

**Summary of the General Debate for the ECOSOC 2006 Substantive Session High-Level-
Segment 3.July.2006-5.July.2006**

The General Debate of the High-Level Segment for the 2006 Substantive Session of ECOSOC began with statements by **Mr. José Antonio Ocampo**, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs followed by **Mr. Milivoje Panić**, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for Development Policy. They highlighted the major elements, concerns and recommendations raised by the international community on the theme of the High-Level Segment.

Mr. Ocampo presented the Report of the Secretary-General on the theme "*Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development*," which provided a detailed analysis of recent trends in employment across the globe. Despite many countries experiencing economic growth over the last decade, unemployment has risen reaching 192 million people in 2005. Young people are affected most by unemployment, as they comprise about one-fourth of the population, but account for about half of global unemployment. In developing countries, poverty exists not necessarily as a result of unemployment but underemployment, where wages are too low to support workers and their families. Globalization and relative economic processes have widened the income gap, which is creating market asymmetries.

As a result of these trends, he stressed that governments should make employment and decent work central objectives of their national and international strategies through supportive migration, capacity-building, social protection, gender equality and market integration policies. Specifically, (1) international migration policies should aim to maximize the development impact of migration; (2) monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies should take into account their employment impact and (3) youth should be integrated into the labour market through vocational training and the promotion of entrepreneurship. Finally, particular attention should be paid to the agricultural sector, as it is the main source of jobs in many developing countries.

Mr. Panić stated that the Committee was unanimous that the employment agenda should be a key objective for domestic economic and social policy, but unfortunately, many developing countries have been unable to attain that goal. As such, the international community must develop a coherent macroeconomic framework and national governments should focus on strengthening institutions and capacity-building in improving human capital. Most importantly, the fiscal capacities of developing countries must be expanded in order to (1) maintain ample levels of investments in education and training; (2) guarantee the availability of a skilled workforce and (3) alleviate the negative effects of business cycle fluctuations. He also stressed that economic growth in itself is not sufficient for achieving the full employment and decent work goals. Governments must work to formalize the informal economy by providing access to land, credit and essential services. At the international level, trade must gradually become more

liberalised and economic growth must be pursued in a way which is sustainable and ecologically-friendly by using clean technologies. Finally, international migration and the brain drain must be given more attention in order to ensure that both countries of origin and receiving countries benefit from migration.

The discussion that followed the opening statements revolved around issues concerning the theme of the High-Level Segment.

At the **international** level, they included: **Trade Liberalisation; International Migration; and Rights at Work**. At the **domestic** level, issues were discussed regarding: **Employment; Gender Equality; Role of the Private Sector and Social Dialogue**.

(1) Employment

Achieving full employment and decent work should be at the centre of development policy discussions. Many delegations asserted the need for incorporating the ILO's Decent Work Programmes, Conventions and Pillars into national development policies. They further stressed that job creation, flexibility, efficiency and worker security must be simultaneously addressed and that the gap between rich and poor in developed versus developing countries must be narrowed. Another group of delegations stated that a dual challenge of creating new and productive jobs and improving the quality of existing jobs exists. One delegation agreed with the above statements and further emphasized that it is the role of the government to maintain an economic environment for growth and unleash the creativity of individuals. In achieving the full employment and decent work goals, many diverse approaches should concurrently be undertaken, as highlighted in the remainder of this summary.

Most delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring sustainable growth by strengthening knowledge-based infrastructure. Several delegations particularly stressed the importance of providing adequate education for youth in order to increase their employability, while other delegations promoted an increase in vocational training, specifically for youth. One delegation stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers are provided with the necessary training and knowledge in order to dispense quality education. One delegation shared its country's best practice of providing free transportation for students so that they would not be denied free educational opportunities. Another delegation explained that his country has created a Ministry focusing on youth affairs and Youth Enterprise Programmes, which will provide funding to youth occupied in micro and small enterprises. In order to ensure human dignity and the prospects for youth participation in the future, several delegations championed efforts toward the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

The importance of broadening technical skills by increasing human technical capacities and by extending technical accessibility in developing countries was also addressed by many delegations. A few delegations stressed the importance of bolstering sustainable technical know-how and employment possibilities in rural and agricultural sectors, since the rural sector comprises approximately 50 percent of the labour force in

developing countries. Finally, one delegation further emphasised that tourism has shown to be highly labour-intensive and beneficial to local farming and fishing industries and ought to be pursued in developing areas. Moreover, investing in tourism provides a clean source of revenue and jobs, allowing for sustainable growth.

(2) Rights at Work

Many delegations emphasized the importance of ratifying ILO Conventions and other relevant international instruments and of working closely with international bodies in order to ensure the coordination and implementation of decent work policies and the sharing of best practices. Specifically, one delegation called on ILO, UNCTAD and UNIDO to play a primary role in assisting states in fostering national policies conducive to creating conditions for employment growth, especially in the poorest regions. Several speakers emphasized the need to design labour market institutions providing both flexibility and security, or "flexicurity systems," which means incorporating the needs of workers and enterprises in both the formal and informal sector.

(3) Gender Equality

Most delegations strongly emphasized the urgent need of ensuring gender equality and the elimination of employment discrimination, especially by promoting women's integration into the labour force in order to reduce poverty. One delegation asserted that women today want to be workers and mothers and it is possible to exercise both functions. Thus, there is also a need to promote legislation at the national level allowing men to have greater family roles as well. Finally, several delegations declared that poor households often send members of their family away from home to work and that women and girls are most affected by this. This makes them more vulnerable and social protection instruments are necessary in order to end this phenomenon.

(4) Social Dialogue

Many speakers stressed the importance of achieving the full employment and decent work goals by working closely with partners. One delegation suggested that employers' associations, producer groups and cooperatives can assist entrepreneurs to access credit and markets while sharing risks. Another delegation shared one of its best practices: a Social Partnership Agreement, a tripartite commitment between the Private Sector, Labour and Government in collaborating and consulting on national development. Another delegation stressed the importance of member states communicating with other social partners after disasters and for disaster preparedness, in order to ensure that high priority is given to community recovery programmes and related decent work initiatives.

(5) International Migration

Most delegations expressed concerns regarding international migration in the context of globalization. Several speakers specifically argued that migration leads to the loss of skilled workers from developing countries, as people are compelled to seek better

jobs in the developed world. Others stated that migration must be used as a positive factor in development and one delegation further stressed that studies show labour mobility can actually benefit both host countries and countries of origin; however, it is opposed because of strict entry laws, xenophobia and political repercussions. Finally, one participant stressed that while migration is generally viewed as beneficial for promoting fair globalization, illegal migration and human trafficking should be fought through prevention, prosecution and protection.

(6) Trade Liberalisation

Many delegations stressed that trade must be liberalised in order to achieve the full employment and decent work goals and to bridge wage and employment gaps between developed and developing countries. A non-discriminatory, open and equitable multilateral trading system is essential in order to allow developing countries fair access to international markets. Many speakers voiced disappointment regarding the current lack of results at the Doha Round and urged a consensus to be quickly reached.

(7) Role of the Private Sector

Many delegations reiterated that governments must support the growth of the private sector, particularly micro enterprises, small and medium-sized businesses. A group of delegations stated that commercial banks should be encouraged to lend to small and medium-sized enterprises. Another delegation asserted that its country has encouraged and supported small industries and small businesses in agricultural and fishery sectors. One delegation described her country's program for micro finance, which has resulted in money reaching a large amount of people and the funding becoming a direct source of jobs.

A number of delegations further emphasized the importance of government support in encouraging entrepreneurship and one speaker viewed entrepreneurship in tourist sectors as a potential source for additional employment. Another noted that the development of economic activities resulting from the arrival of power led to job creation, micro-businesses and local handicrafts.