

TRADE UNION PRIORITIES FOR THE SDGS POLITICAL DECLARATION: BACKGROUND NOTE

In September 2019, Heads of State and Government will gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to follow up and review progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs at the "SDG SUMMIT 2019"

The Current Zero Draft of the Political Declaration is available at:

<https://www.un.org/pga/73/2019/05/17/political-declaration-for-the-high-level-political-forum-2/>

The negotiations of the Political Declaration will take place during the month of June 2019, it is imperative that trade unions take action now and start lobbying governments, both in capitals and their ambassadors in New York.

Trade Unions take on the SDGs

Trade unions recognise the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an historic landmark to uphold a universal agenda based on rights and encompassing the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Trade unions have put in place an independent monitoring process on the SDGs to ensure that governments are accountable to their own commitments¹.

By their nature, the SDGs require a new integrated approach in terms of goals, targets, policies and outcomes. The SDG8 highlights the ambition to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Integrating several topics such as growth, employment, and the social dimension, **SDG8 plays a pivotal role within the framework of the 2030 Agenda** and it is at the heart of our call for a **New Social Contract** between governments, business and workers.

Unfortunately, recent trends of overarching relevance for progress on SDG8 are deeply worrying. The current economic model is broken, excluding growing numbers of people from decent lives. Public services are under-funded, privatization is increasing and public discontent is growing.

Major global trends

Shrinking democratic space is a trend of major global concern. The 2018 ITUC Global Rights Index demonstrates a persistent decline in democratic space and an increase in rights violations, such as **freedom of association and collective bargaining**: 65% of countries exclude some or all workers from the right to form or join a union and 81% of countries have violated the right to collective bargaining.

¹ See Trade union country reports : <https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda>

Despite unprecedented economic growth over the last decades, **wages** have stagnated globally and have not kept pace compared to rising productivity. Millions of workers across the world are not earning enough to live in dignity.

The figures from the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook are clear: 300 million workers in emerging and developing countries earn less than US\$1.90 per day.

Less than 30% of the world is covered by comprehensive **social protection** systems and overall 61.2 per cent of workers around the world were in **informal employment** in 2016. To date there is still a 23% average **gender pay gap** that remains to be closed.

It is widely recognised that a significant scale-up of investments is required to achieve the SDGs. **The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls on business to contribute to sustainable development.** There is an urgent need to reconsider current practices in private investments and what policy options can be triggered to ensure alignment with, and impact on, the SDGs.

This is of paramount importance when addressing both **technological and climate challenges and transitions** for the planet, workers and their communities.

As highlighted by the ILO World Employment and Social outlook 2019, “at the current rate of improvement, SDG8 is unlikely to be achieved by 2030. There continue to be major gaps, both across and within countries”.

What trade unions demand

Trade Unions call for the implementation of the policies and priorities described below, which are crucial to the achievement of SDG8 and many other related goals and targets. We call on UN Member States to include the following priorities as a cornerstone of the SDGs Political Declaration:

1. Labour Rights Implementation

The ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining must be followed by effective implementation and enforcement systems.

Ensure business accountability and transparency in investments and ‘due diligence’ in global supply chains as prescribed by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles on Multinational Enterprises and social policy.

Establish a Universal Labour Guarantee that provides a labour protection floor for all workers, which includes fundamental workers’ rights, an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and ensuring safe and healthy workplaces.

2. Inclusive Labour Markets Policies

Take concrete actions for the formalisation of the informal economy in line with ILO Recommendation 204, supported by ILO Recommendation 202 on social protection floors.

In the context of climate action and technological shifts, systems need to be developed to support life-long learning, as well as, support the establishment of an international governance system and standard(s) for digital platform businesses, as well as regulations to govern data use and privacy.

3. Expansive policies on Wages

Implement and enforce statutory minimum wages that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living, be evidence-based and regularly reviewed by social partners and adjusted for inflation. Collective bargaining rights must be ensured to achieve fair wages above the minimum wage level, and collective agreements with sectoral coverage should be promoted.

Put in place and enforce robust equal pay and gender-based anti-discrimination legislation, including implementation of pay transparency measures.

4. Implementation of Social Protection systems

Social protection systems should be extended to ensure universal coverage to workers in all forms of work through a combination of tax-based social protection floors and contributory social security, in line with ILO standards (Convention 102 and Recommendation 202).

5. Climate Justice and Just transition

Social partners must be involved in the development and implementation of policies and strategies for ambitious emissions reductions, in order to ensure a just transition that guarantees decent jobs.

SDGs supervisory process

Finally, monitoring and measuring SDGs is crucial to guarantee accountability of policies. Accountability and dialogue must be at the very heart of the **SDGs assessment's implementation**. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case. Therefore, trade unions call on the UN Member States to urgently put in place **institutional, inclusive and transparent review procedures** as a fundamental condition to ensure credibility of their own commitments. **Social dialogue and tripartism** between trade unions and representative employers organisations with governments need to be clearly recognised as a way to put in place participatory, representative and transparent decision-making processes, and a means to ensure accountability at the very heart of the SDGs progress assessment.

The trade union movement calls for a **New Social Contract** for governments, business and workers, with a *universal labour guarantee* that provides a protection floor for **all** workers. This means fundamental workers' rights and women's equality are respected, jobs are decent healthy and safe with minimum living wages and collective bargaining rights, workers have some control over working time, social protection coverage is universal, due diligence and accountability drive business operations, and social dialogue ensures just transition measures for climate, technology and displacement.



Useful reference document:

Submission to HLPF 2019 - Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/MajorGroup-Workers-TradeUnions-submission-HLPF2019>

A trade union take on the SDGs 2018

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/A-trade-union-take-on-SDGs-2018-EN>