

## **EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Statement submitted by International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Education International (EI) and Public Services International (PSI), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), civil society organisations with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council

### **Putting women's rights to decent work, quality education and quality public services at the heart of the post-2015 Agenda**

**As trade unions, we demand:**

- 1. A stand-alone sustainable development goal on gender equality that includes targets and indicators aimed at the gender wage gap, women's participation and leadership, the unpaid care economy and its impact on women's ability to fully enjoy their economic, social, cultural and political rights, women's access to education, information, land and credit, to stop and prevent violence against women and girls and fair portrayal of women in the media. The gender equality goal must be grounded in the existing policy and normative frameworks for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ILO's Decent Work Agenda.**

***In addition, the new sustainable development framework must take a comprehensive approach to gender equality and women's rights by mainstreaming gender considerations into all sustainable development goals through gender-specific targets and gender-relevant indicators;***

- 2. A decent work goal with targets for basic social protection and increasing the minimum living wage for women and men, and indicators regarding the number of women and men in formal waged employment in public and private organisations;**
- 3. A stand-alone education goal to ensure universal free quality education through which girls and boys, and men and women can gain knowledge and develop the critical thinking abilities and skills that are needed to question, conceptualise and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, and actively contribute to the sustainable and democratic development of society;**
- 4. The inclusion in the new framework of member states' responsibility for the provision of quality public services for a safe and sustainable future for all including services that are necessary to ensure the effective respect of all women's economic, social and cultural rights, and such as the right to housing, food security, health care, social services, physical and sexual security, income security.**

### **A steady regression to unequal societies**

Economic inequality is a threat to the global economy and to the life of millions of people worldwide, and it is sharply worsening. Redistribution of opportunity, wealth and income is urgently needed both between and within countries. Decent work, labour rights, access to a minimum living wage and a universal system of social protection are the key elements of a development agenda that can deliver on equity, inclusive growth and shared prosperity. However, income redistribution goes hand in hand with an authentic democratic distribution of power. Democracy, the people's participation in decision-making, respect for human rights and the rule of law must also be part of this agenda. Trade unions play a crucial role in the fair redistribution of both income and power and must, therefore, be at the forefront of policy debates related to social and economic inequality.

Between the early 1990s and mid-2000s, the global economy grew substantially, especially in emerging and developing countries, but the benefits of this expansionary period were unevenly shared. Overall, the most remarkable trend of that period has been an unprecedented widening of income inequality: at present the richest 1% of the world's population owns 40% of global assets while half of the world's population owns just 1% of global wealth (UNRISD, 2012). A recent study from Oxfam released during the World Economic Forum reveals that together, 85 individuals own as much as 60% of the world's population put together (Oxfam, 2013). In OECD countries, the Gini coefficient - a standard measure of income inequality that ranges from 0 (when everybody has identical incomes) to 1 (when all income goes to only one person) - increased from an average of 0.29 in the mid-1980s to 0.316 by the late 2000s (OECD, 2011), and it has been worsening ever since. Particularly women at the bottom rank of our economy experience the most extreme forms of inequality.

Wage inequality explains a big part of income inequality and it is striking to note that during the period 1990-2008 income distribution showed systematic losses for labour despite an increase in global employment rates. In 51 out of the 73 countries for which data were available, the ILO found that over the past two decades the share of wages in total income declined (ILO, 2008a). The largest decline took place in Latin America and the Caribbean (-13 percentage points), followed by Asia and the Pacific (-10 percentage points). In contrast, the share of profits in national income increased virtually everywhere. This indicates that the quality of the jobs created was not good enough to reduce income inequality, that wages remained at a low level and that labour market tenure was weak. In fact, the majority of the jobs created during that period were short term, part-time, temporary, casual or informal, and, therefore, precarious. Today, half of the world's workforce is in vulnerable employment, living in income insecurity.

### **The tools exist to fight inequality**

To address and redress income inequality, the post-2015 sustainable development agenda must focus on employment, wellbeing and security. In particular, it must address gender inequality in the labour market and in social policies. Male and female labour must be properly valued and rewarded. This requires policy and laws to protect both formal and informal economy workers, to ensure compliance with anti-discrimination and minimum wage legislation and core labour standards, and to secure effective and universal access to social protection. Giving visibility to the unpaid care work carried out by women would also highlight the constraints and discrimination they face, and help formulate better gender-sensitive policy.

According to ILO figures, 17% of all workers in developing countries earn less than 1.25 dollars a day (UN, 2012). Political will and strong policy is needed to achieve fairness, dignity and confidence in the lives of the still growing number of working poor worldwide.

Globalisation has eroded the ability of states to implement public policies that increase the income position of low-income groups, due to international legal constraints and decreased government revenues. At the same time, the globalised economy has eroded workers' bargaining power through liberalisation and work informalisation. In order to address economic and social inequality effectively, the post-2015 development agenda must provide an earmarked policy space for both governments and social partners to define and implement efficient employment and social transfer policies.

The post-2015 agenda must focus, as a matter of priority, on providing rights and protection to the billions of informally employed workers. This includes the extension of labour laws to all sectors, the registration of informal workers, the enforcement of minimum wage and social security legislation, and enhanced capacities for labour ministries and inspectorates. Lessons from successful democracies indicate that rights must be institutionalised in order to reduce inequality. The post-2015 agenda must include respect for international human and women's rights and labour standards.

The ratification and implementation of the core ILO Conventions should be an integral part of the new sustainable development agenda: they lay out key principles designed to ensure that women are not discriminated against in their workplace, and that they have the right to join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining. **ILO Conventions which promote equality in the world of work:** Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No 183), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No 189), the Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No 175), and the Home-Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177). In addition, economic and social policies must integrate the Conventions that create enabling rights for gender equality: the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No 87), and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No 98).

The elimination of violence requires strong intervention from public authorities in order to design and implement appropriate prevention measures, to ensure legal protection and the prosecution of cases, and to provide support and compensation for victims. However, civil society organisations have a strong role to play in the design and implementation of public actions aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls. The sustainable development agenda needs to include targets to stop and prevent violence against women and girls which - among others - ensure gender equality is enshrined as a principle in national constitutions and adopt laws and put in place effective mechanisms to enforce the law in close cooperation with civil society.

Finally, the 1995 Beijing Platform recognised the potential harm and impact of the media on ongoing gender discrimination, calling for more gender sensitivity in the media. Discrimination and stereotype in media can distort the image of women. This does not only reinforces the gender bias in media, but it can also lead to dangerous consequences through underreporting of lack of gender diversity, violence against women and abuses of their human rights. Ethical journalism initiatives and codes of conduct are essential to confront this potential harm and negative impact. They must be promoted by journalists' unions and through education in order to challenge sensationalism and portrayal of women in a way that denies them their human dignity or turns them into "victims", instead highlighting their positive roles in - and major contributions to - society. Furthermore, there is a need for more training and support to women journalists to redress the current imbalance in terms of access to work.

### **Addressing inequality in the post-2015 framework**

There is broad acceptance across the international development community that a major oversight in the MDG framework was its failure to foresee and, therefore, guard against, inequality in all its forms. Inequality - more specifically the respect and promotion of gender equality and women's human rights - must be articulated in the new framework both as a **stand-alone gender equality and women's rights and empowerment goal** that includes targets to:

- *Eliminate the gender wage gap in both the public and private sectors,*
- *Increase women's participation and leadership in public institutions and in the private sector at the local, national, regional and international levels,*
- *Recognise and value paid and unpaid care work and address the negative impacts of the unpaid care economy on women's ability to fully enjoy their economic, social, cultural and political rights, women's access to education*
- *Increase women's access to education and information, and to land and credit,*
- *Stop and prevent violence against women and girls*
- *Ensuring a fair portrayal of women in the media.*

In addition **gender equality and women's rights and empowerment should be a cross-cutting target area in all sustainable development goals**, and most crucially, inequality must be explicitly monitored against ambitious targets.

To measure progress on reducing inequalities, the following indicators should be considered at country level:

- Income inequality expressed by the ratio between the income of the top and bottom percentiles
- Share of wages and profits in national income
- Gender-based wage gaps
- Ratio between GDP growth and the growth rate of social transfers
- Progress in the implementation of decent work components
- Securing adequate investment in the care economy to provide decent jobs - for women and men
- Women's access to decision-making positions
- Fair and balanced gender portrayal in the media
- Women's equal access to, and engagement with, media

### **Decent work for all and universal social protection in the post-2015 framework**

Through quality job creation, with fair wages and better working conditions, people, communities and countries can reverse the trend of growing inequality all over the world. This can only happen when paid work is decent and underpinned by rights. A **decent work goal** must include concrete targets for employment growth, investment in green job promotion, reduction precarious work and progression of a living wage, as well as increased compliance with international labour rights for all workers and gender equality in the workplace. The ILO decent work agenda provides a useful reference for understanding the full components of decent work and the necessary indicators for measuring progress on its implementation. Targets should include:

- Full and productive employment including the reduction of vulnerable employment as well the working poor
- Introduction of a living wage
- Ensuring rights at work (with indicators focusing on ratification of the eight ILO Core Labor Conventions)

- Ensuring gender equality at work (with indicators focusing on Ratification of the ILO Convention No. 183 on maternity protection, No. 156 on workers with family responsibilities and No. 189 on domestic workers and the Gender wage gap)
- Ensuring decent working conditions and universal social protection
- Ensuring effective social dialogue\

Ensuring universal access to the basic guarantees of social protection is a human right - the human right to social security - and a direct and efficient way to reduce inequalities. The new agenda should include a **goal on the implementation of social protection floors** as defined in the Report of the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group chaired by Michelle Bachelet, and ILO Recommendation 202, which has set an international standard to be applied at national level. Social protection targets must be set and realised on income security for the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, pregnant women, children and older people, as well as on access to health care, education, housing and sanitation. While social protection remains the responsibility of governments, a Global Fund for Social Protection could be established to introduce or strengthen social protection floors in the poorest countries. This will have a profound impact on women's empowerment and economic independence. Targets should include:

- Establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection (as proposed UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights)
- Implementing policy framework for social protection Guaranteeing income security and basic social services during childhood
- Guaranteeing income security for unemployed, sick, mothers, people with disabilities and for the elderly

#### **Quality Education in the post-2015 framework**

Quality education is fundamental to the achievement of all development goals because it provides people with the critical knowledge, abilities and skills needed to conceptualise and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, and thereby contribute to sustainable human development. A post-2015 **goal to 'ensure universal, free quality education'** must, therefore, ensure equitable access to, and completion of early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education, and recognise the importance of scaling up efforts to expand post-secondary education by setting the following targets:

- By 2030, every child completes a full cycle of continuous, free quality early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education, which enables them to achieve their potential as human beings and to contribute positively as active members of society.
- By 2030, all young people and adults have equitable access to quality post-secondary education and lifelong learning, enabling them to acquire knowledge, skills and competences to achieve their full potential and participate positively in society and in the world of work.

#### **Indicators:**

- Percentage of children and young people who participate in and complete early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education to the appropriate national standards, disaggregated by disability, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, among others;
- Percentage of children and young people who demonstrate learning achievement broadly- defined and determined through multiple measures and consistent with

national standards, disaggregated by disability, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, among others;

- Percentage of educational institutions that are publicly financed, do not charge fees and are not for profit;
- Percentage of children and young people taught by qualified teachers with an appropriate student to qualified teacher ratio;
- Percentage of educational institutions that have safe and adequate infrastructure, facilities, resources and learning materials for all students;
- Percentage of educational institutions that have adequate numbers of education support personnel, as well as food, transport, health and psychological services;
- Breadth of curriculum, including an evaluation of gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory content, teaching resources and materials;
- Breadth of curriculum beyond literacy and numeracy to include an evaluation of its global citizenship and life skills content

### **Quality public services in the post-2015 framework**

**Access to quality public services**, whether in health and social care, water and sanitation, electricity and fuel, public administration, media, vocational training and further education, **is fundamental to women's access to full employment and decent work**. Investment in all quality public services is a key driver of development. As such, trade unions have grave concerns with the reductions to budgets supporting public services which governments have undertaken in response to the current economic crisis. These cuts are having a negative impact on the provision of quality public services which are central to eradicating poverty through the delivery of health care, education, and decent work for women.

Chronic under-investment in public services in both industrialised and developing countries remains a significant barrier to the social and economic emancipation and empowerment of women. Women, especially, rely on the availability of quality public health, social care, child care, water and energy distribution services. Where States fail to provide adequate public health and care services, the burden falls heavily on women to compensate for their non-availability. Universal access to quality public services is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Across the world, the public sector is an important employer of women. In many cases it is the single largest employer of women outside the informal economy. Yet occupational segregation, undervaluation of women's work and the increasingly precarious nature of public sector jobs (through the use of outsourcing, short-term contracts, informal subcontracting and the indiscriminate use of temporary recruitment agencies) are factors inhibiting the true economic empowerment and advancement of women.