

Statement – Workers and Trade Unions Major Group

19 February 2015

Thank you to the co-chairs for the chance to share the perspective of the international trade union movement on the declaration for the Post 2015 framework currently under discussion. We have some general remarks, but will tend to focus in particular on the issue of the accountability, especially as relates to the follow up and review section of the declaration and the corresponding instruments we will establish at global, regional, national and local levels to ensure that we deliver the goals and targets, in line with our vision and commitments in the eventual Post 2015 framework.

We have an opportunity here to boost policy coherence between economic, social and environmental policies, development promotion, the pursuit of decent work for all and realization of standards based commitments in the areas of labour and environment. The declaration should reflect this.

The declaration must also enshrine fundamental principles of “mutual accountability”, “democratic ownership”, and “inclusive partnership” (with full participation of State and non-State actors). The success of the framework and in particular the mechanism for accountability will depend on the capacity of the process, at all levels, to convene different actors, on equal ground to contribute in a genuine and fully participatory manner to the review and implementation.

Governments must not shy away from honest assessments and should accurately report progress—this is the only way to generate the necessary action to see that commitments will be fulfilled. The declaration must also recognize and promote the use of existing review and accountability mechanisms, especially those that have some legal basis and are not just voluntary in character—the ILO Supervisory Mechanism is an excellent example in this regard.

A standards based accountability mechanism built on existing agreements is a minimum of what is needed to ensure broad accountability. Monitoring must therefore be rooted in the Human Rights Based Approach and the Right to Development. And this is why as the trade union movement we have argued regularly that ILO labour standards and other human rights standards feature in all aspects of the agenda. So while follow up and review must reflect the global commitments and be tailored to national contexts, they must also apply universally agreed standards.

The declaration must put forward that at the national level the review processes must be fully and genuinely participatory of the key actors in development and society at large. In this light, the social dialogue, bringing together the social partners, employers and workers organizations, is an excellent example of how to ensure ownership of policy process at the national level and should inform and actually set an example of how the review processes are carried out. At national level the presence of social dialogue is critical for ensuring social cohesion, social peace through greater accountability.

This type of accountability and review is not without fundamental prerequisites or conditions. To have legitimacy and function effectively, respect for freedom of association, speech and assembly, are critical and non-negotiable. Governments must have the institutional capacity to protect and respect these freedoms and support an inclusive review process. The declaration must reflect this.

Finally, a vision underpinned by a holistic approach which defines the integration of development and human rights into a normative and binding framework would be both ambitious and effective. The ILO framework and its standards based tripartite accountability mechanisms constitute a long-standing example of how relevant and effective this can be.