



## REGIONAL MEETING REPORT: TRADE UNION PRIORITIES ON THE SDGS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND HUMAN-CENTRED RECOVERY IN AFRICA

09 FEBRUARY 10.00 -12.00 AM BRUSSELS TIME

### Welcome and opening

The general secretary of ITUC Africa, Kwasi Adu Amankwah, opened the session. He stressed that the SDGs are providing important tools for trade unions to push for reformed economic policies that invest in sustainable models, transit informal workers to formal and decent work free from all forms of exploitation.

Mamadou Diallo, deputy general secretary of the ITUC, stressed the positive change in attitude of decision makers at the global as a result of the pandemic, which have become more open to discuss workers' demands for a new social contract as well as employment and social protection policies.

### Session 1: Setting the scene on the global and regional processes on the SDGs

Giulia Massobrio (ITUC) presented the state of global and regional processes on the SDGs and unions' role in them. She stressed the positive impact that unions have had in these processes, such as having union priorities reflected in the UN Secretary General reports "Our Common Agenda" and "Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection". She ended by showing the African countries that will present their VNRs in 2022. The next speaker, Guy Nicolas Nahimana (UN-ECA), presented the upcoming African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 3-5 March in Kigali, Rwanda. He also explained that the outcome document of the Forum, which will contribute to the discussion at the HLPF, will be composed of inputs from CSOs and governments.

### Session 2: Contributions from trade union leaders in VNR countries: Highlights and challenges on SDG implementation and recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. Reflections from the ILO Bureau of Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)

Omar Faruk, secretary general of FESTU Somalia, talked about FESTU's experience in getting involved in the national and UN-led development processes in Somalia. Through this work, FESTU is now actively included in the preparation of the government's VNR that will be presented at the HLPF this year.

From Botswana, Thusang Butale general secretary of the BFTU, talked about the way the pandemic was dealt with in the country. On the one hand, there were severe restrictions of human and civil rights, and the president got his power increased. On the other hand, there also were attempts to save jobs through economic support to enterprises earmarked for wages. Regarding SDG implementation, unions have not been included in the process at all, so the monitoring reports do not include workers' view. Overall, the country is not allocating enough resources to achieve the SDGs.

Talking on behalf of all Senegalese ITUC affiliates, Anne Cécile Coly (UNSA) explained that the pandemic has slowed down SDG implementation in Senegal, which was already deficient from the beginning. In addition, unions are having trouble to engage with the UNRC. ACTRAV has provided support to establish a trade union action plan on the SDGs, which has led to a renewed relationship with the government.

Maria Helena André, the director of ACTRAV, reminded of the central role that unions played in shaping Goal 8 and they have today as actors of development. “There can’t be development without unions on board”, she said. She stressed that, in line with SDG16, governments must ensure that unions are involved, informed and have access to funding and resources.

### **Session 3: High Level Debate: Strategies for recovery and resilience in the SDG Decade of Action.**

Mr. Houssein Guedi (African Union (AU)) spoke about the outcomes of a forum on the impact of the pandemic on labour and social affairs that the AU organised, and which resulted in an action plan for stimulating employment, supporting SMEs – particularly in the informal economy, providing access to social protection to all workers, putting forward Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) convention and health insurance to all workers, and promoting the beneficial aspects of labour migration and protecting these workers.

Alexio Musindo, (ILO, and special representative to the AU and the East African Community) stressed the continued relevance of the 2019 Abidjan Declaration approved by governments, employers, and workers, which aimed at advancing social justice and shaping the future of work in Africa. He stressed the importance for governments and all partners to support the implementation of the action points of the declaration.

The interventions were followed by a series of inputs and questions from affiliates from Guinea Conakry, Niger, Eritrea, Senegal and Nigeria, which focused mostly on the aspects of labour migration, social dialogue and social protection.

### **Session 4: Conclusions**

Paola Simonetti (ITUC) and Eric Manzi (ITUC Africa) concluded the webinar by stressing that in spite of the difficult conditions in which many unions interact, they have made successful progress regarding pushing forward their narrative on SDG 8 at all levels.

In particular, Simonetti praised the engagement of affiliates in the TUDCN processes such as the #timefor8 campaign (which will be relaunched this year at the HLPF) and the country reports on SDG implementation at national level. This engagement makes it possible for the labour movement to provide a strong evidence-based support to its policy messages, which are crafted in the TUDCN flagship policy paper on the centrality of SDG 8 in accelerating the realisation of the 2030 Agenda.

They also underlined the importance of a continued collaboration between unions and ACTRAV to bring more unions in the development processes taking place at national and regional level. They ended the session by reminding of the importance of engaging with United Nations Resident Coordinators both regarding involvement in UN Sustainable Development Frameworks and as a potential facilitator to connect with governments.

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