SDG 8 AS A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR A JOB-RICH RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has triggered an extraordinary wave of destruction across the world of work. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that over 250 million jobs have been destroyed thus far and more than 1.6 billion informal workers are facing deprivation without any social protection to fall back on. The ILO also estimates that the number of workers living in moderate or extreme poverty increased by 108 million in 2020, reversing five years of continuous progress.

As highlighted by the ITUC SDG 8 Monitor, the world entered the pandemic already with a “sustainability debt”. The serious SDGs underperformance, in particular regarding the world of work and its endemic pre-existing labour market deficiencies, resulted in making those who are most vulnerable even more exposed to the impact of the crises: low-skilled workers, migrant workers, informal workers, women, and youth, to name a few. It is now imperative to focus on a human-centred recovery from the unprecedented crisis that is afflicting the world of work.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are helping us in this respect. They are more relevant today than ever because they provide the vision and show the path towards resilient economies and just societies. Recovery measures and investments must be in line with the SDGs to be lasting.

SDG 8 is key to addressing the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and to driving the 2030 Agenda forward. Through its targets on decent work, social

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1 International Trade Union Confederation, SDG decade of action - trade union policy responses, 2020
protection and sustainable growth, SDG 8 plays a fundamental role in the trade union call for a **New Social Contract** on:

1. **Jobs**: climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

2. **Rights**: the promise of the ILO Centenary Declaration for rights and protections for all workers, irrespective of employment arrangements.

3. **Universal Social Protection**: social protection for all, with the fight for a global social protection fund for the poorest countries.

4. **Equality**: Progress has stalled, and in some nations, it has been set back by the pandemic. Workers demand equality of income and equality of gender and race.

5. **Inclusion**: Working people want a peaceful world and a just, rights-based development model with the promise of the SDGs.

Ensuring access to vaccines is a moral imperative and the first step for economic recovery, considering the devastating consequences of the pandemic, especially in developing countries. Trade unions call for universal access to free testing, treatment, and vaccines and for the removal of intellectual property barriers and for a massive scaling up of production of vaccines, tests and treatments in developing countries in particular.

Recovery and resilience measures must be funded by debt relief and increased public development assistance for developing countries, enabling them to manage crisis responses. Resource mobilisation efforts through progressive taxation at national level should be complemented by strengthening international cooperation in ending tax evasion and illicit financial flows. This would also need to include a minimum tax floor for all corporations, a billionaires’ or wealth tax, and a financial transactions tax.

To be sustainable, crisis response measures must be built on the engagement of social partners. Social dialogue and industrial relations help to rebuild trust in institutions and assist in crafting equitable policies. This is true within countries, but also across nations. We need a new model of global governance to redress the current imbalance of power and uneven distribution of wealth at international level. A truly inclusive multilateral system where social partners are on board and have a say will make the difference and pave the way to global resilience.

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2 International Trade Union Confederation, *Translating commitments into action: supporting the TRIPS waiver is essential to end the COVID-19 pandemic*, C20-L20 statement, 2021

3 International Trade Union Confederation, *Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum*, 2021
Policies and actions are urgently needed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. Focusing on key SDGs will be fundamental over the next nine years. SDG 8 is one of these key goals, having a strong leverage effect on other targets and goals, thanks to its multidimensional nature.

The ITUC SDG 8 composite indicator covers 145 countries corresponding to more than 97% of the world population and is calculated on the basis of four sub-domains related to the following dimensions: Economic Well-Being, Employment Quality, Labour Vulnerability and Labour Rights.

These sub-domains were chosen to effectively show the centrality of the social and labour dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The final SDG 8 composite indicator is the geometric mean of the four sub-domains. The rating ranges between 70-130 and the world average is set to 100.

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1 The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) developed an innovative approach related to SDG 8 progress assessment thanks to the partnerships and expertise of ASviS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development). See chapter “Methodology of SDG 8 Global Indicator” on p.27-29 in SDG decade of action - trade union policy responses.

2 Value 100 represents the world average, with no value-based connotation. This method was chosen because it does not need the definition of quantitative targets, especially when not explicitly included within the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the whole rating system aims at showing if countries are progressing or not towards a balanced and inclusive sustainable development path based on the four sub-domains which will lead to the realisation of SDG 8 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole.
Considering the UN regions, North America and Europe are the regions with the best SDG 8 composite indicator score and the highest level in all four sub-composites. Africa is the continent with the lowest scores, but while sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest score in economic well-being and labour vulnerability, northern Africa has the lowest score in employment quality and in labour rights. On this last domain, western Asia also performs very poorly, with the second lowest score.

Considering the countries income groups, the results show huge differences between low-income countries and high-income countries with the low-income countries having an average score of 90.70 while the average score of the high-income countries is 107.39.

Although this certainly depicts a North-South divide, it does not necessarily mean that richer countries are doing well. In fact, high-income countries are performing slightly above the world average (100), thus still having a long way ahead towards sustainability.

The analysis of the results of each of the four sub-domains helps to highlight additional trends.

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6 These results do not yet reflect the impact of the crisis because the most recent data available arrived until the beginning of 2020. Final estimates of the economic and social damage cannot yet be made. These will be integrated in this report as soon as they will be available.
Although, as expected, high-income countries present a better performance compared to the other income groups, they still score slightly above the world average (107.25). This seems to be connected to considerable levels of poverty and inequality that persist also in wealthy countries, such as high-income and upper-middle-income countries.

The examples below seem to support these findings\(^7\). Both Germany and Mexico score respectively 109.7 and 96.8 in the economic well-being sub-domain, which could suggest that the inequality indicators counterbalance the good performance related to gross domestic product (GDP) growth:

\(^7\)See Trade unions’ country reports on SDGs [https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda](https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda). For Germany the challenges are directly related to the volume of informal employment: in 2013, 10.1 per cent of workers were in informal employment, with a tendency for informality particularly high in non-standard forms of employment, such as marginal employment, live-in private care, temporary agency work, work in subcontracting chains, posted employment, self-employment, etc. Migrant workers with no residence or working permit are also highly vulnerable to informality.
Despite being the sixth most developed country in the world according to the Human Development Index, **Germany** faces challenges in fighting both poverty and inequality. Poverty indicators show that in 2019, 8 per cent of workers above the age of 18 were living under the nationally defined income line, with part-time and fixed-term employees most at risk. Progress remains to be made in terms of inequalities too, as the share of the bottom 20 per cent income earners in overall GDP in 2016 was 7.6 per cent, compared to the 24.6 per cent share of the top 10 per cent income earners, whose share has been continuously increasing.

**Mexico** is one of the world’s largest economies based on its GDP. However, this wealth is not evenly distributed, as the country has one of the highest inequality rates in the world: in 2018 the top 10 per cent of income earners had a 36.4 per cent share of GDP, with the bottom 20 per cent of income earners holding a 5.4 per cent share.

Poverty rates are equally worrisome: in 2018 41.9 per cent of the Mexican population lived under the national poverty line, a reduction of only 2.5 per cent compared to 2008, which suggests that the eradication of extreme poverty is far from being reached. This is in stark contrast to the fact that Mexico is classified as a country with a high level of human development (Human Development Index of 0.779 in 2019).
The example of Germany also points out that informality is a cross-cutting issue relevant in advanced economies as well if we think of the growth of non-standard forms of work, including “platform” businesses. In fact, according to the ILO, already prior to the pandemic, the informal employment share was 60.2 per cent of global employment.

Therefore, economic growth alone cannot provide countries with the sufficient means to ensure well-being to all. Inclusive social and labour market policies – backed by appropriate investments – are essential to counter the current huge levels of poverty and inequalities violently brought back by the pandemic crisis.

The 2021 Porto Declaration of the European Council endorses the European Social Partners joint proposal for an alternative set of indicators to measure economic, social and environmental progress, supplementing GDP as a measure of welfare for inclusive and sustainable growth.

This is fundamental to push for a step up in quantitative and qualitative data to support SDG indicators, improving the monitoring of SDGS and ultimately contributing to strengthening global governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the already urgent need of adapting methods of labour data collection. This concerns revising the statistical framework for measuring informality and the inclusion of an actual measurement for inequality, which is lacking in the current 2030 Agenda global indicator framework.

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1 Informality can pose a major challenge to economic and social development as well as to the stability of public finances, as informal workers often do not contribute to the general tax base nor do they have access to contributory social security arrangements.

2 International Trade Union Confederation, Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum, 2021

3 United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General, 2021

4 European Council, The Porto Declaration, Press release, 2021

5 European Trade Union Confederation, EU Social Partners on Beyond GDP, 2021
Here the difference between North and South is much less marked. The distribution of countries by income level and employment quality performance seems to show that the correlation between gross national income (GNI) per capita and employment quality is weak.

Gender gaps in labour force participation rates have narrowed slightly over recent decades, but the global gap was still estimated at 27 percentage points in 2019. Among wage workers, gender pay gaps persist at around 20 per cent globally.\textsuperscript{13}

The examples below seem to support these findings:\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} International Labour Organization, ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work – Updated estimates and analysis, Fifth edition, 2020

\textsuperscript{14} See Trade unions’ country reports on the SDGs https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda
Progress has to be made in Spain to reduce both unemployment and the working poverty rate. Unemployment reached 15.5 per cent in 2020, affecting more women (17.4 per cent) than men (13.9 per cent). Young workers below the age of 25 were particularly hard hit, with unemployment rates of 37.1 per cent among young men and 39.7 per cent among young women.

As far as working poverty is concerned, 12.8 per cent of people in employment were at risk of poverty in 2019, and the number of working poor increased by 16 per cent between 2010 and 2019. Greater efforts remain also in terms of ensuring women’s equal opportunities in the labour market. Although more women than men have the highest level of education, their work is generally much more precarious, with high rates of part-time employment, temporary contracts, reduced working hours, lower pay, etc. Likewise, women’s access to managerial and leadership positions is still limited.

Despite a relatively low total unemployment rate, Indonesia faces challenges in terms of employment quality: in 2020, underemployment stood at 7.8 per cent and at 21.5 per cent among those between 15 and 24 years of age. Moreover, salaries often do not allow for a dignified life, considering that over 15 million domestic workers in Indonesia in 2018 were paid under minimum wage.

Progress has to be made also in terms of the proportion of women in skilled employment, which declined from 47.59 per cent in 2016 to 46.31 per cent in 2017. Moreover, the gender pay gap remains a challenge, as women workers with tertiary education degrees earn substantially less than male counterparts. Advancing towards equality in Indonesia also implies increasing the labour income share of GDP, which it had dropped from 38.6 per cent in 2015 and 2016 to 38.1 per cent in 2017.
The positive recent trends related to global employment levels\textsuperscript{15} are being dramatically vanished by the crisis, fiercely translating into job losses. The latest ILO estimate figures\textsuperscript{16} on the impact of the crisis are frightening, such as:

- An estimated 8.8 per cent of total working hours were lost for the whole of last year, the equivalent of the equivalent of the hours worked in one year by 255 million full-time workers. This is approximately four times greater than the number lost during the 2009 global financial crisis.

- Women have been more affected than men by the pandemic’s labour market disruptions. Globally, employment losses for women stand at 5 per cent, versus 3.9 per cent for men. Additionally, 90 per cent of women who lost their jobs in 2020 exited the labour force, which suggests that their working lives are likely to be disrupted over an extended period unless appropriate measures are adopted.

- There has been an 8.3 per cent decline in global labour income (before support measures are included), equivalent to US$3.7 trillion, or 4.4 per cent of global GDP.

Investments in job creation in strategic sectors will need to be on the top of governments’ agendas in order to reverse the economic and social consequences of this crisis. The economic and employment consequences of the COVID-19 crisis are exerting massive downward pressure on workers’ wages. The implementation of statutory minimum wages – that guarantee dignity for all workers and their families – will be key to restoring aggregate demand and to fostering economic recovery. Minimum wages should take into account the cost of living, be evidence based and regularly reviewed by social partners through collective bargaining and adjusted for inflation.

\textsuperscript{15} United Nations, Statistic Division, \textit{The Sustainable Development Goals Report}, 2019

\textsuperscript{16} ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2021, \url{https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf}
High-income countries show a better performance on labour vulnerability. However, it is crucial to note that they slightly overcome (109.15) the world average, while almost all of the countries are under it. Upper-middle-income countries then score exactly on the world average 100.89.

Therefore, it is clear to say that labour vulnerability is still a challenge globally, meaning that workers are vulnerable in all regions of the world.

This is not surprising if we think that nowadays 70 per cent of the world’s people cannot count on the security of full social protection.
With only 9.2 per cent of the total population covered by at least one social protection benefit, no unemployment schemes and only 2 per cent of people in pensionable age receiving a pension, **Pakistan** is an example of labour vulnerability. This is the result of extremely low levels of spending on social protection in the country, at less than 2 per cent, an extremely high level of vulnerable employment, at 55.5 per cent in 2019, and an underemployment rate of 5.2 per cent.

63 per cent of the population in Pakistan is below the age of 30 and suffers great levels of vulnerability. In 2020, 31.2 percent of youth were not in employment, education or training (NEET). This burden falls mainly on women, for which NEET rates stood at 56.2 percent compared to 8 per cent for young Pakistani men. This inequality has aggravated and perpetuated gender inequality in the labour market as well as the society as a whole.

This is also the reason why the crisis has had an enormous impact on those countries that did not have appropriate social protection systems in place. Social protection – an essential pillar of the decent work agenda – is crucial in order to trigger recovery and to create resilient societies. It is time for governments to support the implementation of universal social protection systems and floors.

In 2019, more than one in five of the world’s youth were NEET. This has remained almost unchanged since 2005. Since young women were already twice as likely to be jobless and not in education nor training than young men, and as women have been disproportionately pushed into inactivity during the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis is likely to worsen the NEET gender gap among youth.

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17 See Trade unions’ country reports on SDGs: [https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda](https://www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda)

18 See as examples the case studies in Colombia and Chile in *The SDGs for recovery and resilience – Case studies from Argentina, Chile and Colombia*, 2021, p. 17 to 25, and in Zambia in *The SDGs for recovery and resilience – Case studies from Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia*, 2021, p. 18

The picture is challenging also when we consider occupational health and safety (OHS). Each year 2.78 million people die from work-related illness and injury – this even before the pandemic. With the pandemic, the situation is now bleaker than at any time before.

Reversing this trend requires a strong commitment from governments and employers to promote decent working conditions, including effective occupational health and safety measures for all workers, fulfilling the promise of the ILO Centenary Declaration.

Argentina is surely a promising example in this sense. The Argentinian government has recognised COVID-19 as an occupational disease and measures have been taken to address it as such: supporting companies and SMEs in maintaining employment by providing a minimum living wage for each employee by the state and banning dismissals and suspensions from work without just cause or due to the lack of or reduction in work volume or due to force majeure.

Unfortunately, the monitoring of “safe and secure working environments for all workers” is extremely challenging, as official data is only available for 83 countries. This is particularly problematic, as OHS has been recognised by the Centenary Declaration as fundamental to decent work, setting out a pathway for this to be given formal recognition in the framework of ILO Fundamental Rights.

This represents another challenging area when it comes to the data gap (very much linked to informality contexts) that hampers global governance.
The histogram above mirrors the findings of the ITUC Global Rights Index. It shows very similar results for the first three income groups (low, lower-middle and upper-middle-income countries), which are all below the world average. Only high-income countries show a higher score (111,48).

At the same time, we can also observe a significant degree of variability in the low- and high-income groups (different labour rights performances among income groups is the main source of variability). This means that good economic performances of countries (high-income) do not put them necessarily in a good position towards the full achievement of SDG 8.

Therefore, the respect of rights of workers is not necessarily related to the good economic performance of the country.

20 International Trade Union Confederation, Global Rights Index 2020
This finding is confirmed when we observe the consequences of the pandemic. The economic crisis brought along restrictions of freedoms and violations of labour rights worldwide. An increase of violations of workers and trade union rights across the world is a result of the measures adopted by governments in many countries. These violations concern, in particular, international labour standards, non-compliance with labour regulations regarding layoffs, working hours and the payment of wages, and a disregard of OHS regulations.

Upholding the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as, supporting social dialogue should become key priorities for countries governments. Countries where democratic institutions, collective bargaining rights and social dialogue are well in place, they are the ones coping better with the crisis and recovering faster. According to the ILO, social dialogue outcomes concerned support enterprises, jobs and incomes, and protect workers in the workplace.

Therefore, social dialogue is an effective tool to put in place socioeconomic reforms that guarantee ownership and ensure greater levels of transparency and accountability. Here, the link between SDG 8 and SDG 16 is clear: rights, fundamental freedoms and social dialogue are strongly interrelated with effective and accountable institutions.

SDG 8.7 target on the elimination of child labour is relevant more than ever. As stated in the UN Secretary General Progress report, “two in three students worldwide are still affected by full or partial school closures. The most vulnerable children and those unable to access remote learning are at an increased risk of never returning to school, and even being forced into child marriage or child labor.”

The 14 remaining governments that have not ratified ILO Convention 138 on the minimum age should do so this year, and all governments should resolve not to allow the world to slide back into 19th-century exploitation. A new social contract will provide the hope and the pathway to realising the aim of the UN Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.” - Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary.

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21 International Labour Organization, ACTRAV, Social Dialogue remains vital to build sustainable recovery from COVID-19, 2021
22 International Trade Union Confederation, COVID-19: 98% of world’s workers not getting the basic support they need, 2021
23 The Guardian, Social Dialogue vital to post-COVID-19 recovery, 2021
24 International Labour Organization, COVID-19 and social dialogue
25 United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Report of the Secretary General, 2021
Also, when it comes to monitoring this important target, the data gap is striking, especially if we consider the data from developed countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion and number of children aged 5 - 17 years engaged in child labour</th>
<th>Total no. of countries</th>
<th>No. of missing countries where data is available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-middle-income</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle-income</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-income</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The estimation of a composite indicator for SDG 8 gives the opportunity to address the interactions between the economic and decent work dimensions of the 2030 Agenda with other indicators used as proxies of sustainable development domains.

In this chapter, interactions are estimated through a linear regression model which puts the SDG 8 indicator in relation to other variables:

- Poverty headcount ratio (proxy of SDG 1).
- Prevalence of undernourishment (SDG 2).
- Under-five mortality rate (SDG 3).
- Level of secondary education enrolment (SDG 4).
- Proportion of women in managerial positions (SDG 5).
- Energy share in the total final energy consumption (SDG 7).
- Manufacturing value added as a proportion of gross domestic product (SDG 9).
- Income inequality (SDG 10).
- Mortality caused by road traffic injury per 100,000 people (SDG 11).
- Material consumption per capita (SDG 12).
- CO2 emissions per capita (SDG 13).
- Social dialogue (SDG 16).
The interlinkage between SDG 8 and SDG 16 is not calculated through a statistical model. The general lack of data related to almost all SDG 16 target indicators hampers this approach. Moreover, most importantly, there is no indicator within the official indicators framework of the 2030 Agenda referring to the existence and implementation in practice of social dialogue (dialogue between workers and employers’ representatives, and governments). This is certainly a weakness, as where social dialogue is genuinely implemented, it provides a contribution to the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions, which is a key target of SDG 16. It is essential for trade unions that this interrelation be highlighted and valued. Therefore, it has been included in the table below, on the grounds of a qualitative analysis of practice.

Correlation analysis can be used to identify the direction of links among SDGs. There are reinforcing links when improvements in SDG 8 lead to higher performance in other indicators, while there is evidence of trade-off when good performances in SDG 8 are correlated with a deterioration on another indicator (see figure 7).

Good performances in SDG 8 are correlated with a low poverty headcount rate, low under-five mortality rate, lower percentage of undernourishment in the population, low-income inequality, higher secondary education enrolment, higher proportion of women in managerial positions, lower mortality level caused by road traffic, lower domestic consumption, and higher levels of social dialogue.

Therefore, the achievement of one goal (SDG 8) seems to reinforce the country’s ability to achieve the other ones described above.

The magnitude of the interlinkages between SDG 8 and SDG 1 is the strongest one.
Get on track to end poverty and hunger, and transform towards inclusive and sustainable economies:

**INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN SDG 8 AND SDG 1 AND SDG 2**

SDG 8 is positively correlated with low poverty headcount rates (SDG 1 on ending poverty) and with low prevalence of undernourishment (SDG 2 on ending hunger).

The social dimension of SDG 8 (employment levels, wages and social protection coverage, in particular) is key to fight poverty and hunger.

Minimum living wages can set a threshold that would effectively limit income poverty. Likewise, expanding social protection systems and floors will increase resilience and act as an economic and social stabiliser to promote a stronger recovery.
Revamp and transform consumption and production and address and mitigate climate change:

**INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN SDG 8 AND SDG 9, 11, 12 AND SDG 7 AND 13**

SDG 8 is positively correlated with increased levels of manufacturing value added (SDG 9 on resilient infrastructure), lower levels of mortality caused by road traffic (SDG 11 on sustainable cities) and domestic material consumption (SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production).

![Graph showing the correlation between SDG 8 and other SDGs](image)

Higher levels of productivity (manufacturing value added) are brought about by progress on SDG 8.

![Graph showing the correlation between SDG 8 and mortality](image)

Improvements of SDG 8 also favour more inclusive urban contexts, to the extent that both the economic and social conditions of families are better and reflect on the well-being of the cities. In the specific case of the indicator, this can be translated in cities with a greater balance in the management of services, for example in local public transport or in contexts in which the quality of work also brings with it an increased share of social capital.

![Graph showing the correlation between SDG 8 and domestic material consumption](image)

Restructuring national economies and production/consumption systems will be vital to build resilience. Data show a positive correlation between SDG 8 and lower levels of material consumption per capita. This is a positive trend that will need to be reinforced and supported by sustainable industrial policies.
SDG 8 presents a trade-off with SDG 7 (sustainable energy) and 13 (climate change). This implies energy decarbonisation and industrial transformations leading to zero CO2 emissions. Proactive policies will be required to implement a Just Transition towards sustainable economies in which workers and their communities are not left behind.

SDG 8 itself includes the target on decoupling GDP growth from environmental degradation. Therefore, a trade-off arises for the relations between economic growth, currently primarily carbon-based, and the environmental dimension of the SDG 8 itself and other goals of the 2030 Agenda.
Promote more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies:

**Interrelations between SDG 8 and SDG 3, 4, 5, 10, 16**

SDG 8 is positively correlated with low levels of mortality rates under 5 years (SDG 3 on health), with increasing levels of schooling (SDG 4 on education), women in managerial positions (SDG 5 on gender equality), with less inequality (SDG 10) and with increased social partners dialogue with institutions (SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies).

The social dimension of SDG 8 shows the way towards resilient societies, with health and education being a fundamental pillar of progress, as well as gender equality and redistribution policies.

Universal access to basic services through the implementation of social protection floors is a way to grant access to health.

Investments in education, skills training and life-long learning are also crucial if we think of measures for integrating young people in the labour market.
The promotion of equal pay for work of equal value, including active labour markets fostering women’s access to higher-paying jobs, remains a key precondition to gender equality.

Minimum wages not only help protect workers against unduly low pay but also contribute to reducing inequality.26

Finally, practice demonstrates that meaningful participation and interactions between social partners and institutions (social dialogue) bring along inclusive and transparent decision-making processes that contribute to accountability and good governance. Moreover, social dialogue, as a collective problem-solving process, delivers policies that are the fruit of consensus and work for the actors involved. This contributes to facilitating policy implementation in key socio-economic areas.28

26 International Labour Organization, Global Wage Report 2020-21 – Wages and minimum wages in the time of COVID-19, Executive Summary, 2021

27 International Trade Union Confederation, Social dialogue as a driver and governance instrument for sustainable development, 2017 and The Global Deal, Social Dialogue in the 2030 Agenda, 2020

28 International Labour Organization, The contribution of social dialogue to the 2030 Agenda - Promoting a Just Transition towards sustainable economies and societies for all, 2019 and The contribution of social dialogue to the 2030 Agenda: Formalising the informal economy, 2019
Looking at the impact of the crisis, we can highlight major trends related to SDG 8.

**Divergent recoveries**

The response and measures taken to respond to the needs of the population during the pandemic have been very uneven, with high-income countries spending heavily on their pandemic response. The ILO has estimated the “stimulus gap” between the stimulus measures in low- and lower-middle-income countries and high-income countries to be around US$982 billion. As reported in the UN World Economic Situation Prospects 2021, stimulus spending per capita averaged nearly US$10,000 in the developed countries, while it amounted to less than US$20 per capita in the least developed countries. That is, for every additional dollar per capita of stimulus that the LDCs managed to spend, the developed countries spent nearly US$580 per capita on stimulus. This results in advanced economies countries moving more quickly towards economic recovery than others.

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30 World Bank / International Monetary Fund, Development Committee, Statement by Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO at the 102nd Meeting of the Development Committee, 2020
According to IMF estimates, emerging markets and developing economies would be those with the stronger recovery in 2021-2022. However, the "projected recovery follows a severe contraction bearing adverse employment and earnings impacts on certain groups" and income inequality is likely to increase significantly because of the pandemic. Close to 95 million more people are estimated to have fallen below the threshold of extreme poverty in 2020 compared with pre-pandemic projections, reversing a long trend of global poverty reduction.

**Weakened landscape on employment**

According to the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook 2021:

- An estimated 8.8 per cent of global total working hours were lost for the whole of last year (relative to the fourth quarter of 2019), the equivalent of the hours worked in one year by 255 million full-time workers.

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32 The countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia experienced the sharpest declines. In contrast, the economies in East Asia fared relatively better than those in all other developing regions, with GDP expanding by 1 per cent in 2020. On the back of China’s quick and robust recovery, the East Asian economies are forecast to grow by 6.4 per cent in 2021. See World Economic Situation Prospects 2021 https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP_2021_Executive-Summary_E.pdf


34 Ibid.

• Global labour income, which does not include government transfers and benefits, was US$3.7 trillion (8.3 per cent) lower in 2020 than it would have been in the absence of the pandemic. For the first two quarters of 2021, this shortfall amounts to a reduction in global labour income of 5.3 per cent, or US$1.3 trillion.

• Relative to 2019, an estimated additional 108 million workers are now extremely or moderately poor, meaning that they and their family members are having to live on less than US$3.20 per day in purchasing power parity terms. Five years of progress towards the eradication of working poverty have been undone, as working poverty rates have now reverted to those of 2015.

• The impact has been more severe for women, youth, migrant workers and vulnerable groups, such as informal workers. For women, this is due to their presence in particular hard-hit sectors (such as services, manufacturing, and care) and in the informal economy. A cross-cutting issue affecting women in all countries is that the burden of childcare has disproportionately fallen on them, leading to a rise in unpaid working time. Moreover, women often work in frontline occupations, facing elevated health risks and difficult working conditions. Setbacks in the advancement of gender equality are especially problematic in those regions where gender gaps were already extensive before the crisis.

• Globally, the recovery is projected to result in the net creation of 100 million jobs in 2021 and an additional 80 million jobs in 2022. Projected employment in 2021, however, will still fall short of its pre-crisis level.

• Unemployment is projected to be high in countries at all income levels in 2022, with middle-income countries being the most affected. Indeed, the recovery will be relatively faster in high-income countries. In low- and middle-income countries, the more limited access to vaccines and greater constraints on fiscal spending will dampen the employment recovery.

This dataset includes both real and imputed data from 1991-2019, as well as projections from 2020-21. Estimates may differ from official national sources. Source: International Labour Organization, ILO modeled estimates (ilo.org/weso/data)
Growing concerns for fiscal deficits and debt sustainability are likely to push governments towards austerity, making devastating cuts in fiscal spending to reduce deficit and debt and cutting back social sector spending on health and education and public services. Austerity will inevitably weaken the speed and quality of the recovery and undermine resilience to future shocks, with dire consequences for SDG 8 and sustainable development.

Therefore, it is crucial now that policymakers prioritize long-term vision strategies and policies, such as those pointed out by the IMF: “strengthening social protection with wider eligibility for unemployment insurance to cover the self-employed and informally employed; ensuring adequate resources for health care, early childhood development programs, education, and vocational training; and investing in green infrastructure to hasten the transition to lower carbon dependence.”

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According to the numerous and significant interlinkages of SDG 8 with other goals described above, the negative impact of the crisis on SDG 8 implementation will entail a heavy challenge for the whole 2030 Agenda. The policy recommendations below are meant to offer a vision linking both urgent and long-term recovery measures, granting resilience, promoting societal well-being, and supporting governance modalities to push back power imbalances and inequalities.

**An SDG8 driven recovery and resilience requires:**

- Just and climate-friendly jobs with just transition – decoupling gdp growth from environmental degradation
- Scaling up universal social protection
- Upholding equality and fighting vulnerability
- Financing recovery and resilience
- Inclusive governance and social dialogue
JUST AND CLIMATE-FRIENDLY JOBS WITH JUST TRANSITION – DECOUPLING GDP GROWTH FROM ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The pandemic has destroyed over 250 million jobs worldwide and left 1.6 billion informal workers in desperation. We need to create 575 million jobs to reach full employment and formalise at least one billion informal jobs.” Sharan Burrow.

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work will be key for repairing a broken labour market where the despair of informal and insecure work dominates. Job creation strategies should put SDG 8 at the forefront, accompanied by measures for the formalisation of the informal economy in line with ILO Recommendation 204. They should also guarantee the application of a labour protection floor that ensures that fundamental workers’ rights are respected, an adequate minimum wage is applied, maximum limits on working time are guaranteed, and safety and health at work is upheld.

Data from the IMF shows the direct job creation potential of an additional one million US dollars of investment in a range of different infrastructure sectors. Stepping up public investment can have a significant impact on job creation and overall employment levels – especially when public investment is concentrated in labour-intensive sectors such as infrastructure and care.

Millions of jobs can be created with investments in green infrastructure, renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has estimated that renewable energy could employ more than 40 million people by 2050 and that total employment in the energy sector could reach 100 million by 2050, up from around 58 million today, if renewable energy were to be pursued to its full potential.

The transition to green and more sustainable farming practices could also lead to the creation of 200 million jobs by 2050. The agriculture sector already accounts for around one billion jobs worldwide, and around three per cent of global GDP. It is forecasted that global food production will need to be increased by 70 per cent to feed the expected world population in 2050, highlighting the potential for further growth of the sector as well as the importance of improving efficiency and productivity.

Footnotes:
38 Food and Agriculture Organization, Green Jobs for a Revitalized Food and Agriculture Sector, 2011
Governments should urgently put in place national plans for climate friendly jobs creation, with **Just Transition measures** to support workers in industrial transformation processes. Just Transition measures – negotiated with social partners, linked to both climate and technological shifts, and rooted in social protection, education, training and skills development – will guarantee that no one is left behind.

The ILO has estimated that spending an additional 3.5 per cent of GDP in the **care economy** would lead to the creation of 269 million extra jobs by 2030 (compared to 2015). ITUC analysis has also shown that if an extra two percent of GDP were invested in the health and care sector within developing economies, it would generate increases in overall employment ranging from 1.2 per cent to 3.2 per cent, depending on the country39.

**KEY COMPONENTS OF A JOB CREATION PLAN**

- **Strengthened industrial policy** to support domestic industries and public investment, especially in climate-friendly industries and sectors that directly benefit people (e.g. infrastructure development and care).
- **Direct creation of jobs**, including public sector jobs and public works programmes.
- **Promoting decent work**, through regulation, incentives and procurement practices.
- **Formalising the informal economy** through incentive and enforcement measures.
- **Investment in training and skills development** to support workers adapting to new jobs.
- **Full involvement of unions** in the development of jobs plans.

**WHAT DOES NOT BELONG IN A JOB CREATION PLAN**

1. Using low wages and weak labour standards as a mean to attract foreign direct investment.
2. Deregulation and weakening of workers’ rights, including on employment protection legislation.
3. Reduction of labour costs, in particular on wages and social security contributions.
4. Weakening of collective bargaining, including through allowing deviations from collective bargaining agreements and decentralisation of negotiations.
5. Providing **unconditional tax cuts/subsidies** for businesses that don’t require retaining/creating jobs.

Source: ITUC Forthcoming

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39 International Trade Union Confederation, *Investing in the care economy - Simulating employment effects by gender in countries in emerging economies*, 2017
Governments should strive to expand social protection systems and floors, according to ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors and Convention 102 on Social Security. Universal social protection should ensure that all people have access to basic social security guarantees.

Social protection systems have contributed to limiting the impacts of the pandemic in many countries, ensuring access to healthcare and supporting job and income security. Putting social protection at the centre of government responses to the crisis will increase resilience and act as an economic and social stabiliser to promote a stronger recovery. Social spending increases are consistently accompanied with reductions of poverty and inequality, increased employment (especially women’s employment), increased productivity, increased tax revenues stemming from higher and better-quality labour force participation, and overall higher GDP. In short, social protection must be recognised as a key factor for social and economic development and is an investment for robust and inclusive economies.

If these are feasible options for many countries, where only political will seems to be the real determinant, this is not the case for the poorest ones. The proposal of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights for the establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection is crucial to upholding the implementation of social protection floors in this respect.

Donor governments need to fulfill and exceed the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance (ODA) and for increasing ODA levels allocated to social protection (currently 0.69 per cent of bilateral ODA). Around US$78 billion would be needed annually to fund social protection floors in the world’s lowest-income countries. This amount represents a fraction of a percent of global GDP, but it amounts to around 16 per cent of the collective GDP of these countries – an unsurmountable financial burden. Global mechanisms, such as the Global Fund for Social Protection, could help catalyse such financing for low-income countries.

Particular attention needs to be paid to adopting measures to reboot labour market access and equal economic participation for women and youth. As seen above, women and youth are amongst the ones mostly hit by the crisis, as they are more exposed already to informality, undervaluation of work, occupational segregation and care demands.

For example, women make up the largest proportion of domestic workers (often migrants) at risk of losing their job.

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40 International Trade Union Confederation, New Social Contract: ITUC report makes economic case for social protection, 2021
41 Olivier de Schutter, Global fund for social protection: international solidarity in the service of poverty eradication, 2021
42 International Trade Union Confederation, A global social protection fund is possible, Campaign brief, 2020
ranging from 58.2 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 69.7 per cent in Africa, to 86 per cent in Europe and Central Asia and 88.5 per cent in the Americas. Moreover, unequal distribution of increased care demands affects women disproportionately. The bigger their losses in employment during the lockdown phase and the greater the scarcity of jobs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, the harder it will be for women’s employment to recover.

Investing in care is a priority if we are to raise women’s labour force participation and access to decent jobs. Investments in quality public care services and social protection, the promotion of equal pay for work of equal value, and the introduction of minimum living wages with stronger collective bargaining remain the preconditions to gender equality. The elimination of gender-based violence in the world of work is also key in this respect.

Legislating, monitoring and enforcing the implementation of the ILO principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” between women and men and ratifying ILO Convention 190 to eliminate violence in the workplace are the way forward. Specific attention should be given to LGBTI+ workers.

The European Union Directive on reconciliation of family and professional life of parents and careers is certainly an excellent example, together with the recent proposal of the European Commission on pay transparency to ensure that women and men in the EU get equal pay for equal work.

Investments in education, skills training and life-long learning are also crucial if we think of measures for integrating young people in the labour market. Due to changing technologies recently boosted also by the pandemic, the number of entry-level jobs posted in the USA – most
suited for workers just starting their careers – decreased by 68 per cent\textsuperscript{49}. This means that these jobs do not exist anymore (companies reducing the number of low-level positions) and that “today’s graduates are expected to arrive on the job with a range of in-demand skills they would have once developed in the early years of their career”\textsuperscript{49}. Consequently, educational paths need to be adapted to equipping young people to find a job. In general, for “workers set to remain in their roles over the next five years, nearly half will need retraining for their core skills”\textsuperscript{50}. Transformations in the labour market put heavy pressure on workers to build and adapt their skills to new realities: governments and employers have the duty to provide life-long learning paths throughout workers’ lives so that more young people can find jobs and displaced workers are protected during job transitions.

FINANCING RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE\textsuperscript{51}

Investment capacity will be central in order to bring forward job creation plans. Recovery and resilience measures must be funded by transparent debt relief, restructuring and cancellations – including middle-income countries and with the participation of private creditors\textsuperscript{52}. The G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) should be extended to successfully ease countries’ debt burdens, and larger special drawing rights (SDR) issuance will provide a much-needed debt-free liquidity to boost many countries in need\textsuperscript{53}.

Structural reforms, such as domestic resource mobilisation through progressive taxation, will be crucial to grant resilience, together with ending tax evasion and illicit financial flows. For the latter, international cooperation on tax matters will be crucial, including a minimum tax floor for all corporations, a billionaires’ or wealth tax, and a financial transactions tax.

The uneven capacity of countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of increased international solidarity through strengthened ODA. With current liquidity injections in the developed world, ODA can and should be increased to help developing countries in restoring public goods (such as social protection and capacity building for taxation system implementation). We need to scale up and meet the ODA 0.7 per cent commitment, with 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for least-developed countries.

Increased concessional finance will need to do the heavy lifting for the recovery and resilience needs ahead: multilateral, regional and national development.

\textsuperscript{48} World Economic Forum, Is the entry-level job going extinct?, 2021

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Saadia Zahidi, The Jobs of Tomorrow, IMF Blog, 2021

\textsuperscript{51} International Trade Union Confederation, Trade unions set out demands for UN Financing for Development Forum, 2021

\textsuperscript{52} Trade unions support the recommendation of the UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights to incorporate human rights obligations into frameworks for debt sustainability analysis. See the ITUC’s positions on L20/G20 Italy 2021 and the Note by the UN Secretary General at the General Assembly of 5th August 2016.

\textsuperscript{53} International Trade Union Confederation, Responding to urgent global needs: IMF Special Drawing Rights, 2020
banks and other development finance institutions have an important role to play in offering long-term and counter-cyclical financing to developing countries. They should better support national country needs in strategic sectors and systematically integrate employment into results measurement frameworks, measuring the quality and quantity of job creation.

Central banks should be more developmental in the way they create and guide capital, integrating other objectives, including employment and climate, in their frameworks and mandates.

To secure the rights-based approach, private sector actors and private finance should be in alignment with SDG 8 so that investments can ensure the application of ILO standards and be guided by responsible business-conduct principles and due diligence, integrating quality of employment and Just Transition in their mandates and operations.

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Trade unions welcome the UN Secretary-General’s call for a new model for global governance based on a reinvigorated and inclusive multilateralism.

As seen above, without international cooperation the world would have been in a much worse position. However, the recovery is still uneven and unbalanced, and this is not compatible with the sustainability model that the 2030 Agenda wants to promote.

Ensuring access to vaccines is a moral imperative and the first step for economic recovery, considering the devastating consequences of the pandemic, especially in developing countries. Trade unions call for universal access to free testing, treatment, and vaccines; the removal of intellectual property barriers; and a massive scaling up of production of vaccines, tests and treatments in developing countries in particular.

There is still a significant lack of comparable data among countries for several dimensions of the SDGs. This includes SDG 8, especially regarding the indicators on informal economy, social protection, occupational health and safety, and child labour, amongst others. There is also a need to improve indicators to better describe inequalities.

Producing and measuring data is a matter of political choice that directly affects global policy responses and governance. Governments and international institutions need to do more in terms of concrete efforts to improve the availability and the comparability of statistical data (especially for less-developed countries) in order to ensure more comprehensive, robust and precise analyses of progress made.

A crucial multistakeholder partnership for a sustainable recovery from the pandemic is the one between workers’ and employers’ organisations with their
governments through social dialogue and tripartism. More sustainable responses to the crisis are delivered when social partners are engaged\textsuperscript{54}. Social dialogue and industrial relations are key in crafting equitable policies and grant greater levels of transparency and increase trust in institutions (accountability).

This is true not only within countries, but also across nations. We need a new model of global governance to redress the current imbalance of power and uneven distribution of wealth at international level.

A truly inclusive multilateral system where social partners are on board and have a say will make the difference and pave the way to global resilience.

\textsuperscript{54} International Trade Union Confederation, SDGs for recovery and resilience - Case studies: Argentina, Chile and Colombia, 2021
ARGENTINA

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the German government introduced measures designed to preserve jobs, compensate wage losses, and support small and medium-sized companies and the self-employed, improvements in remuneration to healthcare, and increase support to wage/income protection. Trade unions call on the government to provide universal social protection and free access to healthcare, and increase support to wage/income protection. The support measures put in place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic by the government include: paid sick leave, partial wage/income protection, and additional unemployment benefits. Trade unions report that no consultations were organised with them on the implementation of the strategy and Agenda 2030 in their respective policy fields.

CHAD

Trade unions have called on the government of Chad to address the challenges posed by the pandemic by introducing a paid sick leave from day one, income and wage protection, unemployment benefits, universal social protection and access to healthcare, including vaccination of the population against COVID-19. In addition, the government has created the Economic and Social Council of Chad and the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policy (CNCPS) to ensure that the social and labour needs resulting from the crisis are met. These councils were opened to ensure that the social and labour needs resulting from the crisis were met.

COLOMBIA

The Colombian government is implementing the 2030 Agenda through its National Development Plan (NDP) and has already achieved results in some areas, such as the eradication of extreme poverty. However, the representation of trade unions in these discussions lead ministry. However, the representation of trade unions in these discussions very rarely gets translated into actions, policies and projects that can effectively lead to workers’ demands not being taken on board by the government. The SDGs by implementing the NDP and managing the official development cooperation.

GERMANY

The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and the Federal Ministry for Sustainable Development also play a key role in monitoring the implementation of the strategy and Agenda 2030 in their respective policy fields. The lead ministry. However, the representation of trade unions in these discussions very rarely gets translated into actions, policies and projects that can effectively lead to workers’ demands not being taken on board by the government. The SDGs by implementing the NDP and managing the official development cooperation.

INDONESIA

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MEXICO

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NAMIBIA

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NORWAY

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PAKISTAN

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SPAIN

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SWEDEN

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THAILAND

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ZIMBABWE

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**DEMAND A NEW**

minimum wages as well as making it easier to hire and fire workers, falling short of ILO standards and failing to sustain existing workplaces or improving the quality of

Omnibus Law on Job Creation passed in late 2020 introduces labour market flexibility by allowing hourly pay, decreasing severance pay, liberalising flexible work, lowering export-import simplification, support to SMEs, physical and social distancing policy, and compensation.

pandemic and the related crisis persist.

out dividends or firing workers), but to no avail so far. They have also asked that the financial situation of municipalities and local authorities be improved in order to promote

Trade unions call on the Swedish government to ensure that companies and workers in close contact industries are provided with support and have appropriate working

RESILIENCE

TRADE UNIONS

INDONESIA

www.ituc-csi.org/development-cooperation

While trade unions are usually invited to participate in consultations, their input is

FOCUS ON THE SDG s

www.ituc-csi.org/2030Agenda

#HLPF2021

other support to those facing economic hardship and struggling to buy food; the programme covered 12 million families. In addition, provinces launched their own programs,

INFORMAL ECONOMY

COVID-19:

WORKERS

NORWAY

With regards to measures designed to support the population in view of the economic impact of the pandemic, the National Housing Authority, a state enterprise responsible

PAKISTAN

The Pakistani government has adopted the SDGs as its own national development

SPAIN

National Planning Commission in the office of the president.

SWEDEN

At the National and regional levels, PWF has launched a special campaign for

THAILAND

For the provision of accommodation to working class people, decreased the rent. Additionally, the Government Saving Bank suspended debt payments. While universal

ZIMBABWE

A TRADE UNION

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare is in charge of coordinating

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For the temporary suspension of workers (Expedientes Temporales de Regulación de Empleo - ERTE), adopted to safeguard jobs and cover all affected workers; the automatic

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Although for the first time the NDS1 has a clear recognition of the role of decent

A TRADE UNION

The National Planning Commission in the country’s development plan mainstreams the SDGs.

A TRADE UNION

For larger companies. Support for family microenterprises and freelance workers has come in the shape of a programme facilitating the provision of loans; however, access to

A TRADE UNION

Income (IMV) as well as government measures to restore the balance in collective bargaining, mainly through the repeal of the labour reforms.

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The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare is in charge of coordinating

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As a VNR validation workshop.

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through performance evaluation indicators within the national planning system.

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The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare is in charge of coordinating

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through the National SDG Coordination Team and its task force for the economy,

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To this end, trade unions have presented the government with

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From globalisation.

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A TRADE UNION
With the support of the European Union

#Timefor8 is a campaign of the International Trade Union Confederation