

**Special Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council & the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) of the General Assembly on The future of employment: The world of work in 2030.**

Conference Room 2, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

This meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, chairperson of the Second Committee and H.E. Mr. Martin Sadjik, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council. Presentations were made by the following panellists: Mr. Raymond Torres, Director, International Institute for Social Studies, International Labor Organization; Mr. Marcio Pochmann, Economist and Professor at the Institute of Economics and the Centre for Trade Union Studies and Labor Economics at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), Brazil; Mr. Paul De Civita, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister and Mr. Peter Padbury, Director, Scanning and Foresight, Policy Horizons Canada; Ms. Barbara Birungi, Founder & Director, Women in Technology, Uganda.

Lead discussants for the meeting were Mr. Adam Greene, Vice-President at United States Council for International Business and Mr. Peter Bakvis, Director at Global Unions, Washington DC.

Speakers highlighted the mega trends that will shape the world of work in the next decades. Although new technologies and progress made in education are likely to create new opportunities in the future, the effects of the digital revolution along with demographic evolution will provoke tremendous instabilities in the world of work.

There is a growing mismatch between the nature of jobs available and the skills of workers. New technologies are potentially disruptive in that they change the value of work and contribute to improving productivity with fewer workers. Over the next decade, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, 3D printing or synthetic biology are likely to enter more significantly the workplace and the market, thus transforming or replacing many products, processes and jobs. These emerging technologies may lead to a digital economy using entirely digital supply chains and virtual workers. This will imply profound changes in the nature of jobs as there will be a need for just-in-time skilled and flexible workers.

Panellists stressed that these changes could lead to growing social inequalities and increased uncertainty on the job market, both of which would strongly compromise social mobility. All countries, all sectors and all levels of skills are likely to be affected by these transformations. Young people are particularly vulnerable as they suffer from very high unemployment rates. Concerning developing countries, speakers highlighted the fact that Africa is still lagging behind in the digital divide. African women tend to be excluded from the work place since they are not provided with the skills that match available jobs.

New technology and increasing international integration lead to both opportunities and adjustment difficulties. Discussions highlighted that the growing disconnect between the underlying mega-trends and the many opportunities they offer on the one hand, and the

increasingly unstable and unequal workplace on the other, are mainly a result of a policy failure.

One of the main challenges identified by the panellists was to transform the “creative-destructive” process into decent work opportunities. Therefore, if we are to address the transformations affecting the world of work, countries will need to work with technologies rather than against them. They will also have to work together in a multilateral setting to confront these challenges, including through collective institutions such as ILO and the UN system at large. Speakers insisted that international cooperation is vital for managing this new development and jobs landscape.

Education and training were considered central to any policy response. Governments are responsible for investing in the education system by adapting it to current job opportunities. Especially in Africa, it is essential to put effort in adapting national education systems to technological changes so that workers are provided with the appropriate set of skills. In this regard, emphasis was placed on the necessity to train the teachers and move towards quality education. Youth in particular need to receive practical knowledge to match available jobs and create new job opportunities. Also, governments should support youth enterprise and involve them in policy making.

The issue of informality was emphasized and speakers called on governments to create a legal framework that provides incentives for job creation. In this sense, national policy making is expected to play a key role in ensuring efficient regulation and implementing labour standards. Moreover, governments should also support the private sector, considering the great potential it holds for job creation.

## **Recommendations**

- Addressing youth employment issues requires the creation of a new partnership between the education system and the private sector (teachers and employers).
- In order to make the world of work a tool/medium for social mobility, strong coordinated action is necessary to tackle global policy failures. Emphasis should be placed on improving regulation of the financial system and enforcing international labour standards.
- Providing universal access to education for boys and girls is vitally important.
- Governments need to provide a conducive environment for enterprise creation. Special attention should be given to small and medium sized enterprises.
- It is necessary to provide policy support to the most vulnerable in the world of work, especially young people and women.
- In order to adapt to the emerging digital economy, workers will need to learn new skills and governments, business and civil society will need to work in new ways and to provide new kinds of services. Changes in policies, taxation and infrastructure are necessary to help workers manoeuvre in this new environment.
- Considering the rise of virtual workers, governments need to prepare social policy for a period of rapid job turnover and more non-standard work.