



PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

235 East 45th Street, 16th floor
New York, NY 10017

tel. (212) 519-9500
fax (212) 370-1954
www.pvnewyork.org

Statement by

Mr. Lauris Beets

Director International Affairs,
Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment

of

the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Madam Chairperson

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU. I would like to take this opportunity to share some further views on the role of full employment and decent work and social protection in enhancing social integration.

At the moment, the world faces a global economic challenge. The present economic crisis is a multifaceted complex challenge that can only be addressed if all countries work together in the international and financial institutions as well as at regional level. At the national level all relevant actors should work together, also with a view to a coherent performance at the international level. Together we can find solutions that will lead to economic recovery and social development.

This means that both the UN members states as well as the UN institutions, including the World Bank and the IMF, should improve their efforts to achieve policy coherence and work together towards our common goals. For instance, the ILO, the World Bank and other relevant UN agencies should support each other, and thus mutually reinforce each other, in realizing full employment, decent work and basic social security for all.

Economic inclusion is essential for the full inclusion of people in society. Economic inclusion is mostly understood as equality of opportunity in employment and training, as mentioned in the SG report entitled Promoting Social Integration. Unless economic growth benefits all people in society, there can be no sustainable economic development. The provision of universal access to a minimum standard of living, including access to basic social security, such as a pension, access to basic health care, education and housing, are important basic elements of socio-economic cohesion. Social and economic inclusion are strongly interrelated.

The Netherlands strongly believes that employment, and with that I mean decent work, is key to social integration. Being without a decent job often means that you're excluded from society. Being without a job often means poverty. Unemployment, poverty and exclusion are clearly interrelated. I will come back to this later.

In this respect, the Netherlands is pleased that the General Assembly, in its resolution A/63/230 adopted on 19 December 2008, has decided that a theme for the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008 - 2017) shall be 'full employment and decent work for all' and that the General Assembly will give this theme highest priority in its considerations.

Madam Chairperson

I return now to the relation between poverty and social exclusion. Decent employment should be the first step towards social integration. If decent employment is not feasible however, the question is what mechanisms should be put in place to reduce vulnerabilities due to ill-health, injury, old age or high food prices? The Netherlands is encouraged by the fact that the UN Secretary-General has given ample thought to social security in his reports on social integration and on full employment and decent work for all.

There is a growing body of evidence in support of the idea that social protection can be effective as a preventive measure, reducing risks and vulnerabilities, and can have a positive impact on development efforts and eradicating extreme poverty. Well-designed social protection programmes significantly reduce poverty, provided that they are economically sustainable. These social protection programmes should, where possible, lead to decent work. Where that is not possible, social protection programmes can reduce vulnerability and promote social inclusion.

The Netherlands particularly welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General in his reports encourages the ILO to continue its efforts towards increasing the coverage of social protection and contributing to global discussions on social security. Social protection was a driving force behind the establishment of the ILO in 1919. Social protection, more specifically social security, also played a prominent role in the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944. This Declaration broadened the ILO objectives to include enhanced social security measures to provide basic income to all those in need of such protection.

In June 2008 during its general conference, the ILO unanimously adopted the 'Declaration on social justice for a fair globalisation'. The Netherlands appreciates that the General Assembly, in its resolution A/63/199 adopted on 19 December 2008, has supported the call in this ILO Declaration to promote and contribute to the implementation of an integrated approach to the Decent Work Agenda. This Agenda is based on four inseparable, interrelated and mutual supportive strategic objectives of employment creation, fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and, last but certainly not least, social protection.

Madam Chairperson

The Netherlands recommends that the Commission for Social Development continues to place the issues of full and productive employment and decent work for all, as well as the coverage of social protection and the promotion of universal access to basic social security, high on the political agenda. Sustainable economic development is only possible if social policy is an inherent part of the development process.

Finally, I would like to stress again the importance that this Commission continues to address the need for policy coherence at all levels.

I thank you.