

22 March 2019

INTERVENTION

Closing session of UNECE's Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Dear Chair, dear all,

I represent workers and on behalf of the Regional Civil society Engagement Mechanism we commend UNECE for bringing civil society to this forum. Dialogue with and partnerships with civil society is essential for governments to achieve development progress in line with SDG commitments.

The world wealth grew 3 times in the last twenty years, but a small percentage have benefited from this growth. Inequalities are the main concern of all civil society, regardless of group or regional perspectives. Speakers have recognised this means that many are being left behind.

Inequalities are a threat to sustainable growth, social cohesion and inclusion. Inequalities affect those specifically discriminated against because of their age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, location and social class. Compliance with SDGs are key to reduce them. And we were happy to have heard understanding of the need to tackle inequalities in order to achieve economic and social progress and that national development plans are being reorientated with the SDGs. We were very happy to hear your commitment to gender equality. We look forward to your voluntary national reports with detail of how these commitments are being realised and monitored nationally.

We believe that full compliance with international obligations is precondition for any of the SDGs. Regretfully, some governments that report SDG achievements fail to ensure respect of economic, cultural and social rights. We, unionists, face this everyday, with workers rights, freedom of association, social protection provisions, being violated in our region. Human rights activists are targets of intimidation, repressions and criminal proceedings. Democratic space is shrinking.

We call to build and support independent and effective National Human Rights Institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles to serve as bridge-builders between state authorities and civil society; to support them in accessing and influencing law and policymaking processes and to ensure that the latter are inclusive and effectively addressing all people across the life course in societies. Private sector actors, multi-nationals, must respect human

rights, also within supply chains. The governments must make them accountable for what they bring to the world. There is no one too big to touch.

We urge the governments to take responsibility for what today brings to the future of people, societies and planet. Children march in the streets unified in a climate plea to those who can make their future bright or who can just leave them behind, hiding in irresponsibility, as ten years ago when financial greed destroyed well-being and perspectives of millions. It can not be repeated, or we will leave scorched earth to our children

Just Transition is critical in this process, premised on an inclusive approach that brings together workers, communities, business and governments in dialogue towards concrete steps needed for climate friendly cities and that protect our forests and green spaces, that support sustainable economies and sustainable consumption.

Technological progress necessitates development of adequate regulatory civil, industrial and employment policies. All workers, regardless of their recruitment status, must be guaranteed respect of their rights, minimum living wages, health and safety at work, control over working hours and job security, comprehensive social protection, and we urge for Universal labour guarantee.

Addressing women's double burden of work and care across the life course is critical to close the gender gaps, including through recognition of unpaid care work, social protection and adequate pensions and gender-balanced parental leave. Social protection, quality public services and education are investments in people, equal chances, inclusiveness, fairness and sustainability of our societies. Governments need to design and implement pro-employment macroeconomic strategies supported by progressive trade, industrial, and infrastructure policies, including investments in skills and lifelong learning, equality and the care economy. Civil society is ready to partner in innovative ways to ensure this happens.

After a decade of austerity measures that has put many in Europe to the edge of poverty and further increased inequalities, we need investments and expansionary policies. That should include robust actions to invest in people, to end tax evasion and tax avoidance, to fight corruption, and to put in place redistributive policies through fair taxation which will reinforce the social contract between state and citizens. In addition, the wealthier countries in our region need to take historic responsibility of the global growing inequalities. We need to put people over profit.

It is a political choice, what the wealth of this world is used for. All we need is true leadership and political will. Thank you for your attention.