

RIO+20

UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting (Geneva, 1-2 December 2011)

Item 5: Assessment of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges

Statement by Jerry van den Berge, EPSU on behalf of the Major Group of Workers and Trade Unions

“First of all we would like to recall the three pillars of Sustainable Development; economic, social and environmental, and stress the equal value of each pillar.

We think Sustainable Development must be mainstreamed in European and national policies. A green economy must include social equity, gender equality and decent work. Green jobs must be Decent jobs. We would like to address the social pillar in specific, as it usually gets less attention than the other two pillars.

In this regard we want to highlight two issues: social protection and taxation.

What we would like to see as an outcome of Rio+20 is: the recognition of the role social protection systems play in reducing people’s vulnerability in a sustainable way. Therefore we expect a commitment to the implementation of a universal social protection floor. This implies: social transfers providing minimum income security, access to essential goods and services for all, and the provision of quality public services such as sanitation, health and education.

Social protection needs to be based on decent work policies, rely on legal entitlement of the beneficiaries and be designed with the involvement of the social partners. They should aim at building solid social security systems, providing universal coverage and including at least the contingencies and guarantees provided for in ILO convention 102.

What we would also like to see as an outcome is: a decision to implement the Financial Transaction Tax. Fair taxation is a key factor for sustainable financing with the objective of sustainable development. We think there is a need for innovative sources of funding for Sustainable Development. A Financial Transaction Tax can reduce the risk of witnessing more speculative bubbles in the financial markets and generate revenue for financing global public goods, including social protection and climate action. A global financial transaction tax could yield between US\$ 410 Billion and US\$ 1060 Billion per year.

It is time to take this option seriously.

Last but not least I would like to ask your commitment to involve social partners (business AND workers) through promotion of Social Dialogue on Sustainable Development. I heard today that an appeal was made to business, but it is the workforce that has to do the job to achieve a green economy and a fair and sustainable society. Workers must be involved and participate in decision-making processes and their rights must be respected. Then they will be committed to work to achieve a sustainable planet.