

## REGIONAL MEETING REPORT: SDGS FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE: TRADE UNION PRIORITIES

10 MARCH 09.00 -11.00 AM BRUSSELS TIME

### Welcome and opening

The general secretary of ITUC Asia-Pacific, Shoya Yoshida, opened the session with a message of peace about the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. He quoted ILO-cofounder and trade unionist, Leon Jouhaux who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951 “Not only does war kill workers, destroy homes and factories which took them centuries of effort to cultivate, but it also (...) severely retards their progress towards an age of peace, justice and well-being.” Yoshida stressed that the message of the SDGs about providing everyone with a life in dignity and leaving no one behind became much more significant in this context of war. Paola Simonetti, ITUC Equality Director, added that ITUC is running a [campaign in support of refugees from Ukraine](#) and presented the [agenda of the meeting](#).

### Session 2: Setting the scene on the global and regional processes on the SDGs

Giulia Massobrio (ITUC) presented the state of global and regional SDG processes and unions’ role in them. She presented unions’ key demands and the main tools used to support unions’ work, namely the reports “[A Trade Union Focus on the SDGs](#)”, the [SDG 8 global monitor](#), and the [#timefor8 campaign](#). Massobrio presented the union priorities that are reflected in the UN Secretary-General’s reports “Our Common Agenda” and “Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection”, and explained that this meant that the UN was now placing decent job creation and social protection at the heart of recovery plans and financing strategies. Massobrio concluded by sharing some updates on the next [UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) on 28-31 March 2022 and listed the countries of the region that will present their Voluntary National Reviews.

### Session 3: Contributions from trade union leaders in VNR countries on SDGs implementation and pandemic recovery: Highlights and challenges

Diego López (ITUC), conveyed a message from Pakistan Workers Federation President Zahoor Awan, explaining that Pakistan’s unions are calling for a tripartite meeting on the SDGs to overcome the many challenges that the country is facing to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Julius Cainglet, Vice President of the Federation of Free Workers of the Philippines, explained that the government is involving unions in all SDG consultations. In response, the ILO has endorsed FFW as the representative of workers in official consultations of the National Economic and Development Authority, which is leading the government’s SDG process. Cainglet also saluted the support of the ILO and ILO ACTRAV to unions’ efforts to produce joint positions for the 2021 UN Socio-Economic and Peacebuilding Framework and the government’s Voluntary National Review, which will be presented in July 2022 at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). The ILO and the ILO ACTRAV were also supportive of the trade unions’ call on the government to accept the high-level mission to investigate several aggressions against and murders of trade unionists.

Ariel Castro, Senior Specialist in Workers' Activities-Desk Officer for Asia and Pacific of ILO-

ACTRAV, pointed out the relevance of unions’ participation in SDG processes, and stressed the obligation of governments to ensure that unions are fully enabled to actively take part in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDG plans through formal channels, adequate and timely information, and access to funding and resources. Castro also praised the proactive engagement of unions in the region to invest in internal capacity building, and the decision of ITUC AP to appoint a series of focal points throughout the network, who will ensure that the SDGs remain a priority topic in trade unions’ agenda. Before concluding, Castro underlined the important role of SDG8 in accelerating the 2030 Agenda and encouraged unions in the countries whose decent work country programmes will be ending in 2022 to ensure that their decent work priorities will be reflected in the next programmes.

In the Questions and Answers-session that followed, Maria Emeninta (KSBSI, Indonesia) explained that unions have brought to the preparations of Indonesia’s G20 presidency their demands to expand social protection to platform workers and support the initiative of a Global Social Protection Fund, as well as promote just transition – particularly in the energy sector. Chandra Sekhar (INTUC, India) mentioned the challenges that unions are facing as the government has used the pandemic as an excuse to stop all social dialogue on the SDGs. Sekhar also mentioned that INTUC has been utilising the SDGs to organise workers in the agricultural sector – most of whom are informal workers, which has led to increased numbers of affiliations.

### **Session 5: High Level Debate: Strategies for recovery and resilience in the SDG Decade of Action.**

The Director of the Social Development Division at UNESCAP, Srinivas Tata, explained how UNESCAP is integrating in its work the priorities around job creation, social protection, and labour rights as highlighted in the UN Secretary-General’s report “Our Common Agenda”. He talked about the severe decent-work deficits that the region is suffering from, and underlined that it is critical to explore the role of trade unions in the new social contract proposed by UN Secretary-General Guterres because “they are at the centre of it”.

The representative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Chief Economist Albert Park, explained the Banks’ main priority responses to employment recovery in Asia, such as increasing the vaccination rate to avoid unnecessary lockdowns, mobilising domestic resources, focusing on job creation and minimising learning loss, and creating labour market institutions and policies that support the creation of decent work. ([see power point presentation for further details](#)).

Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, insisted that decent job creation is a critical element of the recovery process. She also praised trade unions for their “huge contributions to achieve all 17 SDGs” by fomenting social dialogue, actively engaging and influencing SDG processes, and by protecting and promoting workers’ rights and the centrality of SDG8, which has “a particular position in the 2030 Agenda as it has important spill over impact on all the other SDGs”. Regarding the SDGs that will be under review at the HLPF, Asada-Miyakawa particularly mentioned the important role of trade unions in combatting child labour and so contributing to achieving SDG4, and in promoting key ILO conventions against violence and harassment that contribute to SDG5.

## **Session 5: TU engagement in Regional processes on the SDGs: the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (APRFSD)**

Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, Office of the Executive Secretary, UN ESCAP went through the agenda of the APRFSD and informed unions about the best entry points to push for their positions: side-events (list already online), round-tables, and as a constituency of the Major Groups they will have the opportunity to make a statement in any of the agenda items.

Joy Hernández (ITUC-AP) talked about the forum for civil society organisations (People’s Forum) where unions can work with other organisations and consolidate their positions for the APRFSD. Hernández also presented the sessions of the agenda that will include trade union interventions.

## **Session 5: Conclusions**

Paola Simonetti spoke about the role that the care sector can play in producing part of the 400 million jobs target set out by the UN in the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection since that sector alone could generate 280 million new decent jobs by 2030. Simonetti encouraged the ADB to support ILO’s efforts in promoting the establishment and expansion of social protection, and she underlined that besides providing a safety net to people, social protection also strengthens countries’ economic resilience. Simonetti concluded with a note about this year’s edition of the #timefor8 campaign, which will focus on the interrelation between SDG8 and SDG5.

Shoya Yoshida encouraged unions to continue calling, “even louder than before”, for a new economic model based on sustainability, inclusion, social justice and an economy that serves workers and their families. Yoshida concluded by recalling that the SDGs provide a strong support for unions to engage with relevant stakeholders such as the UNRC, and ensure workers’ needs are reflected in recovery and resilience plans.

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