



TIME FOR 8 WEBINAR ASIA-PACIFIC

28 OCTOBER 09.00 AM-11.15 AM BRUSSELS

REPORT

Welcome and opening

At the start of the meeting Mamadou Diallo, ITUC Deputy General Secretary highlighted the importance of SDG 8 and the Time for 8 Campaign. Shoya Yoshida, ITUC-AP General Secretary, presented the context of the region in terms of progress towards the SDGs and provided some highlights on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on employment in the region. He stressed that the crisis is also bringing opportunities to prioritise the increase of domestic demands by increasing wages and improving living standards across the region, and to promote investments in labour protection floors, such as organisational health and safety, social protection, and living wages.

Session 1: Recap on trade union initiatives and agenda presentation

In the first session of the meeting, Paola Simonetti, from the ITUC-TUDCN, presented the trade union SDG country reports and highlighted the trade union priorities for SDG 8. She also recalled the SDG 8 monitor which is based on relevant and existing data, structured across four sub areas. She emphasised the main trade union demands for the SDG decade of action being: decent jobs, social protection and just transition.

Session 2: SDG 8 as a key to recovery and resilience: main findings from the ILO ACTRAV survey

In the second session of the meeting Hilma Motte, from ILO/ACTRAV, presented the preliminary findings of the survey undertaken by ACTRAV on trade union perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on SDG 8. The objectives of which were to have baseline data, to serve as a first measure of the assessment, and to draw conclusions and recommendations to provide timely advice. She highlighted that already before COVID-19, SDG 8 was not on track to be achieved and that overall, it does not seem there has been much progress.

Session 3: UN and ILO Strategy for the Decade of Action for the SDGs in Asia Pacific

The following session looked into the UN and ILO strategies for the SDG Decade of Action in Asia-Pacific. Neil Buhne, Regional Director of the UN Development Coordination Office in Asia-Pacific, highlighted the need to address inequalities and to base the responses to the pandemic on a new global deal and a new social contract within countries with social protection programmes that integrate employment, labour market policies, and social dialogue.

Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, described the consequences of the pandemic in the region and presented four main pillars for response: 1) Stimulation of the economy and employment; 2) Support to enterprises, jobs and income; 3) Workers' protection in workplaces; and 4) Social dialogue. She also stressed ILO's commitment to support unions' engagement with the UNRCs at country level. On this point, Mr. Buhne added that to improve the efficiency of this engagement, it is

important that unions have a strong knowledge of the UN system and how to contribute to it, in discussions with the ILO.

Session 4: The Time for 8 Campaign and trade union engagement in the UN Country Frameworks: updates from members on their engagement with Resident Coordinators

In the final session trade unions presented their engagement in the UN Country Frameworks.

In Bangladesh, the pandemic has especially affected the garment sector. Workers' demands have been partially responded by the government but unions have not been fully engaged in the monitoring and implementation of these responses. In terms of engagement with the UNRC, national, ILO Dhaka facilitated a very fruitful meeting between unions and UNRC Mia Seppo on how to address the pandemic and achieve the SDGs. From that meeting, the UN Country team expressed its wish to reach to trade unions to develop a socio-economic response framework.

In Indonesia, the government has not included workers in the process of establishing response measures to the COVID-19 crisis. KSBSI wrote to the ministry to call for a tripartite discussion on the responses but the government did not respond adequately. Regarding the work done on SDG implementation, the government has established several task-forces, KSBSI is involved in the one dedicated to the economic pillar. However the work of the task force has been interrupted since the beginning of the pandemic. Concerning the engagement with the UN system, KSBSI expressed its concerns for not being involved in the annual UN mechanism. There is a change of UNRC ongoing, which could be the start of a new collaboration. ILO Jakarta is willing to facilitate the engagement with the new UNRC.

In the Philippines, the situation with the government is difficult as social protection is inadequate, organisational health and safety measures are weak and there are attacks on workers' rights. Concerning the engagement with the UNRC, unions have plans to engage, however the process is very long.

In India, unions describe the situation as very difficult. The government is leaving everyone behind and challenges labour law. A strike is on its way.

Following the interventions from trade unions, the Mr. Buhne took note of the different inputs. He welcomed the positive advancements in Bangladesh and provided additional technical information on the other cases. Ms. Asada-Miyakawa reaffirmed the ILO's commitment to support the facilitation of engagement between unions and UNRCs, and to help unions to improve their skills and knowledge on the UN system.

Conclusions

The meeting was closed with the final remarks from the Deputy General Secretary of the ITUC and the General Secretary of ITUC-AP who focused on building a new social contract in response to COVID-19; seizing the opportunities that the SDGs are bringing for unions to advocate their priorities; strengthen unions' cooperation and dialogue with the UNRCs; and seek the support of the ILO in this engagement.



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