

Trade Unions and Workers Statement on the Means of Implementation at the APFSD 2017

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Trade union efforts towards the SDGs are driven by our firm belief that sustainable development cannot be achieved without quality jobs and decent work. It builds upon the origins and purpose of the trade union movement as a whole to provide workers and their families a voice, to protect workers' rights and to build a fair and just world.

We are asking governments to fulfill their obligation to Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for all. We can only meet the aspirations set out in the SDGs if we take the necessary measures to ensure all actors are working towards SDGs. This means building a framework that provides the appropriate means, both financial and non-financial, for SDGs implementation.

Profit-making and capital accumulation, with a view of driving trillions of dollars, through public budgets and funds should be channeled into productive investments, including towards greening the economy and ensuring a "just transition" to green and decent jobs for workers.

All tax evasion and avoidance practices, including transfer (mis-)pricing must be addressed in order to guarantee that taxes are paid, where profits and value added are generated. As these decrease government income, the real losers are the workers of Multinational corporations. They don't receive a fair compensation for their efforts and productivity nor a just share of the company's profits they are entitled to, since income taxes are already taken from them or withheld, even before these can be redistributed.

Maintaining policy space is one thing, making use of policies is another. Countries need to create partnerships, including with labour, CSOs, academia, and assure transparency and participation, in order to define policies that would generate state income, create decent work and promote investment—both public and private—in different economic sectors.

Labour standards are gravely affected by global trade and investment patterns. Therefore, we need fair, regulated international trade and investment treaties and agreements that guarantee the enforceability of national labor laws and fundamental principles and rights at work, including clear and enforceable responsibilities for foreign investors and their supply chains.

The respect and application of International Labor Organization (ILO) core labour standards should be a minimum for workers everywhere, including precarious workers and migrant workers. States should provide the conditions for workers to join and form trade unions. Together with the implementation of social protection floors, strengthening labor institutions would raise sustainable aggregate demand and would create new jobs.

We need wage-led economic growth, to support aggregate demand and build stronger and more resilient economies. Labor's share to national income has been on a steady decline. Over-reliance on exports and consumer borrowing for economic growth and "financialization" of the global economy has proven to be unsustainable. On the contrary, countries need to increase domestic demand based on rising wages and a more equal distribution of income.

National plans developed, adopted and implemented through tripartite consultations anchored on policy coherence for development, in particular decent work, should ensure that pro-employment macroeconomic policies are supported by trade, industrial, tax, infrastructure and sectorial policies as well as investments in education and skills development.

We need strong and functioning labor market policies and institutions, with appropriately designed wage/income policies, including minimum wages; collective bargaining; labour inspection; strong employment services; unemployment benefits with strong links to social protection programs; targeted measures to increase labour market participation of women, youth and under-represented groups; as well as, measures to help low-income households to escape poverty and access freely chosen employment.

At the same time, a transformative shift towards sustainable development, including a greener economy and a just transition for workers, requires significant and equitable investment in education, training and lifelong learning, facilitating young people's school-to-work transition.

We urge governments to enhance social dialogue—bringing together social partners: employers and workers organizations, to ensure ownership of policy processes at the national level. Social dialogue is critical to ensuring social cohesion and peace through greater accountability.

All these require the institutional capacity of governments to support such a process and I believe the International Labor Organization and the whole UN System could provide support for such.

The ILO framework has a unique and built in means for accountability—the supervisory mechanism. It was put in place to ensure ILO member states are given support to implement and uphold the conventions that they have ratified in law and practice, a binding legal framework. The system includes a permanent multi-stakeholder monitoring function that requires member states to report at regular intervals on the status of different conventions, a tripartite structure with recognized stakeholders. It also offers technical support so as to improve the implementation of the commitments governments make.