

Input of the CIO to the Debate at the European Parliament, March 17th, 2015

Decent Work – The Path to Dignity for all- Creating jobs for poverty eradication through Post 2015 Agenda

Introduction of the statement of Catholic Inspired Organisations

By Hildegard Hagemann, Kolping international/German Commission for Justice and Peace

Honorable Ms Toia, Honorable Mr Stier,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies,

Highly respected guests from the European Commission, the ILO, the ITUC

dear colleagues from the COMECE and fellow organisations and friends of decent work,

First of all let me thank you on behalf of the Catholic Inspired Organisations that you share with us the interest in promoting decent work in the global agenda for sustainable development. As organisations which are engaged in promoting the human right to decent work we are very grateful that you, dear Ms. Toia and dear Mr. Stier, agreed to host this event. And that you - together with the COMECE support our concern to animate the debate on the post 2015 agenda in this specific issue.

Secondly it is my task today to introduce the statement of Catholic Inspired Organisations on decent work and the post 2015 development agenda- which lies in front of you. It is a position formulated by Catholic organisations with consultative status at the UN and ILO, non-government organisations engaged 'on the ground' across Europe and around the world, with networks, members and activities that include as well as serve, among others, workers, employers, migrants and youth. You can see the list of first signatories and supporters on the cover and the annex.

When you read it you will easily grasp why we stress the importance of work for the development of mankind. Our starting point is the essentiality of work as part of the human being, bringing forward the relevance of work to create income in order to overcome poverty. And we stress that we do not talk about just any kind of work but work which respects and protects the dignity of the person. With this we draw the attention to the biggest group of working people in a global perspective: those working in the informal economy, unregistered, unprotected and unorganised. They are the majority of the labour force in developing countries and also still in some of the emerging economies. In their daily struggle to earn the income for their families they contribute notably to the Gross National Product.

In our statement we describe precisely the importance of social protection, poverty reduction and solidarity as well as the link between solidarity and social peace. Furthermore we highlight the situation of the most vulnerable groups among the workers, especially in the informal economy – the migrant workers and the youth.

Economic globalisation is increasingly characterised by the contribution of **Migrant workers** who are working at crucial points along the global value chains- let it be in the textile industries, agriculture,

food processing but also high-skilled work, including science, engineering, high tech and information technology. Unfortunately those working at the bottom end of the value chains globally or locally, as in domestic work, construction, tourism and the like, are an especially vulnerable group of workers—whether they have legal immigration status or not. They are easily exploited, terribly and constantly, because of their lack of knowledge and enforcement of their rights, language and integration challenges, etc. Many are tied to precarious labour recruitment systems and visas, and engrossed in the zeal to feed, educate and provide a better future for their families far away.

In many societies north and south, the unemployment rate of young people has skyrocketed. Hence we consider it imperative to address the needs of young people who are looking for their place in working life, and by that also a place in their societies. When **Youth** loses perspective and hope in the future, we as the “parent generation” have failed our duty to preserve the future for the coming generations.

Since we published the statement in June 2013, we are happy to see that one of our central concerns has been answered, with decent work included from the beginning of the discussion of the post-2015 development agenda. It was in the report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons in May 2013 and it has been included as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals suggested by the states’ Open Working Group of the UN. Hence this time, the mistake that the Millennium Development Goals initially made in ignoring the nexus of work and poverty will be avoided. You will recall that it was only in 2007 that the UN introduced the decent work and full employment as a target, under MDG 1.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in September the UN General Assembly will agree on a new set of development goals. Recognizing that there some but not all of the current set of MDGs were successfully implemented we certainly need a fresh commitment of the international community, including European institutions and civil society, taking up our common but differentiated responsibility.

We welcome the participatory and transparent process which led to the 17 SDGs currently proposed. Generally, we support the view to maintain the current 17 goals, together with their targets and the suggested frame as adoptable and workable. However, we would like to stress three points which are extremely important for the success of implementation.

1. Human rights based approach

We consider it necessary to anchor the SDG agenda on a substantial and coherent foundation: human rights. Already in the Eminent persons report of May 2013 the principle of ‘leave no one behind’ implicated the human rights based approach for each and every goal. When we agree on this base then implementation of the goals becomes mandatory, non negotiable and, as at least ‘do no harm’ – obliged. Moreover, the human rights based approach calls on the responsibility of every stakeholder—governments, private sector, civil society.

2. Social dialogue

It is an easy step to deduct from the human rights based approach the call for participation and dialogue. For the world of labour, social dialogue is a well recognized but not always well respected

instrument to overcome differences between stakeholders. However we see a dire need to revitalise social dialogue, to institutionalise it and even to widen it where necessary. For example, given the size of the informal economy we see the necessity to include the voices of those who are not formally organised but join hands in other forms of movements, e.g., migrant and diaspora associations, grass root organisations etc.

3. Determination of indicators

To prevent an unwanted trade off between the two parts of Goal 8: 'economic growth, full and productive employment' and 'decent work for all', the **determination of suitable indicators** will be crucial. Economic growth goes along with competitiveness which comes with the minimization of costs. Of course, normally the biggest cost- factor is labour. The economies of all nations are interlinked and most commodities in real economy are produced in long transnational/global value chains. Consumers in one country depend heavily on the work of workers in other countries, which must be safe, fair and resource-minded. Consequently we see need for discussion of **indicators** to monitor the balance of the goals in Goal 8 and measure the progress of implementation, nationally and internationally. For example-the indicators should reflect the quality of jobs and not only the quantity. They also should show the improvement of social dialogue as an instrument to maintain social peace. This is extremely relevant to avoid further frustration among young people.

Finally we call for a **two-track strategy** to implement decent working conditions worldwide in order to comply with the SDGs guiding idea 'common but differentiated responsibility' of the member states.

First, in the **national context** – here I include the context of the European Union – we have to overcome the informalisation and precarisation of work. We should not be pioneers of a race to the bottom and create wage competition, neither inside the EU nor as EU towards the rest of the world. We have to 'clean our own yard' with respect to workers' protection and workers' rights. For example the recognition of rights of the migrant workers and their families, the fight against human trafficking and exploitation in our value chains, the strengthening of social protection schemes and improving education and training facilities your young people are political fields which are also litmus tests for the credibility of development politics.

The second track is **coherent development cooperation**, which is not contradicted or jeopardized by European politics. Strategies for development cooperation are based on political dialogue between donor and recipient countries. Precondition for a good political dialogue is credibility. Precondition for credibility is a policy of coherence in the political fields – from agriculture to finance. We encourage the European Union to strengthen the commitment to a 'development friendly politics' as stated in the Lisbon Treaty.

Since we are eager to incite fruitful discussion I stop here. I thank you for your attention and look forward to our exchange.