

Introductory remarks by the Secretary General / Director of the Social Economic Council of Curaçao

His Excellency, Mr. Hensley Koeiman,

Mr. Ambassador, Pete Hoekstra,

Distinguished guests,

On behalf of the Social Economic Council of Curaçao, the SER, I am pleased to welcome you all to the Future of Work session of the ROAD to GES Caribbean 2019. For the SER, as the tripartite advisory body of the executive and legislative branches of government concerning matters of general socioeconomic interest, we've facilitated various debates and plenary sessions on this topic in 2018 together with the Directorate of Labor of the Ministry of Social Development, Labor and Welfare.

The findings and conclusions of those sessions on the Future of Work, which were attended by representatives of labor unions, the private sector, government, ngo's and the media, were compiled in a comprehensive paper that was approved by the Council of Ministers of Curaçao in September, 2018, as a roadmap for future actions, in accordance with the guidelines set by the International Labor Organization, the ILO.

As many of you may know, the ILO is celebrating this year its 100th anniversary. The Centenary is an opportunity to celebrate the ILO's achievements and reaffirm its position as the authoritative global organization for the world of work. As Member of the ILO, Curaçao, to some degree, has done his homework in preparation of the Centenary celebrations, whereby the SER had a facilitating role.

Therefore, when we were approached by the organizers of this event, we expressed, without hesitation, our willingness to host this part of the GES 2019 Caribbean program.

Ladies and gentlemen,

'The future of work' is one of the hottest topics nowadays. It comes up in every conversation; with scientists, students, workers, CEOs and policy makers. And typically, when this topic comes up, there are at least four issues embedded in it.

First, there's the question and discussion around the impact of artificial intelligence, robots and automation of work processes and jobs, and whether we'll have enough work and jobs left after that.

A second part of the conversation is around the changing models for work and employer-worker relationship. This involves questions around independent work, the gig economy, and what people sometimes refer to as the fissured workplace –whether people's work is subcontracted or not. And whether any of these kinds of evolved work models are going to become dominant in the future,

and what this means for people's working conditions and standards of living—

This brings me to the third topic which is the income question. We know that most advanced economies, over the last decade, have seen a stagnation of incomes, at least labour-driven incomes, while at the same time the share of capital-driven income is increasing.

And so, that ties into the inequality debate and whether people work and earn enough to be able to make a decent living or not. And the question then is, will technology make that even worse as we look forward? And then, finally, people are often asking the question, what policies and actions need to be taken to ensure decent work for all.

These are questions about how work will be organized and how it will impact on people working in the fourth industrial revolution. All of these questions are embedded in this big topic called 'The Future of Work', with conflicting information from experts, leaving plenty of room for debate around what the actual impacts will be.

So far, we can only guess. As the saying goes: 'the future is unpredictable'. Here at the SER we have another, rather unconventional perspective regarding the specific topic we will be handling today. We are of the opinion, to quote Marshall McLuhan, that "the future of work consists of learning a living and not only earning one".

I wish you all fruitful discussions.

Thank you!