to engaging with the private sector to fulfil the social and environmental dimensions of the SDGs.

There were many suggestions over the course of the panel but emphasis was placed on investment strategies and sustainability policies, which contribute to decent jobs and to the growth of the economy. There was also recognition of need to support the development of the local private sector while also working with foreign investors to foster technology and digitalisation, and improve democracy and development. Nevertheless, emphasis was also placed on the need to nurture both the local economy and local workers, to counterbalance the trend of hiring foreign companies and their workers to undertake different initiatives. Additionally, more efforts would be needed on setting effective and progressive taxation systems, and fight against illicit financial flows and corruption.

Adherence to labour standards by private sector would be key, but so would be educating workers about their rights. And in this the private sector should actually have a role in informing the workers about their rights and benefits. Following this, there was broad recognition of the importance of trade unions for achieving the decent work objectives, among others. Decent jobs cannot be created if labour unions are not represented on an equal footing together with employers' organisations.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining between workers and employers' representatives is key to ensure ownership and socio-economic sustainability of development policies and programmes.

Conclusions and suggestions forward

During the closing session it was emphasized that UN 2030 Agenda will require contributions from all corners, including from the labour movement and the private sector. Social movements play a key role in the policy making process. But for the process to work, they need to have partners to relate to. The country experiences from the 2nd TU-DAC Forum demonstrate the importance of inclusive and democratic processes for bringing together key constituencies.

The “Global Deal” was highlighted as an interesting initiative to deliver inclusive growth and decent work for all, by focusing on bringing together the tripartite constituents to achieve sustainable development objectives, and in particular SDG 8. In practice and in principle, this would necessitate that economic growth creates decent work. In this regard, the importance for national development strategies to take due account of the four pillars of the decent work agenda (guaranteeing rights at work; promoting social dialogue; extending social protection and promoting jobs) should be emphasised.

Concretely the four pillars should be integrated into the principles and engagement criteria of donors with business enterprises and DFIs pursuing development strategies and initiatives. That way, social partners will have an active role in the delivery of the SDGs.

As expressed throughout the Forum, social dialogue is a proven “how to” instrument for involving social partners in the design and decision making when it comes national development strategies and policies.

More specifically, the forum introduced a number of proposed follow-up initiatives which can foster further collaboration between the trade union movement and the OECD DAC:

- Pursuing **joint evidence based analysis** on the role of social dialogue in development (including the role of private sector) with the key stakeholders such as donor governments, partner countries governments and social partners (see current examples of country based studies: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/social-dialogue-development>);
- Promoting a **results-oriented approach** in order to provide **recommendations and policy drivers** in the realm of development, for fostering the implementation of the Agenda 2030;
- Setting an **inclusive platform of willing actors** to get engaged in the analysis process, fostering ownership and participation of interested constituencies, especially in the context of the GPEDC global initiatives;
- Sharing and discussing the **findings in the annual Forum** of the OECD/DAC-Trade Unions.

All the meeting documents, media, and speakers presentations are available here: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/2nd-TU-DAC-Forum-docs>