

**Input for the 2025 High-level Political Forum  
International Labour Organization (ILO)**

**Your assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.**

- The COVID-19 pandemic, climate crises, and geopolitical conflicts and uncertainties have magnified the socio-economic vulnerabilities of millions of people. Rising levels of debt and limited fiscal space constrain governments' investment in gender-responsive social protection and employment policies. Low-income and lower-middle-income countries, already facing chronic financial stress, struggle to mobilize the resources needed for short-term and long-term development. Low-income and lower-middle-income countries face a US\$982 billion fiscal stimulus gap for economic and labour market recovery, including the under-investment in social protection. Unsupportive macroeconomic policy frameworks further constrain countries' ability to effectively respond to these challenges.
- Armed conflicts and situations of wider insecurity and fragility have grown in number across the world, with staggering economic costs and an associated "vicious cycle" of unemployment, non-contractual and unregistered work, other decent work deficits, and, ultimately, violations of fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW). At the same time, a deterioration in the rule of law and in respect for civil liberties and human rights, and shrinking democratic space, have seriously undermined the realization of all FPRW in some countries.

**Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.**

- **Bridge the Skills Gap for the Future of Work:** While workers remain unable to access opportunities in high-demand sectors, industries struggle to fill vacancies in key areas such as AI, digital services, green technologies, and the care economy. Promoting people's skills is key for successful and inclusive structural transformation policies, and skilling, re-skilling and upskilling people should happen throughout their life courses. Governments, businesses, and educational institutions must collaborate to create inclusive skills development programs that bring demand and supply together and ensure economic transitions benefit all workers.
- **Raise Wages and Reduce Inequalities:** Despite productivity gains, wages remain stagnant, the labour income share has continued to decline since the pandemic, gender pay gaps persist, and millions remain trapped in working poverty. Addressing wage inequality is not just about fairness—it is an economic necessity to drive sustainable consumption and inclusive growth. Governments and

social partners must strengthen wage-setting institutions, expand collective bargaining, and establish living wage policies. Efforts such as wage transparency legislation, equal pay frameworks, and stronger enforcement of labour standards must be prioritized.

- Promote micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as driver of productivity, inclusive growth and decent jobs: MSMEs represent the majority of employment globally yet remain excluded from key policy frameworks. They often struggle with low productivity, informality, and limited access to finance, markets, and social protections. Governments must adopt integrated MSME strategies that support formalization, increase access to financing, improve productivity, and promote sustainable practices. A productivity ecosystem approach—linking MSMEs to skills development, social protection, and trade policies—will ensure that small businesses drive inclusive job creation.

**Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.**

- The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions is a key vehicle through which the Jobs and Social Protection transition can be implemented at country level. The Jobs and Social Protection transition, and the Global Accelerator, is linked to all other transitions as it supports societal adaptation to ongoing economic transformations through the equitable management of climate change, energy transition and bridging the digital divide. Policies to boost renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, forestry and biodiversity, sustainable construction and infrastructure (digital public infrastructure), and developing the necessary human capital (transforming education) can lead to the creation of sustainable/green jobs. Yet, the transition can have negative impacts on certain job sectors or leave workers with inadequate protection due to the disruption of traditional industries, rapid workforce restructuring, skill gaps and retraining challenges, temporary job displacement, and increasing geographical and sectoral disparities. The creation of decent jobs in agricultural value chains can contribute to the improvement of food systems. Education systems make important contributions to ensuring labour market access, especially for youth and women, reducing inequality and strengthening social cohesion.
- The ILO and USP2030 have launched a call to action to accelerate the achievement of universal social protection to reduce poverty and inequality with a specific quantitative target to increase social protection coverage in every country by at least 2 percentage points per year.
- The ILO works with UN Women and OECD through the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) to close gender pay gaps and promote equal remuneration. By supporting countries in adopting wage transparency and pay equity legislation, EPIC drives systemic changes toward Goal 5 and Goal 8.

**Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

- In the context of the 2023 SDG Summit, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions was selected as one of 12 high impact initiatives, and is seen as a key mechanism to help governments and the UN development system deliver on jobs and social protection transitions, in addition to the other transitions identified as having transformative effects across the SDGs and their accelerated implementation.
- The ILO participates in the UN Steering Committee for the Pact of the Future Implementation and three of its working groups on Pact contributions to SDG delivery, youth and digital technology. Under Pact contributions to SDG delivery, the ILO intends to support efforts aimed at building social protection systems to reduce vulnerability to shocks and prevent people from falling back into poverty. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and the ILO/USP2030 call to action to increase social protection coverage by at least two percentage points per year figure among the key initiatives advancing this action. In the Working Group on Youth, the ILO is co-leading a task force to develop an options paper for a Global Youth Investment Platform and will contribute to sub-actions related to supporting investment in education and skills, decent jobs, livelihoods and access to universal social protection systems for youth, and entrepreneurship and innovation.

**Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.**

- **Recalibrate Macroeconomic Policies for Inclusive Growth:** Governments must shift towards employment-rich economic frameworks that prioritize job creation, social investments, and productivity-driven growth. Public policies must ensure that GDP growth translates into stable, well-paying jobs across all sectors. This requires targeted public investments in infrastructure, digital transformation, and the care economy, all of which have high employment multipliers. Fiscal policies must be pro-employment and gender-responsive.
- **Close the Fiscal Gap for Social Protection:** Governments must mobilize domestic revenues through progressive taxation, financial reforms, and strengthened social security contributions. This means, increasing social protection coverage by at least two percentage points per year, recognizing this as both an ambitions and achievable objective. Additionally, international financial institutions must expand debt relief, increase ODA, and unlock SDG-aligned private investments.
- **Ensure a Just Transition in Green and Digital Economies:** Governments and businesses must integrate strong labour protections, reskilling programs, and income security measures to support workers as industries evolve. Promoting people's skills over the live cycle is key for successful and

inclusive structural transformation policies. Investments in renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and sustainable transport must include job-rich transition strategies. A “productivity ecosystem” approach can leverage the potential of MSMEs to drive productivity and decent job creation.

- **Strengthen Labour Rights and Protections:** The erosion of fundamental principles and rights at work and declining labour protections leave workers vulnerable. Governments must enforce international labour standards, formalize informal work, and ensure equal protection for all workers. Social dialogue is essential to realizing fundamental principles and rights at work.