

Towards Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal # 8

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (2030) speaks to 'Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.' Part of what Goal # 8 aims to achieve by 2030, is the full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, equal pay for work of equal value, and the substantial reduction in the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020.

The Progress Report for UN Goal # 8 in 2018 noted that, "Globally, labour productivity has increased and the unemployment rate has decreased. However, more progress is needed to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce informal employment and labour market inequalities (particularly in terms of the gender pay gap), promote and secure working environments, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth."

The reality of this challenge facing the world has been placed in context by the UN Progress Report on Goal # 8. The point has been underscored that global unemployment has increased from 170 million in 2007 to nearly 202 million in 2012, of which about 75 million are young women and men. Secondly, that nearly 2.2 billion people live below the US\$2 poverty line, which suggests that poverty eradication is only possible through stable and well-paid jobs. Thirdly, 470 million jobs are needed globally for new entrants into the labour market between 2016 and 2030.

Against the backdrop of global economic contraction, it is increasingly difficult to comprehend how and when a turn in fortunes is likely to come about within the immediate future, so as to bring about equal access and opportunities to employment for all. This is a must if economic and social inequalities, which currently exist, are to be addressed as a first step towards poverty eradication.

A review of the Sustainable Development Goals, highlights the good intentions of eliminating poverty, achieving zero hunger, promoting good health and well-being,

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quality education, gender equality, access to clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, infrastructure and reducing inequality. These are all laudable intentions, but the fact that we live in a capitalist world, it would seem that the odds of achieving fair, just and equitable societies remain heavily stacked against realizing these noble ideals.

In this global environment, it is known that many of the small island developing economies remain heavily reliant on support in many forms from the industrialized countries of the world relative to investments to aid the development of the economies. This means that the dependency syndrome will continue to be a restraint on their economic and social development. The fact that in September 2015, the leaders of all 193 member states of the UN adopted the Global Sustainable Development Goals, does not necessary mean that it is not a most ambitious agreement.

It is expected that Labour holds a vested interest in the realization of a substantial reduction of the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training by 2020. In like manner, the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value by 2030, would be desired.

Labour would welcome the taking of immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child in military services in war zones.

Of equal importance to labour would be to have a greater emphasis placed on protecting labour rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers; in particular women, migrants and those in precarious employment. As a matter of interest to Barbados and all Caribbean tourism destinations, the expectation is that by 2030, full attention will be directed at devising and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that create jobs and promote local culture and products.

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In moving the agenda forward, it must be understood that the call for action and the implementation of strategies to achieve the goals, can be stalled where there is no access to quality and timely data collection.