

European Union Policy Forum for Development
Session on Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda
Presentation by Matt Simonds, International Trade Union Confederation

I will present a more specific perspective with my remarks, than previous speakers, based on the labour movement's priorities for this framework. I will still address the three elements which need to be in the framework.

First, a few sentences to set the scene for the last fifteen plus years to give context to our demands or the three key elements we are pushing for in this agenda. Since 2001 the number of unemployed has grown significantly and as result the global unemployment rate has been fairly erratic. The first half of the period saw a positive decline in the unemployment rate, down to about 5.5% of the global population, up until sometime just before the economic crisis took hold in 2008. However, since the crisis in 2008 unemployment has spiked and stayed relatively high at around 6% with trends suggesting further increase in the years to come (ILO Global Employment Trends 2014).

A more concerning trend however is the pervasiveness of inequality and the erosion of labour market institutions across the globe. No doubt, labour's share of national income has been on a steady decline since well before the MDGs came into being and has not been limited only to developing countries, as evidence shows declines in the majority of OECD countries as well. This while productivity gains have been on a steady and sustained uptick.

So this is the context from which our demands for a Post 2015 framework emerge. We want to see that all people have access to a decent life and a decent work in a healthy environment, while securing the needs and ensuring opportunity for future generations. To realize this, the trade union movement is asking for a framework rooted in the Human Rights Based Approach to development and that has a binding character. This is in particular important for the accountability mechanism, which should be standards based and multi-stakeholder. So we would ask governments to keep this in mind as we look towards defining the character of the High Level Political Forum.

Beyond these general demands we are hoping to see a framework with two specific commitments in the form of a goal on Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for all and a goal on Universal Social Protection. We are supporting and working intensively on a number of other goals and areas, but given the time I'll only expand on these two, and give a particular emphasis on the possible means of implementation we would like to see the EU support.

Decent Work

With respect to a goal on Decent Work, it is important to emphasize each of the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda in the corresponding Targets and Means of Implementation. This means targets which seek to assess job creation, social protection, social dialogue and importantly workers' rights. There need to be appropriate means of implementation to support this.

Means of Implementation for this proposed goal are the following:

Strong and functioning labour market policies and institutions - such as appropriately designed wage policies, including minimum wages; collective bargaining; labour inspection; strong employment services; unemployment benefits with strong links to social protection programs; targeted measures to increase labour market participation of women and under-represented groups and protect vulnerable groups; measures to help low-income households to escape poverty and access freely chosen employment

The adoption of comprehensive national employment policy frameworks, based on tripartite consultations, that help coordinate pro-employment macroeconomic policies; trade, industrial, tax, infrastructure and sectoral policies; education and skills development; enterprise and labour market policies, and migration policies.

Comprehensive activation strategies to facilitate young people's school-to-work transition, in line with the ILO 2012 Call for action and the Global Strategy on Youth Employment
Measures to ensure the adherence and respect international labour standards
Measures to enhance social dialogue and participation of the social partners in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development policies, including through compliance with relevant ILO conventions like C081 and C129

Universal Social Protection

We would like a commitment to universal social protection which that ensures income security for all, including unemployed, older person, people with disabilities, children and pregnant women. But it also includes access to essential public goods and services, like healthcare, education, housing, and water and sanitation.

In practice this means the implementation of social protection floors in all countries. . Social Protection Floors are nationally defined minimum levels of income security in the form of various social transfers as well as universal, affordable access to essential social services. The core idea is that no one should live below a nationally defined income level and everyone should at least have access to basic social services.

Means of Implementation for this proposed goal are the following:

Develop policy frameworks to design and implement social protection floors which include ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 102 on social security, ILO Recommendation No 202 on SPFs, and x% spending on social protection as a percentage of GDP

Providing technical support and financial assistance to developing countries for the design and implementation of social protection systems, in particular social protection floors, including governance structure, benefits and public service delivery, identification of beneficiaries and financing mechanisms

Further to these two suggestions and particularly on the resourcing of social protection floors, joint research by IMF and ILO suggests that social protection floors can be implemented in all country contexts. This can be done by:

- Re-allocating public expenditures.
- Increasing tax revenues.
- Reducing of debt or debt servicing.
- Adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework and fighting illicit financial flows.
- Increasing social security contributions.

I limit my comments to these, though I'd close with a quick reflection on the process forward. We are pleased to see that the UN GA has just adopted the OWG proposals as the basis for negotiations going forward. We found the OWG process an inclusive setting that made important efforts to take on the perspectives of civil society. However, we are unclear what our role will be for the next iteration of the process. So with that I would ask that the EC do its utmost to fight for space for civil society to input into the intergovernmental negotiations set to take place next year.