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Agenda item 2

Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Draft ministerial declaration of the high-level segment submitted by the President of the Council on the basis of informal consultations

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2006 of the Economic and Social Council, held in Geneva from 3 to 5 July 2006,

Having considered the theme “Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development”, as well as the report of the Secretary-General on the subject,¹

Recalling the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields,

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome,²

Having considered the *World Economic and Social Survey 2006: Diverging Growth and Development*,

Recognizing that the total number of people unemployed worldwide reached a new high in 2005, even though the global unemployment rate remained unchanged, and that half of the world’s workers, most of them women, are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their family members out of poverty,³ and hence emphasizing the dual challenge of creating new productive jobs and improving the quality of existing ones,

Have adopted the following declaration:

¹ E/2006/55.

² General Assembly resolution 60/1.

³ \$2 a day poverty line.

1. We are convinced of the urgent need to create an environment at the national and international levels that is conducive to the attainment of full and productive employment and decent work for all as a foundation for sustainable development. An environment that supports investment, growth and entrepreneurship is essential to the creation of new job opportunities. Opportunities for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity are essential to ensuring the eradication of hunger and poverty, the improvement of the economic and social well-being for all, the achievement of sustained economic growth and sustainable development of all nations, and a fully inclusive and equitable globalization.

2. We recognize that full and productive employment and decent work for all, which encompass social protection, fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue are key elements of sustainable development for all countries, and therefore a priority objective of international cooperation.

3. We recognize the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization as an important instrument to achieve the objective of full and productive employment and decent work for all.

4. We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies and our national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. These measures should also encompass the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as defined in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, and forced labour. We also resolve to ensure full respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.

5. We resolve to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all, inter alia, by:

(a) Respecting, promoting and realizing the principles contained in the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, recognizing the central role of the International Labour Organization in this regard;

(b) Making continued efforts towards ratifying — where Member States have not done so — and fully implementing the International Labour Organization conventions concerning respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, namely, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to organize and bargain collectively, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, as well as the effective elimination of child labour and discrimination in respect of employment and occupation;

(c) Considering the ratification and full implementation of other International Labour Organization conventions concerning the employment rights of women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and indigenous people.

6. We reaffirm that an employment strategy that aims to promote full, freely chosen and productive employment, as well as decent work for all, with full respect for fundamental principles and rights at work under conditions of equity, equality, security and dignity, should constitute a fundamental component of any

development strategy. We further reaffirm that macroeconomic policies should, inter alia, support employment creation. The social impact and dimension of globalization should be taken fully into account.

7. We reaffirm our determination to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, recognizing that these are critical for achieving sustainable development and for efforts to combat hunger, poverty and disease. We are determined to implement our commitments to promote and protect all women's human rights by, inter alia, ensuring equal access to full and productive employment and decent work.

8. We recognize that violence against women and girls is a serious obstacle to the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, and of sustainable development, and reaffirm our commitment to elaborate and implement strategies and policies, including targeted measures, in order to fulfil the obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, provide protection to victims, and investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of such violence.

9. We underline the need for the consistent use of a gender mainstreaming strategy for the creation of an enabling environment for women's participation in development that requires multisectoral, integrated approaches and a range of measures, including political commitment at the highest levels; institutional and organizational change; the adoption and implementation of sector-specific policies and programmes; the establishment and enforcement of legislative frameworks in line with any obligations undertaken under international human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and International Labour Organization conventions; adequate resources and gender-responsive budget initiatives; accountability and monitoring mechanisms; and capacity-building and public awareness-raising.

10. We affirm our commitment to develop and implement strategies that give persons with disabilities everywhere equal opportunities to full access and productive employment and decent work on an equal basis with others and without any kind of discrimination, including by promoting a labour market and a work environment that are open, inclusive and accessible to all and by ensuring just and favourable conditions of work.

11. We reaffirm our commitment to develop and implement strategies that give youth everywhere a real and equal opportunity to find full and productive employment and decent work. In this respect, noting that almost half of the unemployed people in the world are young people, we are determined to mainstream youth employment into national development strategies and agendas; to develop policies and programmes for enhancing the employability of youth, including through education, training and lifelong learning that meet labour market requirements; and to promote access to work through integrated policies that enable the creation of new and quality jobs for young people and facilitate access to those jobs, including through information and training initiatives.

12. We recognize the importance of the work of the Youth Employment Network as a peer exchange, support and review mechanism, and invite Member States, the United Nations and partner organizations to strengthen and expand the Network at the national, regional and international levels.

13. We stress the important nexus between international migration and development and look forward to the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on international migration and development to be held on 13 and 14 September 2006 as an opportunity to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize their development benefits and minimize their negative impacts.

14. We reaffirm the importance of promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health and the access of all to primary health care as part of the effort to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration. We recognize the continued need to address the impact of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and other major infectious diseases on social and economic development.

15. We emphasize that good governance at the international level is fundamental for achieving sustainable development. In order to ensure a dynamic and enabling international economic environment, it is important to promote global economic governance through addressing the international finance, trade, technology and investment patterns that have an impact on the development prospects of developing countries. To this effect, the international community should take all necessary and appropriate measures, including ensuring support for structural and macroeconomic reform, a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem and increasing the market access of developing countries.

16. We call upon all countries to promote good governance, which is essential for sustainable development, and reaffirm that sound economic policies, solid democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of the people and improved infrastructure are the basis for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation, and that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, the rule of law, gender equality, market-oriented policies and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies are also essential and mutually reinforcing.

17. We recognize that appropriate institutions and regulation, including frameworks for social dialogue, are important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets. This includes the adoption and implementation of labour laws that protect workers rights.

18. We encourage Governments and other relevant institutions, where appropriate, to consider the impact of their policies on employment and decent work for all, including ensuring coherence of policies.

19. We recognize that, in the context of globalization, countries need to devise policies that enable them to pursue both economic efficiency and social security and develop systems of social protection with broader and effective coverage, which should be guided by each country's needs and circumstances, and in this regard invite the international community, including the international financial institutions and the International Labour Organization, to work together to assist, as appropriate and upon request, the developing countries, in their efforts.

20. We reaffirm that, with three quarters of the world's poor living in rural and agricultural regions mostly in developing countries, rural and agricultural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies, and working out of poverty requires urgent efforts to improve productivity and raise incomes in rural farm and non-farm sectors given the importance of livelihood security for subsistence farmers in developing countries. This should include substantial improvement in market access; reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies; substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support; and increased investment, including foreign direct investment, in physical infrastructure and product diversification, as well as increasing the value-added content of exports. We call for enhanced support for agricultural development and trade capacity-building in the agricultural sector in developing countries, including by the international community and the United Nations system, and encourage support for commodity development projects, especially market-based projects, and for their preparation under the Second Account of the Common Fund for Commodities.

21. We re-emphasize that rural and urban areas are economically, socially and environmentally interdependent and that cities and towns are engines of growth that contribute to the development of both rural and urban human settlements. Integrated physical planning and balanced attention to rural and urban living conditions are of crucial importance for all nations. Full advantage must be taken of the complementary contributions and linkages between rural and urban areas by giving appropriate attention to their different economic, social and environmental requirements. While addressing urban poverty, it is also essential to eradicate rural poverty and to improve living conditions, as well as to create employment and educational opportunities in rural settlements and small and medium-sized cities and towns.

22. We reaffirm that the eradication of hunger and poverty, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development, and invite all countries to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, with the developed countries taking the lead and all countries benefiting from the process, taking into account the Rio principles, including, inter alia, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities as set out in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,⁴ as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation).⁵

23. We recognize that the increasing interdependence of national economies in a globalizing world and the emergence of rule-based regimes for international economic relations have meant that the space for national economic policy, that is, the scope for domestic policies, especially in the areas of trade, investment and

⁴ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

⁵ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

industrial development, is now often framed by international disciplines, commitments and global market considerations. It is for each Government to evaluate the trade-off between the benefits of accepting international rules and commitments and the constraints posed by the loss of policy space. It is particularly important for developing countries, bearing in mind development goals and objectives, that all countries take into account the need for appropriate balance between national policy space and international disciplines and commitments.

24. We resolve to encourage greater direct investment, including foreign direct investment, in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to support their development activities and to enhance the benefits they can derive from such investments.

25. We further resolve to continue to support efforts by developing countries and countries with economies in transition to create a domestic environment conducive to attracting investments through, inter alia, achieving a transparent, stable and predictable investment climate with proper contract enforcement and respect for property rights and the rule of law and pursuing appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage business formation.

26. We commit ourselves to promoting and facilitating, as appropriate, access to and the development, transfer and diffusion of technologies, including environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how, to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed.

27. We acknowledge the vital role the private sector can play in generating new investments, employment and financing for development.

28. We encourage Governments to continue to pursue the creation of a conducive environment for enterprise development in both rural and urban areas. Particular attention should be given to policies that promote micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and women's participation and entrepreneurship in formal and informal sectors through, inter alia, simplified and improved administrative regimes for the registration of small businesses access to microcredit, social security systems and information on markets and new technology, as well as better regulations. Such policies should contribute to the integration of informal economic activity into the mainstream economy.

29. We stress the importance of promoting corporate responsibility and accountability. We encourage responsible business practices such as those promoted by the Global Compact and call upon the private sector to take into account not only the economic and financial but also the developmental, social, human rights, gender and environmental implications of their undertakings. In this context, we underline the importance of the International Labour Organization tripartite declaration of principles concerning multinational enterprises and social policy.

30. We call for increased national investment and international development funding and investment flows to developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are targeted to sectors of the economy with greater potential to generate productive employment and decent work for all. Such development funding could include, as appropriate, debt-for-sustainable-development swaps aimed at creating employment and decent work for all, particularly for youth and women.

31. We also acknowledge the important role the public sector can play as an employer and in developing an environment that enables the effective generation of full and productive employment and decent work for all.

32. We underline the important contribution that employment generation can make to post-conflict reconstruction and development. We stress the urgency of generating employment opportunities for men and women whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the impact of conflict or disaster. We call on all international organizations, civil society groups and the private sector to complement national efforts towards employment generation when addressing the impact of such emergencies.

33. We strongly encourage multilateral and bilateral donor and inter-agency cooperation and coordination, in the pursuit of the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all. To this end, we invite all the relevant international organizations, at the request of national Governments and relevant stakeholders, to contribute, through their programmes, policies and activities, to the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all in accordance with national development strategies.

34. We request the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies and invite financial institutions to support efforts to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all in their policies, programmes and activities. In this regard, we invite stakeholders to duly take account of the International Labour Organization decent work country programmes in order to achieve a more coherent and pragmatic United Nations approach to development at the national level on a voluntary basis.

35. We also request the functional and regional commissions to consider how their activities contribute, or could contribute, to the goals of full employment and decent work for all.

36. We also encourage all relevant agencies to collaborate actively in the development of the toolkit to promote decent work that is currently being developed by the International Labour Organization at the request of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

37. We call upon the International Labour Organization to focus on the implementation of commitments regarding the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including those contained in the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit and the World Summit for Social Development, in order to achieve significant progress in both policy and operational programmes, and in this regard we request the International Labour Organization to consider developing time-bound action plans to 2015, in collaboration with all relevant parties, for the achievement of this goal.

38. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the present declaration and invite all relevant actors, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral banks, to join our efforts in this regard.

39. We decide to keep the implementation of the present declaration under review, including through the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social

Council, and underline that the Council should ensure the coordination and coherence of the relevant programmes of United Nations entities.

40. We request the Secretary-General to include, in his annual report on the follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, a review of the progress achieved in creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development, at both the policy and the operational levels.
