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Priority theme 2 on Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies with a special focus on gender and youth dimensions.

Statement submitted by

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My name is Donovan, speaking on behalf of the UN MGCY

Please allow us to first thank the speakers and member states for their interesting interventions, as well as concrete examples of national programs aimed at closing the digital skills gap.

In the months leading up to this meeting, we've done extensive consultations on the topic of digital skills and more broadly the future of decent jobs for youth. Please allow us to share some reflections.

The skills mismatch, arising from the creation of new industries and rapid changes in existing industries, should not be addressed solely from a market-driven perspective of supply and demand, but also from a sustainable viewpoint grounded on closing the gender and digital divides, respecting human rights and planetary boundaries, and overcoming structural barriers to access. This is reflected in targets 8.4, 8.5 and 8.8 among others.

Policies addressing skills mismatches should be constructed considering differences between and within countries, demographics, and geographies. A thorough understanding of the skills base of countries and industries, as well as the changing future skills requirements are necessary to consciously, especially to accelerate progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and avoid path-dependence that is contrary to the aspirations outlined.

There should be recognition of issues surrounding technology and labor justice as core to sustainable development. Increasing shares of the population, especially in emerging countries, have taken up informal sector jobs, and increasing proportion are women and youth. This often leaves them without any protection of labour laws and social benefits such as pension, health insurance or paid sick leave. They routinely work for lower wages and in unsafe conditions, including risk of sexual harassment.

There is also increasing trend towards gig economy; however with high turnover rate and volatile aggregate pay, which indicates unstable jobs. Increasing wage gaps between median pay and top-management pay, as well as an ideological (and structural) business shift from having equal responsibility to all stakeholders to mostly shareholders are some of the observed consequences. Some regions are seeing increasing periods of obligatory, unpaid labor contributions, prior to decent work, thus jeopardize livelihoods and delay of autonomy.

Digital literacy skills need to be taught in conjunction with complementary formal and informal skills that are context-specific. Adapting to the rapid changes in the workplace will require flexibility in learning and acquiring new knowledge.