



ATUDN REGIONAL MEETING

“TRADE UNION PRIORITIES ON THE SDGS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND HUMAN-CENTRED RECOVERY IN AFRICA”

WEBINAR: 16-17 FEBRUARY 2022 12:00 – 2 PM ADDIS ABABA TIME

REPORT

Useful links:

- [Article of the meeting](#)
- [Webpage of the meeting](#)

DAY 1: PREPARATION FOR THE NINTH SESSION OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

16 FEBRUARY 10.00 -12.00 AM BRUSSELS TIME

Welcome and opening

ITUC Deputy General Secretary Eric Manzi opened the first day of the meeting and underlined the positive progress African unions are making in terms of their levels of engagement with governments and the United Nations. He was followed by Paola Simonetti, director of the Equality Department at the ITUC, who said that the [Congress Statement](#) of the ITUC fifth World Congress reflects unions’ continued commitment to maintain the SDGs high in their agendas.

Session 1: Update on trade union engagement on SDGs at global and regional level

Giulia Massobrio (ITUC/TUDCN Coordinator) explained that trade unions’ narrative on a new social contract is making its way across different UN processes, such as the [Financing for Development Forum](#), the [Commission for Social Development](#), the [Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions](#), and the UN Secretary General’s report “[Our Common Agenda](#)”. She concluded by looking at the key events in 2023, with a special mention to the HLPF (July 2023) and SDG Summit (September 2023).

Session 2: Members’ updates on SDGs advocacy at national level and reflections from the ILO Bureau of Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV)

Anne Cécile Coly (UNSAS, Senegal), Omar Faruk (FESTU, Somalia) and Thusang Butale (BFTU, Botswana) shared progress in engaging on the SDGs following their participation in the [ITUC delegation at the HLPF 2022](#) and [their report on SDG progress in their respective countries](#). All three speakers acknowledged the important support they received from ITUC and ACTRAV in terms of capacity building and technical support.

After these interventions, the director of ACTRAV, Maria Helena André, praised trade unions for demonstrating their commitment to work across sectors and engage in complex political processes with governments and the UN. She underlined that it is those unions that are proactive and investing in their own capacity development that are registering the best results.

Session 3: The UN-ECA Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and opportunities for trade union engagement. Discussion on trade union priorities on the SDGs under review in 2023 and strategy for the UN-ECA Forum

Diego López (ITUC Development Cooperation Coordinator) started this session with a presentation of the proposal of key trade union messages for each of the five SDGs that will be under review this year (SDG 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17). After him, Nicolas Nahimana (Focal Point for Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, UN-ECA) presented the upcoming [African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development \(ARFSD\)](#) that will take place from 27 February to 2 March in Niamey, Niger. He highlighted the key parts of the programme that could potentially be used by unions as entry points for engagement.

Session 4: Conclusions

In her concluding remarks, Paola Simonetti congratulated unions for their work. She said that unions' strategy and tools were delivering and underlined key events from 2023 (SDG Summit), 2024 (UN Summit of the Future) and 2025 (World Social Summit) that will start shaping the "beyond-2030".

DAY 2: HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE "ACCELERATING THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND AGENDA 2063 IN AFRICA"

17 FEBRUARY 10.00 -11.30 AM BRUSSELS TIME

Welcome and opening

The second day of the meeting was opened by ITUC-Africa General Secretary Kwasi Adu-Amankwah who underscored the impact of converging crises on African workers and the need for a New Social Contract with SDG 8 at the centre. ITUC Deputy General Secretary, Eric Manzi, followed by highlighting the commitment of the ITUC to implementing the SDGs as well as the different campaigns and strategies that the ITUC is leading related to SDG 8.

High Level Debate

The high level debate was introduced by Eric Manzi and involved representatives from the Regional Office for Africa of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA) and the African Union (AU).

Ms. Sweta Saxena, acting director of the Gender, Poverty & Social Policy Division of UN ECA, emphasised the potential of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in boosting Africa's development and the role of the ARFSD in promoting it. She highlighted the importance of a Just Transition to tackle climate change and the need to invest in climate resilience infrastructure to power Africa and close the energy gap, and also presented the work that UN ECA is doing to develop e-commerce and digitalisation (see her full intervention [here](#)).

Ms. Odette Sarr Bolly, Programme Coordinator, Labour, Employment and Migration Division at the African Union (AU), underscored the need to ensure that governments, trade unions and business are part of the AU's work at all levels. She mentioned the work they are doing on labour mobility and the need to beef up efforts and collaboration on access to social protection and security for all migrant workers. She also emphasised the need for collaboration through the green economy and green jobs and the role that trade

unions play in making a Just Transition a reality and mentioned the AU partnership for transformation on informal employment.

Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa, pointed out the challenges of informality, working poverty and social protection coverage in Africa. She emphasised the need for trade unions to be at the table with UN-ECA and the AU and the importance of strengthening partnerships. In terms of social protection, she outlined the ILO strategy to more than double coverage in Africa from 17% to 40% in 3 years. She also underlined the contributions of the ILO to capacity building of trade unions for engagement on the AfCFTA and for evidence based policy making. Ms Samuel-Olonjuwon put forward the important progress that trade unions from several countries have made on engagement in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) and called on the AU and UN ECA to work together with the ILO to better incorporate trade unions in the 2023 planning.

The three interventions were followed by an open discussion in which participants highlighted other challenges in the region (high levels of youth not in education, employment or training, lack of good governance, threats to peace and human rights), stressed the importance of supporting trade union engagement in the development of the UNSDCFs, the need to strengthen capacity building for trade unions to effectively engage and the lack of references to decent work in the AfCFTA.

This was followed by a round of final remarks by the panellists in which Ms Saxena noted the financial challenges in Africa and the need to restructure the global financial architecture, the need to include references to creating jobs in the AfCFTA and the importance of reevaluating African educational systems to adapt them to the new jobs that are required.

Ms Sarr Bolly, signalled that the AU is looking into how to better reflect the labour dimension in the trade agreements. She also emphasised the need to support trade unions through capacity building and signalled that they will look into coaching of trade unions with ITUC-Africa.

Ms. Samuel-Olonjuwon highlighted the importance of promoting SDG 8 to address the SDGs as a whole and of working together on the UN Country Frameworks. Trade unions need to have clear messages for the African Regional Forum and use the available resources. She underscored the importance of boosting institutional capacity building of trade unions, and the need for them to have clear messages to flag in spaces such as the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD). She concluded by emphasising that social protection must be a priority for concrete action.

Conclusions and way forward

In closing, Eric Manzi emphasised that we must be more effective in using the spaces that we have for engagement and build our capacity. For this we need allies such as the ILO, UN ECA and the AU with which we can work together to achieve the SDGs



This project is co-funded by the European Union