

‘Youth Action for Decent Work’ Berlin, 1-2 June 2007

10 demands of the G8

We, young people in progressive political parties, democratic and representative trade unions, NGOs and other civil society organisations have over the course of two days in Berlin met and discussed the urgent need for action in the quest to ensure decent work¹ for all young people. Recognising – yet not approving of it, indeed questioning its legitimacy – the influence the leaders of G8 economies have not only on their own countries but also on the development of most other countries of the world as well as on the international system of global governance, we address our concerns and demands regarding decent work for young people to them.

Young people are deprived of decent work for a multitude of reasons. These include the unequal distribution of wealth in the world, the general lack of decent work opportunities, the increasing precariousness of work, scarcity in education opportunities at all levels and the incidence of child labour, inter-generational poverty, inefficient transitioning between education and work, and the unequal ways in which labour markets distribute opportunities. G8 leaders must address all these issues, both at home, abroad and in the international arena. We therefore call upon the leaders of the G8 countries to:

1. Ensure that decent work, particularly for young people, is placed at the heart of economic, social and development policies. Economic growth is not enough in itself. It must be pro-poor, pro-development, employment intensive and sustainable. This should be done with a view to increasing demand for labour, enhancing the employment intensity of growth, and strengthening the inclusion of economies. Targeted initiatives and incentive schemes to raise labour demand for young people, particularly disadvantaged youth and young women, should be made without decreasing the quantity and quality of work of others. Indeed, a global pact for youth employment is necessary. All countries in the world have to develop national strategies that bring together economic, social and education policies in order to fight unemployment and ensure that those that are unemployed can live a decent life. Countries must come together at the regional and international level to end the scourge of indecent work through a global pact for youth and make youth unemployment history!
2. Ensure that all trade policies, both at the WTO and in regional and bilateral agreements, are used as an instrument for decent work and for empowerment of the world’s young workers and unemployed. Decent work must be made a negotiating priority in trade negotiations and trade liberalisation that does not take into account its employment effects should thus be avoided. To promote decent work for young people, WTO rules and actions must be amended to ensure attention to their employment impacts and the respect for workers’ rights.
3. Ensure that the priorities of the international financial institutions incorporate social concerns. In particular, to abandon loan and debt conditionality that promote deregulation of labour markets, austerity in public spending as well as privatisation and liberalisation of public services to the detriment of access and quality. Indeed, the IFIs – in particular the World Bank – have been instrumental in recommending the kind of labour market policies that create two tier labour markets,

¹ We use ‘decent work’ as defined by the ILO, incorporating employment creation, workers’ rights, social protection and social dialogue.

most often with young people inhabiting the lower tier. Countries must have the autonomy and self-determination to decide on their own development priorities.

4. Ensure that global solidarity between peoples of developed and developing countries is backed by commitments of all governments to increase the level of official development aid of advanced economies to at least 0.7% of GDP. Promises of debt cancellation and increase in aid, made at previous G8 meeting, must be fulfilled and further aid and debt cancellation commitments must be made. Decent work should be fully integrated into first Millennium Development Goal and made a clear objective of PRSPs. In particular, G8 countries should increase their development assistance targeted towards the creation of decent work and social protection, for example by developing special programmes of 'aid for decent work'. Local capacities should be used to the largest extent in development efforts.

5. Ensure that labour laws based on international labour standards, especially the core labour standards, good governance of the labour market and, where they exist, collective agreements, apply to all young workers, including those currently lacking protection because of disguised employment relationships or temporary employment. Young workers should be able to enjoy and exercise their rights at work, in particular their fundamental rights. Special emphasis must be put on ensuring that trade unions can act independently and without government interference, and on eliminating violations of trade union rights.

6. Ensure the eradication of child labour in all its forms and access to universal, free, quality public primary, secondary and tertiary education, making basic education compulsory, together with investments in vocational training and lifelong learning that enhance the employability of young people, particularly those with the least skills. Special attention must be given to women who are often discriminated and left without job opportunities. Literacy, numeric and technological knowledge, alongside core work skills, should form a basis for such education.

7. Ensure that employment services, guidance and career advice such as labour market information and career counselling are made available to young people. This should be based on improved labour market information systems that enable students, first job seekers and unemployed young people to make informed choices about their educational and working lives, and thus increase their opportunity to enter the labour market.

8. Ensure that gender policies are mainstreamed into all sectors of policy making, especially in employment policies. Barriers to the participation of women in the labour market must be broken down. Maternity protection, prevention of discrimination and equal pay must be ensured.

9. Ensure that governments provide migrant workers and their families, regardless of their legal status, with the same rights as local workers. Migration management must be framed in a rights-based approach that better emphasises the link between migration and decent work, including respect for the relevant ILO instruments. In addition, more must be done to ensure non-discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, disabilities and sexual orientation. Moreover, the rights of indigenous people with regards to employment, their culture and their land rights must be protected and discrimination against them abolished.

10. Ensure that the challenges of the growth of the so-called informal economy, which condemns millions of workers and their families to not having a voice, rights or any kind of social or legal protection, are overcome. Efforts should be made to move young, as well as all other, people from informal employment to formal employment. G8 governments should, furthermore, support the endeavours of developing countries to integrate the informal economy into the economic mainstream

through policies to raise productivity, incomes and social protection, and ensure a legal and institutional framework for poverty and labour rights and enterprise development.