‘Big Think’ on jobs must address structural reforms and labour market-oriented training, says IOE President at ECOSOC in New York

In his keynote address to the 2015 Economic and Social Council 2015 Integration Segment in New York on Monday, 30 March, IOE President Daniel Funes de Rioja underlined the urgency in addressing two fundamental areas for increasing job opportunities, particularly for young people.

The opening panel entitled The ‘Big Think’ on Jobs and Growth had as its goal to provide an overview of the current global economy within which an effective framework could be established for inclusive and balanced growth, with full employment as a macroeconomic policy objective.

While welcoming the labour market reforms undertaken with success by some governments, the IOE President called for the removal of the regulatory barriers to offering diverse forms of employment. He went on to highlight that there was empirical evidence that greater workplace flexibility resulted in a win-win situation for both companies and the individuals they employed, with positive impacts on productivity, quality of work and employee retention.

Workplace flexibility also enhanced the transition of enterprises from the informal to the formal economy, said Daniel Funes, with higher employment rates being recorded in countries where companies, particularly SMEs, could adapt quickly to a rapidly changing world.

On the topic of ensuring adequate training systems, Mr Funes said, “If there is a silver bullet to address youth unemployment, then it is high quality apprenticeship systems.” Despite this, IOE research had found that in many countries there were still significant skills mismatches.
To address this challenge, the private sector, both companies and employers’ organisations, were playing their part through the IOE-BIAC initiated Global Apprenticeships Network (GAN), launched to promote exchanges of experience and best practice in the area of training and work-readiness programs around the globe.

Daniel Funes highlighted the value of national GAN networks, such as recently launched by the Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TISK). He urged governments to support such initiatives by enabling the institutional and regulatory environment for companies to engage in offering apprenticeships, including by involving companies and employers’ organisations in the design and implementation of VET systems, and by promoting excellence in STEM subjects in schools.