



ARGENTINA



A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2019



Photo: José Manuel Fernández / Telam

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Argentinian government has established eight governmental objectives, directly or indirectly linked to the SDGs, and outlined priority initiatives for ministries and administrative bodies.

The body in charge of coordinating the adaptation of the SDGs to national needs and priorities is the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policy (CNCPS).

There has been no social dialogue or consultations regarding the 2030 Agenda, and the only communication channels opened by the Argentinian government at the request of the ILO and UNDP have been informative and/or informal. The government-initiated consultative multi-stakeholder platform on the SDGs, coordinated by the Argentinian Network for International Cooperation (RACI), does not include trade unions. Furthermore, the information available on the progress made in implementing the SDGs is limited, with trade unions reporting that they have not been informed about the mechanisms for civil society to take part in, to

monitor or to contribute to the process in a comprehensive and timely manner.

Trade unions have denounced the fact that, despite the cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda, the government has only seen fit to involve them in discussions on the implementation of SDG 8 (decent work), coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. The situation further deteriorated in 2018 with the dissolution of this ministry and its absorption into the Ministry of Production, where the post of Labour Secretary remains vacant.

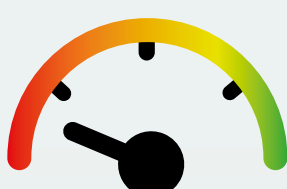
The national social dialogue structure does not, moreover, include a discussion on the SDGs, and only employers and business representatives are consulted on the matter. The government has still not allocated a budget to the SDG implementation process, and the country's current external debt burden – which reached 100 per cent of GDP last year – will also impact negatively on the national development plans.

TRANSPARENCY



No access to information at all

CONSULTATION



There is no consultation process at all

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



There is no involvement of social partners by the national government on an SDG national plan definition and implementation



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Worryingly, due to the economic crisis underway in Argentina, there has been a significant reversal in the progress towards meeting the targets set by the SDGs.

With regard to SDG 1, after improvements in past years, indicators for **target 1.1 (eradicating extreme poverty)** have worsened as a result of the adjustment policies being pursued by the government to tackle the large-scale national crisis, with poverty increasing by 19 per cent in 2018 as compared to 2017. Argentinian workers not only risk falling into poverty as a result of losing their jobs but also due to the loss in the purchasing power of their salaries, with inflation set to reach 50 per cent by the end of 2019. The 63.3 per cent of the 2019 budget earmarked for social protection spending, to meet **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)**, is insufficient, and large swathes of society have been left poor and hungry.

As regards **SDG 5 (gender equality)**, the government's gender policies are centred on the action priorities set by the National Women's Institute to prevent violence against women and assist its victims. However, cuts have been made to the funding allocated for this purpose from the national budget, and it is now too low to ensure its effective implementation. Women in Argentina remain overrepresented in informal employment – 37 per cent of women were working in the informal sector in 2018, compared to 31.6 per cent of men, suggesting challenges for reaching **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**. With regard to **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation in political, economic and public life)**, in 2018 women faced higher (10.5 per cent) unemployment levels than men (7.8 per cent), despite women's higher overall levels of education – 89 per cent of women compared to 86 per cent of men have attained a secondary education level.

With regard to **SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth)**, progress on reaching **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)** has been stalled, as unemployment levels grew to 9.6 per cent in 2018, with youth unemployment standing at a staggering 25.7 per cent. In addition, 34 per

cent of workers are in the informal sector. While underemployment stands at 11.2 per cent, affecting more women (14.4 per cent) than men (8.7 per cent), the number of workers with excessive workloads is increasing. The fall in real wages over the last year has reached 10 to 15 per cent, depending on the sector. As regards the indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)**, 19.3 per cent of young people aged under 29 are not in employment, education or training. Worryingly, despite legislative advances, there has been a regression with regard to **target 8.7 (eradicate the worst forms of child labour)**, as 10 per cent of children aged 5-15 and 31.9 per cent of children aged 16-17 engage in labour. **Target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** is not sufficiently met, as only 51.8 per cent of workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements.

Urgent action is needed in Argentina to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)**, in view of the extremely high rates of inflation, which mean that the minimum wage has lost half of its value as compared to 2015. Inflation, coupled with increases in the price of rents, public services, transportation, electricity, gas and water, has prevented many workers from accessing decent housing, adequate sustenance, healthcare and education and from covering their basic needs. In 2018, the labour share of GDP dropped for the fourth consecutive year, standing at 45.2 per cent. Reflecting the rising social inequalities in the country, Argentina's Gini coefficient rose sharply between 2017 (0.465) and 2018 (0.51).

With regard to **SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)**, trade unions report limitations on the freedom of expression in the media in Argentina and a lack of independence of the judiciary, in particular concerning the guarantees of trade union representatives against dismissal. There are further concerns over the government's interference with trade unions' freedom of association.

WHERE TO NEXT?

TRADE UNION RECIPE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Trade unions call on the Argentinian government to:

- Involve a wide range of trade union associations, movements and civil society organisations in the drafting and implementation of the national SDG plan. Ensure their effective participation in the diagnosis of needs and the process of adapting, implementing and evaluating SDGs at national level.
- Ensure a cross-cutting, rather than fragmented, implementation of the 2030 Agenda, by involving a diverse range of actors in the consultation and implementation processes at all levels.
- Recognise the Argentinian Platform for Monitoring the 2030 Agenda (PAMPA 2030), which brings together trade unions and civil society organisations advocating the design of regulatory frameworks in line with the SDGs, as a dialogue partner.



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