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Policy Development Section
Employment and Social Protection Segment

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THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Discussion about the effect given to the decision adopted in November 2011 on the item entitled Green jobs, decent work and sustainable development, with a focus on the implication for the ILO's programme of work of the outcome of the UNCSO 2012 (Rio +20)

Purpose of the document

The paper is submitted for debate and guidance on ILO contributions towards giving effect to the outcomes of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSO). The Governing Body is invited to discuss the issues raised in this paper, to identify the priorities for substantive follow-up by the ILO to the outcome of the UNCSO and to take action accordingly (see draft decision in paragraph 20).

Relevant strategic objective: Sustainable development in relation to decent work and the role of the ILO in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSO) 2012.

Policy implications: Yes.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: Yes – within the framework of the current Programme and Budget for 2012–13; to be taken into account in the preparations of the Programme and Budget for 2014–15.

Follow-up action required: Paragraph 20.

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Related documents: GB.313/INS/4, GB.316/INS/4.

Executive summary

The paper summarizes the contributions of the Office to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in June 2012 and highlights the key outcomes with relevance to the ILO and its constituents.

It discusses the general implications for the ILO as a whole and sets out possible avenues for specific follow-up through the ILO's programme of work in the current and following biennia. The points for decision may best be considered in conjunction with the Governing Body discussion on the post-2015 development agenda¹ in the Institutional Section.

Introduction

1. On 22 June 2012, the 193 member States of the United Nations, including Heads of States and Governments from over 130 countries, adopted by acclamation the outcome document on sustainable development entitled, *The future we want*.² This was the result of a long process of national and regional consultations and preparatory committee meetings culminating in the high-level United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (UNCSD, or Rio +20).
2. The organization of the Conference was decided by the General Assembly of the United Nations at its 64th Session.³ It set two major topics as lead themes, namely: (i) green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (ii) the institutional framework for sustainable development. The aim of the Conference was to secure renewed political commitment to sustainable development and to assess the progress and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the earlier summits on sustainable development in 1992 and 2002.
3. The Governing Body concluded in November 2011 that it wished to assess and discuss the outcomes of the UNCSD and its implications for the ILO at the 316th Session of the Governing Body in November 2012.⁴ In March 2012,⁵ the Governing Body discussed the scope of the ILO's contribution to the Rio +20 process and intended final outcome. It called on the Office to pursue an active participation in the preparations for the Rio +20 Conference and in the Summit itself and underlined the following main messages:
 - (i) the need for a strong social pillar of sustainable development with decent work as a conceptual framework;
 - (ii) the recognition of social dialogue as a major contributor to the governance of sustainable development;

¹ GB.316/INS/6.

² See <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/814UNCSD%20REPORT%20final%20revs.pdf>.

³ UN: A/RES/64/236.

⁴ GB.312/POL/PR.

⁵ GB.313/INS/4.

- (iii) the importance of reflecting decent work in appropriate indicators and in the possible sustainable development goals.
- 4. The purpose of this short paper is to help identify priorities for follow-up to the outcome of the UNCS D 2012 by the ILO.
- 5. The paper should be read in conjunction with document GB.316/INS/6 on “Decent work in the post-2015 development agenda”, providing a perspective on the significance of the Rio +20 outcome in the wider UN intergovernmental process.

ILO contributions to the UNCS D

- 6. The main inputs by the Office to the Conference can be summarized as follows:
 - Submission of an input for the zero draft of the outcome document, active participation in the preparatory meetings, comments on the draft outcome text, briefings and advice to national delegations before and during Rio +20, based on the ILO messages endorsed by the Governing Body (GB.313/INS/4).
 - Launch of the report *Working towards sustainable development*⁶ by the Green Jobs Initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the ILO, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on 1 June 2012. This global review is a sequel to the 2008 Green Jobs Report, and assesses the scope for decent work and social inclusion in the transition to a green economy.
 - Active participation of the Director-General in the high-level segment of the Summit, including in the round table on sustainable development and in numerous side events. In his participation, concrete ILO deliverables to Rio +20 and its follow-up process were emphasized, in particular in the areas of capacity building for social dialogue, support for the elaboration of employment assessments of the impact on jobs of greening the economy, with particular focus on opportunities for youth; and in the design and implementation of integrated social protection floor policies, including synergies with environmental policies and leveraging South–South and triangular cooperation.
 - Organization of the ILO side event on decent work and social protection floors for sustainable development, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UNEP and the Governments of Brazil, Norway and Indonesia.
 - Inviting contributions to over 20 other side events, inter alia, Green Jobs: A Chance for Youth (with UNEP), Socio-environmental Protection Floors (with Brazil), A Green and Inclusive Economy: The Finance Ministers’ Perspective (with Brazil and G20 finance ministers), UN System: Together for the Future We Want (with the UN System Chief Executive Board for Coordination – CEB), Multilateral Cooperation Towards Sustainable Development (with the World Trade Organization (WTO)), and two events on sustainable enterprise development (one with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), one with the Brazilian Service of Support for Micro- and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE)). These events gathered a very sizeable audience and demonstrated a strong interest in establishing a better link between

⁶ “Working towards sustainable development: Opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy”; ILO and ILS (2012).

environmental and economic policies, and social challenges like unemployment, working poverty and social exclusion.

- Press releases were published throughout the Rio +20 system, disseminating news and the ILO's views on events as they happened; press conferences were held during the days of the Rio +20 high-level proceedings; and a dedicated ILO public web page on Rio +20 was set up.

Key outcome of UNCS D and other results

7. The adoption at the Summit, on 22 June 2012, of an agreed declaration has been welcomed as the most important achievement of the Conference, alongside a very large number of voluntary commitments by member States, civil society and international organizations.⁷ Many countries and organizations seized the momentum to launch specific initiatives of their own. Others launched partnerships to take the sustainable development agenda forward in practical ways.
8. At UN level, the following achievements were identified:
 - Renewed commitment to sustainable development and the launch of an intergovernmental process on the formulation of sustainable development goals that would help lay the ground for a post-2015 UN development agenda.
 - An agreed outcome document setting a framework for action and follow-up on 27 thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues.
 - Guidelines on advancing a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.
 - A universal intergovernmental high-level political forum to be established to provide political leadership and guidance on future action for sustainable development.
 - A stronger role for UNEP.
9. International reactions to *The future we want* have been mixed, but the outcome document itself, the follow-up process and the numerous national and international initiatives already in progress, suggest that Rio +20 will be seen as a milestone towards an internationally agreed sustainable development agenda.
10. Looking ahead, perhaps the most important achievements for the ILO are that the international system has underscored the fundamental contribution of decent work to sustainable development, recognized the need for more knowledge sharing on green jobs and to agree on a process to develop, formulate and adopt a set of sustainable development goals.
11. The UN has initiated a number of follow-up activities, most of them relevant to the ILO:
 - Follow-up to the Rio +20 outcome document: Responsibilities of the UN system, contained in a letter of the Secretary-General of 2 August,⁸ assigning a lead role for

⁷ See: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/voluntarycommitments.html>.

⁸ http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/816SG%20Letter%20to%20ECESA%20Plus_August%202012.pdf.

the ILO on employment trends, youth employment, social protection, and knowledge sharing on green jobs.

- Establishment of an open working group composed of 30 representatives, nominated by member States from the five UN regional groups, to be constituted no later than the opening of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 2012), with a view to developing global sustainable development goals for adoption by the General Assembly.
- Establishment of a Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, with the ILO and World Bank as co-chairs.

12. The post-Rio +20 process is meant to be aligned with the wider intergovernmental consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. The ramifications are dealt with in the related GB paper on this topic (GB.316/INS/6).

Implications for the ILO

13. It would seem that the Decent Work Agenda has been significantly strengthened through the Rio +20 process. In comparison with 1992 and 2002 there is a stronger overall recognition of the social dimension of sustainable development with specific and explicit references to the pivotal role of decent work in achieving sustainability and to the role of the social partners and civil society in the required institutional framework.

14. The outcome document *The future we want* contains a significant number of references to core issues in the ILO's mandate and strategic objectives, such as:

- A separate chapter on “Promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection” (paragraphs 147–157).
- An explicit reference to the newly adopted ILO Recommendation No. 202 on national social protection floors.
- A call on governments, trade unions, workers and employers to promote decent work for all, and help young people gain access to needed skills and employment opportunities, including in new and emerging sectors.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of a just transition, including programmes to help workers adjust to changing labour market conditions.
- Emphasis on addressing, inter alia, youth employment, decent work in sustainable cities and in sustainable tourism, investment in infrastructure, public works, informal economy, micro-enterprise and cooperative development, skills for green jobs, occupational safety and health and fundamental rights at work; in this respect it underlines that women and men should have equal access to opportunities to acquire job skills as well as to worker protection.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of efforts to promote the exchange of information and knowledge on decent work for all and job creation, including green jobs initiatives and related skills, and to facilitate the integration of relevant data into national economic and employment policies.

15. In the more than 500 side events organized during Rio +20, numerous successful national and regional initiatives sought to promote a green economy, green jobs and social inclusion. Those initiatives provided evidence of a strong commitment among countries to

move towards a more sustainable future that addresses economic, social and environmental dimensions in a single coherent strategy.

16. In the context of Rio +20 and the drive for an integrated approach, UNEP and the ILO strengthened their existing partnerships and formulated a new Memorandum of Understanding in order to improve and expand technical cooperation and knowledge management on issues pertaining to the green economy and green jobs.

Suggested way forward

17. Overall, the ILO's role in Rio +20 is encouraging. However, it does provide a significant challenge for planning the support of the post-2015 development agenda and for a realistic roadmap of key contributions given the limited resources in the current and next biennia. Success in building on the outcomes of Rio +20 will, to a large extent, depend on a concerted effort by constituents with the support of the Office.
18. The prioritization of the follow-up by the Office could be founded on the following guiding principles:
- Supporting the strengthening of the social dimension of sustainable development and the implementation of the agreed outcomes at the highest organizational level.
 - Assisting ILO constituents in examining the relevance of the Rio +20 outcome in their national context, thus ensuring a meaningful participation in multi-stakeholder consultations.
 - Cooperating with the UN system on requested follow-up (strategy for youth employment, best practices, social protection programmes, employment trends, green economy and green jobs knowledge sharing) and strengthening relevant partnerships in the UN system (e.g. Green Jobs Initiative).
19. Suggested priorities for practical follow-up by the Office in support of constituents are:
- (i) *Capacity building for social dialogue*: strengthening training and outreach programmes to establish national frameworks and agreeing on measures that ensure a transition aiming at greater social inclusion and the creation of quality employment opportunities at sectoral and national level.⁹
 - (ii) *Employment assessments*: expanding the ongoing technical assistance for the analysis of the impact on employment and skills development of greening economies and enterprises at national and sectoral level, with the aim of enhancing opportunities for productive and decent work, particularly for youth.
 - (iii) *Social protection floors*: identifying and promoting positive linkages between national social protection floors, economic development, poverty reduction and environmental protection.

⁹ A recent example is the tripartite Green Jobs in Asia Regional Conference (29–31 August 2012), held in Indonesia, with 100 participants from ten countries. As well as reviewing the achievements at country level facilitated through ILO technical cooperation on green jobs, the conference was also an opportunity to reflect on ways to give a practical follow-up to the Rio +20 outcomes and anchor decent work more firmly in forthcoming post-Rio consultations. See http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/public/pr/WCMS_188833/lang--en/index.htm.

- (iv) *Sustainable development goals*: providing political and high-quality technical support for the design of goals and indicators to pursue decent work for all as a core priority of the global development agenda through, inter alia:
 - Establishing an informal ILO working group on indicators and measurement.
 - Providing focused messages for the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons, the UN Development Group-led national consultations on post-2015 and the intergovernmental working group on sustainable development goals being set up following Rio +20, as they prepare their reports to the General Assembly, to illustrate in practice how the Decent Work Agenda should be seen as a core resource in dealing with emerging and pressing global priorities.
- (v) *Research and knowledge management*: continuing to provide constituents with knowledge and information, tested tools and practical approaches on decent work creation in the transition to a green economy.
- (vi) *Resource mobilization*: intensifying the resource mobilization strategy to support country programmes that aim at making decent work a core component of national sustainable development strategies.

Draft decision

20. The Governing Body decides to:

- (a) *approve the priorities identified in paragraph 19;*
- (b) *call on the Office to work closely with constituents to ensure that the fundamental contribution of decent work to sustainable development becomes one of the central elements of the post-2015 development agenda (the Governing Body will have the opportunity to discuss this element in the Institutional Section);*
- (c) *request the Director-General to reflect the suggested priorities in the forthcoming Report on Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Green Jobs for the ILC 2013 general discussion, and to consider the financial implications of the adopted priorities in the preparations of the Programme and Budget for 2014–15.*