

WEBINAR ON “TRADE UNION RESPONSES TO THE SDG DECADE OF ACTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”

25 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT

Background

The ITUC’s Time for 8 Campaign has been putting forward the importance of SDG 8 in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. ITUC affiliates’ engagement in this campaign went beyond expectation with an incredible mobilisation of leaders and workers to emphasise the importance of SDG 8 in the responses to the current crisis. An important part of our actions in the framework of the Time for 8 Campaign was to promote national dialogue with the United Nations and the involvement of trade unions in the development and implementation of UN strategies at country level.

Objectives

- To analyze the UN and ILO strategies towards the Decade of Action for the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean
- To discuss follow-up actions to strengthen national dialogues between the UN / ILO and trade unions to ensure a decent work-based recovery and accelerate the SDG Decade of Action.

Participants

The webinar counted with 34 participants, including: 15 representatives of Latin American affiliates from 8 countries (Argentina, Brasil, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and Panama), 3 representatives of TUCA, 8 representatives of the UN and the ILO (including ACTRAV) and 6 representatives of ITUC/TUDCN.

Contents of the discussion

The webinar opened with a quick update on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the Americas by Rafael Freire, TUCA Secretary General, who insisted on the centrality of SDGs and the Decent Work Agenda for recovery and resilience plans. On her side, Paola Simonetti (ITUC Deputy Director of the Department of Social and Economic Policies) gave an overview of the work undertaken by the TUDCN in on SDGs, including the trade union country reports, the SDG8 Monitor and the #timefor8 Campaign in the context of the pandemic.

In the following session, Amanda Villatoro (ACTRAV/ILO Desk Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean) shared the preliminary conclusions of the ACTRAV survey on the impact of COVID19 on SDG8. The survey measures the current assessment of unions regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the SDGs, specifically on the indicators of SDG 8, and in general in the Decent Work agenda. Preliminary conclusions included the need to focus on the potential positive impacts of COVID19 on the pillars of decent work, for example on employment creation and social dialogue as a key element of national recovery plans.

Concerning the UN and ILO strategies towards the Decade of Action for the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean, both Christian Salazar (UN Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean) and Vinicius Pinheiro (ILO Regional Director) agreed with Rafael Freire’s opening remarks in recognizing the central role of SDGs and SDG8 in the necessary responses to the pandemic. On the one side, Salazar highlighted both the challenges posed by COVID19 -in terms of growing inequalities and political instability in the region- and the opportunities – in terms of momentum to change the narrative and invest in different paths such as environmental sustainability and the care economy. On the other side, Pinheiro provided an overview of the impact of COVID19 on decent work indicators; thus, he insisted on the importance for UN resident coordinators to set up a permanent dialogue with trade unions and social partners at the national level to build joint strategies for recovery based on labour rights; moreover, he expressed the full commitment of the ILO in supporting such dialogue at the national and regional level.

The panel was followed by several interventions from national affiliates on the state of play of their relationship with the UN resident coordinators, with both positive and negative highlights: for example, in the cases of Costa Rica and Argentina the relationship is already well established, while in the cases of Venezuela and Brazil the dialogue has not started yet.

As a concrete follow up, Freire, Salazar and Pinheiro agreed on organizing a follow up meeting in October with TUCA-TUDCN members and the national UN resident coordinators, to accelerate the setting up of spaces for dialogue at the national level.

In their concluding remarks, Paola Simonetti (ITUC) and Freire stressed the importance of the follow up meeting and express the commitment of the ITUC and TUCA/TUDCN to provide all necessary support in that sense.



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