

Embargoed: 4pm Sunday 22 June 2014



Civil Society challenges G20 on inequality and sustainable growth

Global civil society has called on the G20 to tackle endemic corruption, confront the challenges of climate change and urgently address the social and economic time bomb represented by the world's unemployed youth.

Meeting in Melbourne over the weekend to finalise the essential issues civil society wants to see on the G20 agenda when it meets in Brisbane in November, the C20 reaffirmed its belief that economic growth must deliver jobs and reduce poverty and global inequality.

Chair of the C20 Steering Committee Tim Costello said, "Growth without jobs will do little to address the urgent global challenge of extreme and growing inequality. The C20 believes that growth should achieve long-term sustainability, not just wealth for a few."

The C20 is calling on G20 members to adopt targets for increased employment participation for all groups.

"The importance of decent work is a central element of achieving inclusive sustainable growth. Closing the participation gap for women alone could deliver the G20's stated growth target," Mr Costello said.

Today representatives of the C20 Steering Group will present Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott with their policy roadmap for the leaders of the world's largest economies.

"The C20's primary aim is to ensure the most vulnerable in our society do not get left behind in the quest for economic growth. The C20 Summit has identified the key elements to achieving that, in a way that reduces global inequality," Mr Costello said.

"There was also an overwhelming consensus among the 400 delegates that economic growth cannot be discussed in isolation from climate change.

"Climate change is not a fringe concern. Its impact on communities, including threatening food security, makes it an economic issue regardless of domestic political considerations. Climate change must be a stand-alone issue on the G20 Agenda."

Key policy asks to come out of the Summit aimed at tackling corruption and recognising the need for transparency, included the development of a new focused and measurable G20 Anti-Corruption Plan.

Also needed are public registries required to disclose accurate beneficial ownership information – in open data format – of companies, trusts and other legal structures, to tackle tax avoidance, tax evasion, corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.

"Good governance includes transparency and accountability to citizens," said Mr Costello.

The C20 reiterated the importance of taxes being paid where economic activity occurs.

Delegates involved in the weekend's C20 Summit included senior representatives of leading NGOs as well as national and international speakers across four key policy issues:

- Inclusive Growth and Employment
- Infrastructure
- Climate and Sustainability
- Governance

The C20 ('Civil Society') Summit at the University of Melbourne was the first of the lead-in G20 'satellite' conferences, providing a platform for dialogue between civil society and the political leaders of the G20 countries.

Over the two days, more than 80 leading international and domestic experts spoke on issues including tax transparency, anti-corruption, climate change and renewable energy investment, youth employment, food and resource security and infrastructure. Around 400 delegates were in attendance.

The full communiqué from the summit is available on the C20 website at: www.c20.org.au

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