



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 April 2012

Original: English

Substantive session of 2012

New York, 2-27 July 2012

Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*

High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Statement submitted by Canadian Labour Congress, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.



Statement

Decent work is central to the well-being of all. A policy framework that prioritizes decent work also reduces inequality, promotes social cohesion and alleviates poverty nationally, regionally and internationally.

In June 2009, the International Labour Organization (ILO) recognized the damage that a long and protracted jobless recovery would inflict on the citizens of the world. Its response was a comprehensive Global Jobs Pact, rooted in the ILO decent work agenda, calling for urgent and coordinated action from Governments, employers and labour organizations. With the economic recovery still weak and faltering, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the ILO Global Jobs Pact in 2011. The economic recovery and the well-being of workers remains threatened by government austerity budgets in many countries.

While Canada has not achieved a self-sustaining recovery in jobs, the federal Government has withdrawn its stimulus package and has prematurely transitioned to focus on reducing budget deficits. Canada's youth unemployment levels remain high, the number of discouraged job searchers is growing, and the number of unemployed workers with access to benefits or training support remains at a historic low. There is a dire need for Governments and businesses to invest in workers and build quality skills and employment for men and women through vocational education and training.

The expansion of precarious work (in Canada, as well as internationally) has continued through the economic crisis and interferes with a true recovery. Growth of insecure, temporary, part-time and low-paid work disproportionately affects women and other vulnerable groups (such as aboriginal workers, workers who face racial discrimination, workers with disabilities and newcomers). As Governments face pressure to cut their budgets, they reduce services, outsource work and freeze wages. This results in the growth of precarious work and the reduction of public services that ameliorate the effects of a sluggish economic recovery and that act as a drag on economic growth.

In the presence of continued sluggish employment growth, precarious employment may become the new norm unless strong action is taken on both the economic policy and labour standards fronts. Precarious work increases inequality, and inequality increases both social unrest and economic instability. The power imbalance created by the prevalence of precarious work puts decent work agendas and social protection measures under attack, just when they are needed most.

The well-being of future generations cannot be forgotten either. It is urgent that we recognize the need for a "just transition" towards a low carbon economy and that we develop proposals to ensure that the job creation potential of mitigating climate change is maximized.

Government austerity responses work at cross purposes to the decent work agenda. The ILO Global Jobs Pact clearly outlines the potential to put into action effective policies that improve employment, reduce poverty and help towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Canadian Labour Congress calls on the international community and national Governments to shift their focus from failed austerity measures to a recovery that is led by decent jobs and that is achieved by working with employers, labour and civil society to put the Global Jobs Pact into action.