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ROLE OF SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IN ACHIEVING THE SDGS

Mr. Moderator, thank you for giving me the floor. Dear colleagues, distinguished guests:

first, let me thank you for the invitation to this side event. The efforts of the organisers in promoting social economy are admirable, hence the sector can help us build more democratic, equal and inclusive society. Therefore, we should further support it and do everything in our power to respond to its specific needs. Foremost, we need to step up our efforts to achieve SDGs.

I am pleased to share with you our views and practices on the social economy. And even more to listen to your interventions that will feed in our future development in the field.

During the last financial crisis, the sector of social economy has demonstrated a strong resistance to challenges and offered numerous opportunities for maintaining jobs and strengthening social cohesion. Even during the current pandemic, the sector showed ability to act and organise quickly.

However, there is a place for improvements and further development of this important sector. We must insist on at least two major advantages of social economy, namely:

- egalitarian and democratic forms of decision-making going beyond the hierarchies of traditional companies, where labour is subordinated to the owners of capital or management (for example workers' cooperatives operating on the principle of one worker one vote);
- overcoming the profit as the only motive of the business: instead of pursuit of profit, wider social, environmental objectives, community welfare, and so on must be taken into account.

Slovenia adopted the Social Entrepreneurship Act in 2011. In 2017, the act was amended to incorporate the definition of social economy into the law, placing the concept of social entrepreneurship in a broader context.

Since the adoption of the act, the number of registered social enterprises has been growing steadily. In addition to registered social enterprises, the sector also consists of companies for the people with disabilities and different employment centres, which we are structurally supported by a quota system for people with disabilities.

Slovenia also recognises the importance of the social impacts created by social economy and social enterprises in particular; hence the national methodology for social impact measurement for social enterprises is being developed. It is based on the SDGs indicators.

Slovenia also encourages the development of social economy and social enterprises through the financing of their activities from the European Funds.

In addition, some social economy organisations have the possibility to use the premises owned by the state or local authorities free of charge, which facilitates their entry into the market.

However, we identified some systemic disadvantages in Slovenia. There are obstacles to development of cooperatives as important actors in social economy. Moreover, the existing regulation of social entrepreneurship often leads to precarious and low-paid employment without adequate social security.

Social economy organisations in Slovenia, as also elsewhere, face certain challenges. They differ among themselves and participate in a sector that is composed of different legal entities. The sector is not homogeneous, and it is difficult for them to engage in collective bargaining and form common positions towards decision makers. Therefore, the social economy council was established, that will provide ten-year social economy strategy on the national level.

In future, we intend to work intensively to improve before mentioned deficiencies and systemic disadvantages and with this guarantee strengthening of workers' cooperatives and other forms of economic democracy, strengthening the conditions for the trade union organisation in social and solidarity economy as well as improving and promoting working conditions and stable, decently paid employment with a full work and social security rights.

I therefore welcome and support the promotion of a process leading to the adoption of an UN General Assembly resolution on the role of the Social and Solidarity Economy in sustainable development.

Particularly due to several difficulties that social economy actors and governments are facing, we need as many encouragements as possible to make the sector of social economy a thriving sector in the service and to the benefit of our citizens.

I am sure our experiences in social economy may be useful to other countries, while we would be ready to learn from others.

Thank you.