

Statement on behalf of the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group

Chair,

Allow us first to congratulate the Secretariat for the very comprehensive report done on this very broad and difficult issue. We agree with its approach, based among others on enhancing human and social capital, promoting non-farming employment and improving natural resources management.

We would like to highlight some of the policies suggested as key for achieving progress in this area:

- **Decent employment policies in rural areas have to be promoted**, as they help in increasing labor productivity and reducing poverty. New industries need to be supported to create new jobs and income opportunities outside the agricultural sector.
- **Income generating and job-creating policies and measures should give special attention to young people, who constitute the bulk of migrants to urban areas.** For example, employing rural dwellers to repair and protect the natural environment could generate a large number of jobs. Terracing or countouring land, building irrigation structures, conserving water and other related activities are labour-intensive and will therefore provide employment, as will the rehabilitation of dams, barrages and embankments. In South Africa for example, a public programme has provided work for 25,000 previously unemployed people around these activities.
- **Dialogue with local stakeholders, including agricultural workers, can provide with innovative ideas and opportunities for rural areas.** Microcredit programmes can help in financing these.
- Human and social capital is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against rural poverty and the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas. Our second recommendation will go to the **promotion of education and vocational training, as they are key in providing rural workers and communities with the opportunities for improving their lives in the agriculture sector, as well as in other areas.**
- Policies aiming at **building and reinforcing safety nets and social protection, including the provision of employment insurances and health services** are key in reducing the vulnerability of rural communities to environmental and economic stresses.
- As the report points out, **engaging with employers in social dialogue provides a good opportunity for rural workers to address the concerns of often excluded or marginalized groups such as smallholders, rural women and agricultural**

laborers. Such dialogue will allow for a better adaptation of institutions to the realities on the ground, as Ms. De la Rosa pointed out.

- Last but not least, Madame Chair, **freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, elimination of discrimination at the workplace and the right to information are all essential preconditions for the effective engagement of vulnerable groups.**