

HLPF 2023 - Input of the International Labour Organization

for the theme

“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”

In response to the letter of the ECOSOC President, dated 15 November 2022, the present document sets out the deliberations and policy recommendations of the ILO on the theme of the 2022 High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development as well as the SDGs under review.

The present policy recommendations are based on and make reference to the [ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work](#) (also endorsed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution [A/73/L.117](#)). Further valuable policy recommendations and experiences with regard to COVID-19 response are contained in the deliberations of the tripartite [ILO Global Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work – Building a better future of work](#) (1 – 9 July 2020) and [the ILO Global Call to Action for a Human-centred Recovery that is Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient](#).

Furthermore, the 110th International Labour Conference, held in 2022, had discussed and adopted a [resolution on the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work](#).

This resolution underlines the vital importance of occupational safety and health, as compellingly demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound and transformative impact on the world of work. Consequently, the resolution declares that the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) shall be considered as fundamental Conventions within the meaning of the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work \(1998\), as amended in 2022](#).

The ILO Governing Body at its 347th Session also considered how the COVID-19 crisis had a wider impact on the social dimension of sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda (see GB document [GB.347/INS/4 – Global coalition for Social Justice](#)). In so doing it was noted that the quest for social justice goes beyond the world of work. Both the ILO Social Justice Declaration and the ILO Centenary Declaration note that furthering social justice cannot be an endeavour for the ILO alone and requires the involvement of the multilateral system as a whole.

Failure to act on social justice in one domain undermines progress in others, and undermines the capacity of the ILO to promote decent work. This has been particularly evident during the recent COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent energy and food crises. Indeed, the ILO has long acknowledged that the pursuit of social justice in respect of adequate food and housing and effective access to quality medical care and education is essential for the realization of its own mandate. For these reasons, the [ILO Declaration of Philadelphia](#) refers to the obligation of the ILO to advance programmes and actions to extend social security measures to provide comprehensive medical care, provide adequate nutrition and housing, and ensure equality of education and vocational opportunity. These are mutually interdependent. For example, effective access to health care and to quality education improves opportunities to access employment, while access to decent work enhances the likelihood

that workers and their families will enjoy good health and adequate nutrition and will benefit fully from quality education.

Societies pursue social justice particularly by working to protect the most vulnerable and marginalized, end poverty, ensure equal opportunity, and mitigate inequality and dislocation. How well they succeed in this regard depends in large part on the strength of enabling rights and social dialogue, employment, including the promotion of sustainable enterprises, labour and social protection and just transitions within their economies. These are the initial four main planned focus areas of the Global Coalition for Social Justice. They are central to the decent work agenda and crucial for achieving social justice, building on the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022.

Each of these social dimensions of sustainable development has come under increased pressure in recent years due to a combination of economic shocks (COVID-19 and cost-of-living) and transformations (environmental, technological and demographic). Such immediate and longer term forces are exacerbating poverty, insecurity, inequality and dislocation in many countries. The international community urgently needs to strengthen support for efforts by countries to respond to such challenges which are likely to intensify in the coming years. Therefore, the ILO is organizing a Global Coalition for Social Justice -- to increase the level and effectiveness of international cooperation on these four critical social dimensions of economic progress.

The Coalition is an unprecedented global effort to reach beyond the ILO's own means of implementation to engage the multilateral system and international community more deeply and concretely in the ILO's social justice mission. The Coalition will act as a catalyst and serve as a conduit and amplifier for initiating or accelerating action in policy areas where the realization of the ILO's mandate in achieving decent work requires greater solidarity and coordination with other partners to create greater policy coherence and urgently address the multiple challenges impacting on the world of work.

The Coalition pursues the overarching goal of enhancing social justice and decent work to leave no-one behind, and accelerate delivery of the 2030 Agenda. To achieve this goal the coalition will:

- assemble a wide range of stakeholders to increase effort and action at global, regional and national level to advance social justice for all, building on the ILO's experience of mobilizing tripartism as a proven means to advance social justice through social dialogue;
- advocate for the primacy of social justice in policy-making and decision-making at all levels;
- leverage the impact of the ILO's work through increased and better coordinated multilateral and multistakeholder action and greater policy coherence;
- build a platform for increasing political momentum on social justice, in line with the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda" and in support of successful outcomes of the envisaged UN Social Summit in 2025.

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs

The [2023 ILO World Employment and Social Outlook Trends report](#) provides data and analysis of the impact of economic slowdown on the global labour market. It covers the extent and consequences of

the labour market disruption caused by overlapping economic and geopolitical crises and analyzes global patterns, regional differences and outcomes across groups of workers.

The report makes the case that in the response to multiple economic and geopolitical crises, international solidarity is more critical than ever. Strong commitment to initiatives such as the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions as well as the close involvement of social partners in all areas of policymaking at national and international levels are key measures that will strengthen policy coherence and partnerships to tackle current challenges and respond to long-term trends in the future of work.

Accelerated progress in reducing the global jobs gap, strengthening the quality of jobs and protecting real incomes will require renewed policy coordination and social dialogue. A strengthened global social contract will also need to integrate longer-term objectives, addressing threats from climate change while resolving deficits in development and living standards, in part through faster productivity growth.

Action to limit global warming to 2°C creates jobs. The transition will cause job losses in some sectors as carbon and resource-intensive sectors are scaled down, but there will be more than offset by new job opportunities. Measures taken in the production and use of energy will lead to job losses of around 6 million jobs as well as the creation of 24 million jobs, globally (ILO, 2018, Greening with Jobs). In addition, the move to a circular economy that emphasizes the reuse, recycling, remanufacture and recycling of goods will create 6 million jobs. More and better jobs can be created if women and men can get training in the skills demanded in the growing sectors of the economy, and have access to income support if they lose their jobs.

Climate change also threatens the health and safety of workers, as well as the economic activity of enterprises. Heat stress for example will lead to a reduction of 2.2 percent loss of labour productivity in 2030 globally, as high temperature reduces workers' productivity, notably those working outdoors and performing a physical activity (ILO, 2019 Working on a Warmer Planet). UNDRR is using these ILO data on heat stress in their Global Assessment report 2023 on Risk-informing the Sustainable Development Goals. Turning to solutions, a lot can be done to help countries to adapt to heat stress and give guidance to enterprises to protect workers from this increasing risk. More generally, enterprises in both advanced and developing countries are taking measures to green their outputs and their production process (ILO, 2022, Greening Enterprises: Transforming processes and workplaces).

(b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.

The World of Work is closely linked to the SDGs under review through the transversal nature of SDG 8.

In this regard, improving and enhancing social protection systems has been identified as a key transformative policy response and has met with some success: [Social Protection: Progress on better social protection for 30 million people \(ilo.org\)](#).

In the same vein, the UN Secretary-General has launched a Global Accelerator for Jobs, Social Protection and Just Transitions as part of his report Our Common Agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented loss of jobs and livelihoods. This has exacerbated income insecurity

around the world, particularly for the more than half of the global population without any access to social protection, including the 2 billion workers in the informal economy. The pandemic has contributed to increasing the financing gaps for social protection by at least 30 per cent, as countries have sought to mitigate the health and economic effects of the crisis, while revenues were falling due to lower growth and trade. Constrained by higher debt burdens, countries now face a difficult trade-off between increasing much-needed public investments to overcome the crisis, achieve a human-centred recovery and facilitate the structural transformations and just transitions that are necessary to achieve the SDGs and beyond, and, on the other hand, containing debt vulnerabilities.

In such a transformation and recovery context, just transitions are therefore a key policy response area which has been translated into joint action on the ground. The so-called "Just Energy Transition Partnerships" (JETPs) were initiated at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2022, with a Political Declaration on the Just Energy Transition in South Africa^[1] committing a group of countries to mobilize an initial amount of approximately USD 8.5 billion to support South Africa's pathway to low emissions and climate-resilient development, decarbonization of its electricity system, and the development of new economic opportunities. Subsequently, JETPs were announced for other countries including India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Senegal. At the UN climate change conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022 South Africa published a JEPT Implementation Plan outlining priority investment needs and involving a total funding need of USD 98 billion. The G20 leaders' summit held in Bali, Indonesia in November 2022 announced a JETP for Indonesia,^[2] with a funding commitment of USD 20 billion in finance over 3 to 5 years, to be mobilized in part through public funding and in part through the private sector.

JETPs are considered to be innovative partnerships that are country-led and mobilize a coordinated and tailored international support to help heavily fossil fuel-dependent emerging economies achieve ambitious and just energy transitions. They combine domestic resource mobilization with international financing, involving both public and private sector finance, including that from multilateral development banks. However, several questions and concerns have been raised, including the risk to undermine multilateral efforts towards climate mitigation by focusing only on a few key countries, which may discourage action by others. In addition, pathways of decarbonization involving natural gas and other fossil fuels as transition fuels have been questioned. Nonetheless, the recognition of the massive structural, economic, and social transformations required, and the alignment of financing to enable just transitions is a positive development. The ILO has been involved in policy discussions concerning JETPs, including within the UN system.

A Green Transformation Economic Advisory Mechanism established under the UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) trained UNRCOs on green economic modelling and dialogues and provided targeted economic expertise in the 22 countries involved in PAGE. Through UN support and collaborating involving UNDP and ILO, 62 countries were assisted to integrate just transition dimensions in their enhanced/updated NDCs.

^[1] [Political Declaration on the Just Energy Transition in South Africa - UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 \(ukcop26.org\)](https://www.ukcop26.org/). Declaration from the government of the republic South Africa, the United Kingdom of great Britain, the United States of America, the republic of France, the Federal republic of Germany, and the European Union

^[2] G20 BALI LEADERS' DECLARATION Bali, Indonesia, 15-16 November 2022. [Indonesia and International Partners Secure Groundbreaking Climate Targets and Associated Financing | The White House](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/16/20221116-g20-leaders-declaration/), Declaration from the Governments of the Republic of South Africa, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Republic of France and the Federal Republic of Germany, and the European Union

SDG 9 also aims at fostering innovation and this will need to be considered in the context of decent work. Technological innovations, in particular those linked to digitization, automation and communications, impact on the world of work while at the same time enhancing productivity, promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, advancing social justice, and paving the way for a transformative change towards environmental integrity.

Innovative technologies generate productivity gains which must be shared equitably between workers and employers through a process of social dialogue and collective bargaining. In the platform economy such processes are rendered difficult by the fragility (or absence) of employment relationships.

The transformative change required to achieve a human-centred development agenda cannot succeed without effective social dialogue process, reinforced by inclusive partnerships, comprehensive labour market information systems, and capacity building of constituents.

Against this background, the ILO Governing Body therefore considered a [normative gap analysis on decent work in the platform economy](#) to inform decision making on the nature of the item to be placed on the agenda of the 2025 International Labour Conference.

(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

In addition to claiming millions of lives, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented loss of jobs and livelihoods and exacerbated income insecurity around the world. The impact has been particularly adverse for people without access to social protection, including those working in the informal and care economies, women, children, youth, and those without access to digital technologies. More recently, the conflict in Ukraine has exposed fragilities in the global food and energy systems, as well as in the global economic and financial systems, triggering a cost-of-living crisis around the world unseen in at least a generation. This has to be set against the backdrop of the accelerating climate crisis and its adverse impacts on economies and societies. Constrained by rising debt burdens and shrinking fiscal space, many countries now face an even more daunting policy landscape. Yet it is more important than ever to chart a human-centred green recovery out of the present crisis and facilitate the inclusive structural transformations needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

In response to these complex global challenges, in September 2021, the UN Secretary-General launched the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions (Global Accelerator) with the aim of fast-tracking much-needed global actions to promote a job-rich recovery, as well as just ecological, technological, and societal transitions to more sustainable and inclusive economies. The Global Accelerator operates through three complementary and mutually supportive pillars:

- The development of in-country integrated and coordinated employment and social protection policies and strategies to facilitate just transitions.
- The establishment of national financing frameworks and the mobilization of public and private domestic and international resources to support the implementation of integrated policies and strategies.
- Improved multilateral cooperation on jobs and social protection for just transitions, including with the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks.

These three interlinked pillars aim to increase the level and coordination of the multilateral system's efforts to help countries create 400 million decent jobs, including in the green, digital and care economies, and to extend social protection coverage to the 4 billion people currently excluded.

The Global Accelerator thus supports much-needed transformations (brown to green, informal to formal, digital, new demographic trends/pressure) through:

- promoting strategic investments in sectors of the economy (renewable energy, agriculture, digitalization, etc.) with high potential for decent job creation and social protection improvements, or where the greatest decent work deficits exist;
- promoting investments in integrated policy approaches, and strengthening public social protection and labour market institutions, to put the State closer to people and incentivize workers and enterprises to contribute their fair share of taxes and social security contributions.

(d) Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

At the mid-point of implementation, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs are faced with a difficult world of work environment and deceleration and reversal of progress in a number of areas, as set out in the [ILO Monitor on the world of work](#).

Multiple crises threaten recovery: While the impact of COVID-19 has waned in most countries, multiple and overlapping economic and political crises are threatening labour market recovery around the world. These crises are likely to further increase labour market inequalities due to the disproportionate impact on certain groups of workers and firms, while contributing to a growing divergence between developed and developing economies. The latter had already been recovering more slowly from the COVID-19 pandemic, and are now facing less policy space to protect hard-hit workers and enterprises during the most recent crises.

Recovery in hours worked remains uneven and is now threatened by slowdown: The encouraging recovery in hours worked seen at the beginning of 2022 has not continued, although there continue to be significant differences between regions and income groups. Estimates indicate that in the third quarter of 2022, hours worked were 1.5 per cent below the level of the fourth quarter of 2019 (the pre-crisis benchmark), equivalent to a deficit of 40 million full-time jobs. Also, progress in narrowing the gender gap in hours worked is at risk because of the slowdown in recovery.

Divergence in employment persists: In the first half of 2022, employment-to-population ratios had returned to or exceeded the pre-crisis level in the majority of advanced economies, while in most middle-income countries with available data, employment deficits persisted relative to the pre-crisis situation. Available data shows that high-skilled occupations (managers, professionals, and technicians and associate professionals) had experienced a stronger recovery by 2022 Q2 compared with low- and medium-skilled occupations, including services and sales workers, which remain below the level of the same quarter in 2019

Informal job growth outpacing formal work: Concentrated in developing countries, informal job growth in 2021 fully reversed the losses experienced in 2020, whereas formal employment did not. For 2022, informal jobs are estimated to be growing at the same pace as formal employment, jeopardizing the slow but consistent trend towards formalization observed over the previous 15 years.

Labour market prospects extremely uncertain: The outlook for the labour market is currently highly uncertain, with growing downside risks, including the impacts of high inflation, tightening monetary policy, increasing debt burdens and declining consumer confidence. While it normally takes time for an economic slowdown or a recession to result in job destruction and unemployment, available data suggests that a sharp labour market slowdown is already underway. On current trends, global employment growth will deteriorate significantly in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Latest developments in Ukraine: The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine has had a disastrous impact on the Ukrainian labour market. The ILO estimates that during 2022, employment in Ukraine will be 15.5 per cent (or 2.4 million jobs) lower than in the previous year. Measures to stabilize the labour market, including interventions to keep economic activities going, assistance to relocate enterprises, improved employment services for displaced people and income assistance, are being implemented but not at the scale needed. The impact of the crisis on countries neighbouring Ukraine and the Russian Federation needs to be carefully assessed, as they could put at risk political and labour market stability, particularly if the conflict becomes more entrenched. Spillover effects beyond the region, particularly through heightened price volatility and increased food and energy prices, have significantly impacted labour markets in the Global South, leading to increased food insecurity and poverty.

At mid-point, the SDGs as seen through the lens of the World of Work are therefore in a precarious state. Accelerated and focussed national multilateral action is therefore required to rescue the SDGs.

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit

The [ILO Monitor on the World of Work](#) offers the following policy messages for coping with multiple crises in the wake of COVID 19:

Comprehensive, integrated and balanced policies are needed to face multiple crises: The multiplication of crises raises the risk of another significant global labour market downturn, requiring comprehensive, integrated and balanced policies which address not only inflation in isolation but also its broader implications for employment, enterprises and poverty. Excessive policy tightening is causing undue damage to jobs and income in both advanced and developing countries.

The set of policy tools to combat multiple crises needs to be widened through social dialogue, which would include: (a) interventions in setting prices for public goods; (b) rechannelling windfall profits; (c) strengthening income security through social protection; (d) increasing income support to maintain the purchasing power of labour income; and (e) targeting support to the most vulnerable people and enterprises. To support the labour markets in Ukraine and those affected by the ongoing conflict, a continued focus on decent jobs and social protection is needed, including in the ongoing discussion on reconstruction in Ukraine. Labour market integration measures for Ukrainian refugees also need to be strengthened. In order to respond at a global level to multiple economic and geographical crises, internal solidarity and coordination is even more critical, and policy coherence is key, which are also principal aims of the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

Social Justice deficits must be addressed in a rebalanced and crisis-resilient 2030 Agenda: We owe it to our future generations to coordinate efforts in realizing a fair and safe working environment without leaving anyone behind. If we want to achieve shared prosperity, inclusive growth and universal and lasting peace, we first have to achieve social justice. Social justice helps societies, economies and households become more resilient to socio-economic and environmental shocks, geopolitical instability and global health crises.