**SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth Transcript**

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**Introduction**

Welcome to the introductory lectures for youth engagement on 2030 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

**Speaker**

Today's speaker will be Dr. Jurgen Schwettmann who's a formerly officials of the international organization and myself is Lichia Yiu representing Centre for Social Economic Development. Let me say a few words about Dr. Schwettmann, he's a German national and has been working in the International Development Corporation helping developing countries dealing with the various challenges since 1979. He has been working for ILO for the last 28 years until his recent retirement, he has hold different positions including Director of the Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department and also has served as the Deputy Regional Director for Africa in Addis Ababa and also the Director of the ILO office for East Africa in Dar es Salaam but most uniquely he was also Chief of the ILO Co-operatives Branch in Geneva and that's where we first met as a matter of fact. You can see that from the screen that he has a very extensive and Broad experiences in terms of dealing with the labor and workforce development issues since retirement the organ has continued to engage with the work that he has been doing and served as consultant for different multilateral and bilateral development cooperation agencies

**ILO**

Let me say a few words about the International Labor Organization, it is as a UN agency but it is the only tripartite UN agency. You might wonder what is tripartite basically is agency that with representative from government, employers as well as the labor unions and is of indeed a very unique construction it has a 187 members it its mission is to say to set labor standards related programs to promote decent work for all. Its mandate in its charter is promotes social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights. And today the ILO decent work agenda helps advance the economic and working conditions that give all workers employers and governments a stake in lasting peace prosperity and progress.

**Lecture Overview**

And today's topic I will come to that later on SDG 8 is very much are reflection of this decent work agenda we'll be focusing on the following first to describe what SDG 8 is all about and why is it important to be implemented, to be putting into everyday practices and what the progress have been like since the launching of the 2030 Agenda in 2016. And what are the challenges in introducing Decent Work and Economic Growth into the sort of development process and how does that affect young people and where young people can be engaged to promote the implementation of this particular SDG goals so let me hand over to Jurgen to start his lecture for the day.

**Q1**

Let me start ask the first question why we have to take SDG 8 seriously and how do we measure progress by using the targets and indicators.

Thank you Licia for the introduction and also for inviting me to take part in that lecture. Now what is SDG 8 and why it doesn't matter, SDG 8 is one out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and it combines two aspects it's on the one hand calls for economic growth, particularly economic growth the least developed countries in terms of GDP per capita which would as a minimum should reach 7% GDP per capita gross per year.

**SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

And it contains several elements of the decent work agenda so the goal itself is called promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. It includes 12 targets which are much more precise and concrete than the goal itself plus 17 indicators that allow member states of the United Nations to measure progress towards the achievement of the target and the goal. 10 out of these 12 targets focus on the intended outcomes and there are also two targets which are rather means of implementation which are necessary actions to support the attainment of the goal SDG 8and these two specified with a letter rather than a number.

**SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”**

As I can show in this slide we have these 12 Targets, 8.1 to 8.10 which are substantive targets under SDG 8 and we have a Target 8.a and 8.b which are so called means of implementation.

Let's have a quick look at these 12 Targets, the first one calls for a sustainable economic growth meaning if we wanted to create these jobs we need to have economic growth as a foundation for job creation. Let's see philosophy behind.

Then we need to diversify innovate and upgrade economic production, we need to promote policies to support job creation and growing enterprises and for example the ILO as an employment policy department which assists member states in devising such policies.

We need to improve resource efficiency in consumption and production that's a very important Target because it relates to the environment, related SDGs under the 2030 agenda. If we call for economic growth, there is a risk that economic growth leads to more CO2 emissions or resource depletion so Target 8.4 cautions the world against touch resource inefficiency. Then 8.5 calls for full employment and decent work with equal pay so men and women should have the say the same income for similar work.

Full employment also means that a person's employed is the informal economy which in particular in developing countries is very high should have the acceptable working conditions and living conditions.

Target 8.6 is now particularly important for young people, the promotion of youth employment, education and training, using unemployment rates in most countries of the world are higher than the adult unemployment rates that's why they focus on youth employment is of particular importance the context of SDG 8.

Then we have 8.7 and modern slavery trafficking and child labor which relates to an ILO 22 Fundamental Conventions of the ILO one the call for the eradication of slavery and forced labor and another one the only ILO convention which has been ratified by all 187 member states codes for the elimination of child labor. So it's a Target 8.7 it rises one of the four pillars of the diesel bigger agenda I will say a little bit more.

About later then we have the 8.8 protection of Labor rights and safe working environments the latest International labor Conference in June 2022 has recognized universe occupation safety and titles as a fifth Fundamental Convention of the island so 8.8 is also a priority Target.

Then we have promotes as a promotional beneficial and sustainable tourism which probably was included because we have a world tourism organization in the UN system so any universal access to banking in true and financial services which is important for self-employment for an enterprise as one option for U.S employment. Then two of the means of implementation 8.8, the increase in aid for trade support and the development of a global youth employment.

**Q2**

The SDG 8 actually covers a very broad range of economic issues in addition to employment related issues and I think you highlighted the fact that young people are actually more tend to be unemployed more than the older people of course this will have tremendous implication such as the social protection scheme that different countries have put into place which rely very much on the contribution of the younger people. So since the launching of the 2030 Agenda **how much progress have we being able to make** one on in terms of the economic growth, second is to improve working conditions and thirdly is about use employment.

Yes thank you Licia! In general terms until the period 2016 to 2019 several indicators of SDG 8 actually witnessing and improvement but then came Covid-19. The co-owner pandemic which affected not only as the achievement of SDG 8 but also basically the treatment of all the SDGs was a terrible setback because of the closures of workplaces, the tabular restrictions, etc.

**Progress made**

So when you look now at the latest SDG report the United Nations General Secretary issues every year one report on the achievement of the progress made towards the achievement of the SDGs. The latest one certainly highlights the fact that all the SDGs were severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken by governments to contain the spread of the disease. So growth in GDP per capital remained below the seven percent target, meaning the expected to be achieved by developing countries. Labor productivity fluctuated widely but decreased in 21 and under 20, 21 again because of Covid. The global unemployment rate rose significantly during the pandemic, it says now decreased again because most of the containment measures have been lifted but it's still higher than before the pandemic began in 2019. Most disturbingly the number of children working as child laborers move by 8.4 million children since 2016 so rather than eradicating to our labor we were witnessing an increase in child labor. Youth education and training suffered enormously from Covid induced disruption so all that happens in 2019, 2021, in the latest years all indicators have improved so we are back e on the road to Sustainable Development. SDG 8 but whether we will be able to achieve all these indicators by 2030 remains rather questionable.

**Q3**

So you're saying there was a downturn in terms of progress but now we are playing catching up once again. (exactly) Point of view **what do you think would be the some of the most important challenges that need to be overcome in order to move further on the SDG 8.**

**SDG 8: Challenges**

Well there are a number of them as I mentioned earlier the first target on the SDG 8 calls for economic growth but economic growth is likely to increase CO2 carbon gas emissions which would negatively affect environment related SDGs of which there are several from SDG I think it's 10 to14 are all related to the environment.

And 15 too

And 15 too, exactly.

From actually from 12 Climate Change, no sorry from 30 sorry, specifically 13 14 15, yeah of course it's implicated in SDG 8 about consumptions and production.

Exactly I see Target 8.4 yeah but secondly that is something that the ILO has been saying for many years economic growth does not automatically create jobs and if it does those jobs may not be decent. Does that this means that there are situations where the economic economy grows but does not create jobs? It's just a jobless economic growth. And to change the situation we need dedicated policies that can convert economic growth into jobs and in particular into decent jobs that's why employment policy are so important and these employment policy need to be reflected in all other policies that the country adopts in financial policies, in economic trade, tourism policies, etc. That's the only way is that you can ensure that economic growth create a job.

Yeah of course jobs are very important for people for their livelihood yes yeah but could you also say a few words about what is considered to be in decent jobs or in decent jobs? I think this is a very important point you're making.

Yes and that really is also to the next point the decent work agenda comprises four pillars: the creation of jobs, productive employment, the extension of social protection to everyone and we know that many people are not covered by a social projection in particular those in the informal economy. The promotion of social dialogue between government workers and employers and the enforcement of labor standards and also the coverage of labor standards to include oil workers including those in the informal economy.

Now when we look at the SDG 8 and its Target we see that employment creation and labor rights are addressed but social protection is not. Social protection is covered in the first SDG 1 particularly under Target 1.3 which calls for National Social Protective Laws and in Target 3.8 on universal health coverage. Social dialogue is not as there is a very term social dialogue does not appear at all in the SDG 2030 Agenda, it could be subsumed under SDG 16 which calls for transparent institutions as well as peace and fight against crime.

There we have a Target 16.7 which calls for inclusive and transparent institutions and we have 16.6 or 16.8, I don't have it in my mind, which quotes for the participation in decision making processes of everyone. That could be considered as being an element of social dialogue but if very term does not appear in the SDGs which is a pity. So the targets on the SDG 8 cover only two of the four dimensions which I think is a challenge.

Then and that is an issue that affects the entire 2030 Agenda, the SDGs as the indicators are not always consistent with your respective Target. We look at for example at a Target 8.3 and here I would need to quickly get out of the thing and (pls one second) SDG Target 8.3 reach as follows promote development, oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship creativity and innovation and encourage formalization and growth of micro small and medium-sized enterprises including for access to financial services so this is a quite comprehensive Target. The only indicator associated with the targets reads proportion of informal employment in non-agricultural employment by six.

Yeah you're right it's not consistent.

Yes and let me go back again.

And also I think it also perhaps represent the challenge in terms of statistics and the data collection.

Yes and that's important which you will find in many targets of the SDG 2030 Agenda that the ambition of a goal or Target has been reduced to what can be statistically measured. (yeah) The informal economy which occupies 60% of the global labor force so more than half of the globally before it works informally is not article adequately addressed in SDG 8 and not even in the rest of the agenda. This is quite surprising because the informal economy is so important in many developing countries in some sub-Saharan African countries it employs more than 90% of the labor forces but also in India, etc. It’s excluded for many services that the state can provide.

Yeah very much so.

Yeah they cannot participate in social dialogue because they are not represented by the workers or employers and they're also often excluded from social protection systems which are confined to the formal sector.

So lack of representation in the legal system in the also in terms of public services (yeah) basically by not addressing it's a violation of the leaving no one behind principle of the industry or the agenda because now it's not small if you look at it 60% of the global labor force. Global labor force probably stands at the 4 billion or 5 billion level.

Yes of course it's varying the labor force participation rate is varying from country to country, it is usually lower for women's and for men.

Yeah so you have also a gender issue in this regard.

Yeah so that is one of the shortcomings of the agenda which might be addressed and we have a new agenda coming in 2030.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, true yeah. I think that there's significance of this management by objective approach by using indicators, targets and every year consistently measuring progress, it is pushing the development forward for everybody. (yeah) So I was thinking what you just said about the large number of people working in informal sector connect that to your earlier comment about mostly young people (yeah) are unemployed so seems like young people in many ways representing this underrepresented representative and under serviced population is that is that just a fair statement?

Yes I think it is in most developing countries, the formal economy does not create sufficient number of new jobs to absorb the young people entering the labor market so these young people either if they have the means can pursue their education, their training or they create their own jobs and which was in most cases be in the informal economy. And that is what is happening in many many countries that young people have even if they're well educated to have will not find a job in the formal economy or in a public service then we'll have to create their own micro enterprise to make a living. And that is why a focus on informality is so important we are not talking today I think on the formalization of the informal economy that is a decent dream what we can do is to reduce decent work deficits in the informal economy in terms of productivity, in terms of high income, in terms of access to social protection, in terms of participating in social dialogue processes and also in terms of being covered by fundamental labor rights that should apply to everyone not only sector.

When Mr. Juan Somavia in 1999 introduced the decent work agenda he made it very specific saying that “I'm not talking about decent employment I'll talk about decent work” because he wanted to make sure that his work covers every working person both in the formal and in the informal economy that perhaps has not filtered through the entire UN system but as a former ILO person I think don't need to recall this kind of considerations.

But just wondering how do we cover to deliver all the services to everybody who works and contribute to their own livelihood as well as society is large but they are not registered that's why we call them informal. So how do we know who is working and who is not and who is the contract and who doesn't?

Well there are labor for service in many countries or household budget service which identify those working in any form they might be informally or formally so their means to do so and to identify and to measure the size of the informal economy. (okay) And the idea ILO is responsible for this indicator 8.8, 8.3.1 which I just mentioned the size of the informal economy so ILO always collecting data and to identify and to measure the size of the informal economy.

**Q5**

Okay well having that in mind **what do you suggest for young people to engage and to participate** in order to promote the SDG goals especially SDG 8 now **what can they do and make a difference**.

**Youth involvement in SDG 8**

Okay well first of all I think that young people should be seen as development actors rather than passive objects of development. What does it mean? I think young people need to have a say in shaping the developing the gender it's a local and a national level and they have to have a place in implementing these development plans not only as being a target of development but rather as an active participants in driving development and that applies not only to SDG 8 it applies to all the SDGs.

None of the targets under SDG 8 can be achieved without the active participation of young people that's obvious. Young people might be particularly attracted by the Target 8.2 Innovation and Technology and that is relate that relates to the discussion on the around the future of work a subject which was very hotly debated at the ILO in 2019 at the centenary discussion about the future of work here which adopted a declaration on the subject. I think young people are very keen to innovate and to develop new technologies and they're also probably more capable of doing so then elderly people. So that particular aspect of SDG 8 innovation technology could be driven by young people much better than it could be driven by elderly persons. They might be very attracted by Target 8.4 which calls for resource efficiency the combination between economic growth and environmental aspects, I mean we have these Fighters for future movement around the world nowadays and which calls exactly for this kind of policies and these are all driven by young people. So 8.4 plus the other employment environment related targets might be might be very infected. Then we have Target 8.6 as I mentioned the one on use not in employment educational trading which is of course affects directly young people and should be of greatest concern to them.

And finally 8.b and it could be easy global youth employment strategy I think we can add here also a reference to enterprise promotion, enterprise creation, (entrepreneurship) entrepreneurship yes which should be one of the strategies that bringing young people into employment particularly in situations basically Formal sector does not create enough jobs.

Yeah, so you're saying they shouldn't wait to be giving a job but rather actively creating a job and also potentially creating jobs for other people (yes) through innovation and technology.

Yeah, I mean not everybody is an entrepreneur that but those who are should be given the opportunity to create their own enterprise including access to finance, access to resources, access to information and training, etc. And by doing so one creates a job for that person but also as Juan mentioned perhaps for others as well once the enterprise of course.

Yeah so to reduce to lower the threshold for entering into the world of work.

Yes so I think that young people should take the lead in decoupling economic roles from an environmental degradation for example through the promotions in circular economy and by ensuring that economic growth creates decent jobs as we discussed earlier.

Well so I think this is a really sort of a trying to rebuck and revert the trend that to what we see as the compensation the salary package for the higher executives are getting bigger and bigger while the wage of the workers not only is stagnate but if you look at it taking into consideration the cost of living in many cases are actually declining so here we're also talking about sort of more fair wages for everyone.

For everyone and also to fight against inequality which is not specifically in SDG 8 that's SDG 10 but of course SDG 10 is also very important in particular for marginalized population groups so there are a lot needs to be done because unfortunately it seems that the inequality is growing positive rather than the decreasing in many countries and many situations.

Yeah thank you Jurgen for outlining in a broad picture where the young people could spend their energy and time to think a little bit more further but at this moment **as a young person who will enter the world in a post-pandemic situation** **what do you think they could do as a first step to help themselves in terms of getting independence and autonomy.**

Well you see I think that young people should learn rates that are a trader (okay) capabilities and that are needed by the national economy, quite often universities are proposing lectures on topics that might not be needed in the labor marketed to oriented and these young people might get a diploma certificate or something and then still not find a job or still not be able to create their own enterprises and enterprise. Well in as a you will notice I'm a German, in Germany we have the apprenticeship system where young people learn a certain profession in an enterprise not in at school, they go to they work in an enterprise for three years and if they are successful get a certificate which is recognized everywhere and allows that person to work. The similar systems exist in many countries but rather in the informal sector again where let's say a tailor recruits a young person and shares his knowledge with a young person but it's not organized and it's not recognized officially.

Yeah so it's a very old traditional way, sort of the elder teaches teach the younger and you learn by doing it.

Exactly, if one could find a way of officially recognizing this kind of apprenticeship system a lot would be would be gained I think. So that once they have worked for two years with their tailors they get a certificate for publicly recognized by the state that you are not tailor.

Yeah well thank you for this idea and also brought back the apprenticeship model that is being practiced in Germany and in Switzerland but I think the key message if I understand you correctly is really for young people to think not just about pursuing a diploma or a degree but think also in terms of the skills and the competences that they could acquire so that they could find themselves a spot so to speak in the labor market so that they could just sort of be usefully and gainfully employed or they could create a business or micro-business so that they could also meet some of the unmet demands in the marketplace. (exactly) But the key is skills what do what kind of skills are you developing, are you acquiring that will be very much in line with SDG 8 in terms of contributing to economic development as well as a more sort of better jobs and work for oneself.

Exactly yes that’s the message.

I think this is a good place to end today's lecture especially when we are hoping that the youth unemployment will be soon a thing of the past and I want to thank you Jurgen for giving us your views and the critique about SDG 8 and also what young people can do so thank you very much.

Thank you thank you for inviting me Lichia and thank you.