***Delegation from Represented by***

**The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia University of Heidelberg**

***Position Paper for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development***

The issues before the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development are: I. Youth Leadership and Education for Sustainable Development; II. Ensuring Decent Work for All; and III. The Role of Science, Technology, and Innovation in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Every singly topic is characterized by the necessity to create collaborative partnerships between all Member States and relevant stakeholders to work in close cooperation on the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) as laid down in the General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (2015).

**I. Youth Leadership and Education for Sustainable Development**

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Macedonia) recalls the General Assembly Resolution 20/2037 of 1965 and the *World Programme of Action for Youth* adopted by the General Assembly in its Resolution 50/81 of 1995 and 62/126 of 2007 as crucial cornerstones recognizing the important role of the youth as a driving force of social and economic development. Macedonia is highly affected by a youth unemployment rate of 48.2 % in 2015. Moreover, the extraordinary long transition period from education to first employment amounting to 22.9 months reflects the difficulty for young Macedonians to become financially independent. This is why Macedonia recognizes that the provision of quality education and better employment opportunities plays a key role in giving rise to a change. Only if the urgent problem of youth unemployment is tackled successfully can young people realize their full potential and can become leaders in society. **Nationally**, in the last few years the supply of non-formal education has been developed gradually, which can be traced back to the *National Youth Strategy* *of the Republic of* *Macedonia* from 2005. The establishment of local youth centers enables the youth to express themselves creatively and offers guidance in respect of interests and abilities and the entering into the world of work. **Internationally**, the regularly meetings of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee based on the “2016 Global Education Monitoring Report” create a platform sharing important concepts and monitoring developments in the field of SDG 4. In November 2016 the Committee suggested to strengthen international communication and the exchange of best practices by the establishment of an online portal. Moreover, Macedonia acknowledges the Resolution “The youth employment crisis: A call for action” of the *International Labor Conference* in 2012 stressing the need to take action and building the foundation for a “School-to-work Transition survey” conducted in Macedonia. In the **short-term**, the employability of school leavers must be further analyzed so that in the **medium-term** aim can be taken at the curriculum in schools. As an additional subject, the basics of entrepreneurship should be introduced in secondary education schools. By offering the development of virtual and real companies in secondary schools, young people develop the skills, the knowledge, the motivation and above all the courage to become self-employed. Macedonia fully agrees with the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) stating in the “HLPF 2016 Draft Summary” that especially the promotion of women entrepreneurship has to be included in education systems. To foster these ideas on an international level the United Nations Foundation on Global Entrepreneurs Council (GEC) could play a key role in bringing the public and the private sector together. In the **long-term**, a strong partnership between government bodies, institutions of education and the private sector shall be established at a local level. To support youth entrepreneurship on the international level, Macedonia suggests that the already existing “United Nation Youth Delegates Programme” should be declared as obligatory for all Member States.

**II. Ensuring Decent Work for All**

Even though Macedonia experienced economic recovery and economic growth in 2013 after the poor economic situation of the breakdown of the People's Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Macedonia still faces substantial economic infrastructural problems which are resulting in unemployment and social exclusion: 26.2 per cent of the population (540.000 persons) are currently at the risk of poverty. Noteworthy, is also that many of Macedonia's citizens are emigrating due to better working perspectives in other European countries. Therefore enabling environment for job creation and decrease of the unemployment is a priority on Macedonia’s government’s agenda. Macedonia acknowledges the pivotal role of decent work and the interlinkage between the economic, social and environmental pillars for sustainable development as established in the *Rio+20* outcome documents in 2012. **Nationally**, in cooperation with theUnited Nation Development Programme (UNDP) and theInternational Labour Organisation (ILO) Macedonia’s government has not only been reducing unemployment but also securing the flow of human resources out of the country. The “Self-Employment Programme” for example, was developed and implemented by the Macedonian Government in cooperation with theUNDP. It created 7.721 new businesses and is constantly empowering small and medium sized businesses. Additionally, the government has been promoting the ecosystem and sustainable agriculture practice and thereby creating green jobs. To sum up, Macedonia is using the chance of creating sustained jobs and pro-employment growth by implementing macroeconomic policies and fiscal incentives that support employment and stronger aggregate demand. Within those policies lies a focus on tackling high youth unemployment, the “School-to-work Transition Survey Programme” that runs under the framework of the ILO “Work4Youth Project”may be taken as an example*.* **Internationally**, Macedonia acknowledges that youth unemployment is a pressing problem that is faced by Western Balkan and Southern European countries as well. Therefore Macedonia calls the ILO and the European Union to respond to the new and urgent labour market needs and to play a key role in being a platform for the countries on exchanging knowledge based on youth employment, but also to promote the construction and implementation of new public programmes for more and better jobs for youth. Like most **European countries**, Macedonia welcomed hundreds of thousands refugees and is looking for strategies to integrate the willing workers into the job market. On the basis of the *Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development,* Macedonia calls for an open working group combining Non-Governmental Organizations and European governments to concentrate on finding a transnational solution which will preclude the possibility of modern slavery. Here Macedonia stresses the important role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its work with the needed measures as overcoming legal barriers, granting the access to language acquisition and the recognition of former education levels of the refugees.

**III. The Role of Science, Technology, and Innovation in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals**

Macedonia acknowledges the high potential of science, technology and innovation (STI) in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs as set out in the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* of 2015. However, the 0.3 % investment of GDP in research and innovation reflects the difficulties Macedonia still has with an efficient technology infrastructure. Since the transfer and the dissemination of technology are playing a key role in implementing the SDGs, Macedonia is concerned in respect of its stagnant environment of technology transfer. First of all, an adequate technological infrastructure is missing. Secondly, the private, public and academic sectors are all poorly interconnected. **Nationally**, Macedonia is looking forward to the opening of a National Technology Transfer Office which could be realized due to the financial support of the World Bank. In respect to Macedonian companies, the office shall provide a central access to consulting services in the fields of intellectual property, application of technologies and information about new innovations. Moreover, in some cases gaps between the three main stakeholders, the public administration, the private sector and the academia, could be closed by the establishment of business incubators operating as transfer agents. **Regionally**, Macedonia welcomes that the continuous cooperation on research and innovation between the Western Balkan countries and the European Union (EU) serves as an instrument to accelerate the process of integration into the EU. Through association to the EU Research and Innovation Framework programme *Horizon 2020*, Macedonia hopes to become part of the European Research Area in which technology and innovations circulate freely. In addition, the objective of the *Western Balkans Innovation Strategy Exercise Facility* (WISE Facility), namely the promotion of coordinated reforms on research and innovation, is in the interest of Macedonia. **Internationally**, the creation of an annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the implementation of SDGs tackles exactly the deficiencies Macedonia is experiencing in its country. Moreover, Resolution 32/L.23/Rev.1 adopted by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2016 placed the focus on a stable balance between an affordable access to medicines in least developed countries and a high-level protection of intellectual property rights. Fortunately, an amendment to the *Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement* by the World Trade Organization (WTO) could enter into force on January 2017, which changed the legal framework in respect of access to medicines: Generic versions of patent-protected medicines can now be easier produced in least developed countries. As demonstrated by the recently adopted amendment to the *TRISP Agreement*, Macedonia believes that it is important to create a specific legal framework for developing countries. Especially exemptions on foodstuffs and agricultural chemicals have to be elaborated. The cross-border transfer of such goods could be additionally fostered by lowering high tariffs and taxes. Therefore, Macedonia suggests to use the already existing annual meeting of the WTO, Bretton Woods Institutions and the ECOSOC as a platform to discuss possible concepts. However, for developed countries as Macedonia lacking a culture of commercialization of innovations, a legal framework on intellectual property rights is equally important. Setting out a clearly defined regulation facilitates the transfer of technology by increasing the necessary trust in the transfer. Therefore, another focus should be on the promotion of the already existing legal framework by using all as free workshops, academic lectures, conferences and individual counselling.