

Workers Count: A Trade Union Perspective on Means of Implementation, Accountability and Global Governance

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Means of Implementation

The Sustainable Development Agenda can only bring about the transformational shift envisioned if it is supported by a robust Framework for implementation, monitoring and review that is in accordance with a human rights based approach to development.

Addressing deepened inequality within and between countries and the unequal distribution of income is key; international economic and financial policies have to be set against an overall objective of **delivering social justice and decent livelihoods for all**.

Fair and progressive taxation is a priority. Taxes must be paid where profits and value added are generated. This includes addressing tax evasion and avoidance practices and introducing global taxation on short term transactions. Self-reporting and self-assessment by financial institutions should be replaced by country by country reporting. All countries should be able to participate at an equal footing in international cooperation on tax, with the aim of working towards an international UN tax convention.

Partnerships with the private sector must follow standards and regulations defined by the public sector; the responsibility for planning, regulating and monitoring any partnership lies with the state.

International trade and investment treaties and agreements must guarantee national labour laws and internationally recognised core labour standards. The **respect and application of ILO core labour standards** is a minimum for workers everywhere; governments need to protect freedom of association and reinforce social dialogue structures, with a view to expanding collective bargaining, linking wages to productivity and increasing minimum wages. Wage-led economic growth supports aggregate demand, creates new jobs and builds stronger and more resilient economies.

Governments must ensure strong and functioning labour market policies and institutions. These include appropriately designed **wage policies, including minimum wages; collective bargaining; labour inspection; strong employment services; unemployment benefits with strong links to social protection programs**; targeted measures to increase labour market participation of women and under-represented groups; as well as, measures to help low-income households to escape poverty and access freely chosen employment.

Fulfilling the SDGs objective of decent work for all requires comprehensive national employment policy frameworks, developed through tripartite consultations and built upon policy coherence for development. Pro-employment macroeconomic policies must be supported by trade, industrial, tax, infrastructure and sectoral policies as well as significant investments in quality education, training and lifelong learning and the provision of quality public services.

All countries should be able to provide income security for all and universal access to essential public goods and services, like healthcare, education, housing, and water and sanitation, through nationally defined and designed social protection floors.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly governments will need to take extensive measures to ensure the adherence to and respect for ILOs core labour standards. This is key in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of sustainable development policies, and governments will need to take measures to enhance social dialogue and participation of the social partners.

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Standards based accountability

Successful implementation of the SDGs builds on **policy coherence with standards based commitments in areas of human rights, and labour as well as environmental standards**. It should build on existing reporting mechanisms at international level, such as the Economic and Social Council's annual voluntary ministerial review process, and the Universal Periodic review of the Human Rights Council.

In this light, the social dialogue, bringing together the social partners, employers and workers organizations, is an excellent example of how to ensure ownership of policy processes at the national level and should inform and actually set an example of how the review processes are carried out. However, effective social dialogue requires respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining, independent unions and employer's organizations, and the institutional capacity of governments to support the process.

The ILO supervisory mechanism shows how accountability mechanisms can work at global level through to the national level. It supports member states in their implementation of the conventions in law and practice. The system includes a **permanent multi-stakeholder monitoring function that requires regular reporting** (a tripartite structure with recognized stakeholders) but also offers technical support so as to improve the implementation. Importantly, there is also a procedure of 'complaints' which ensures that member states are accountable to the conventions they ratify.

The ILO supervisory mechanism is a unique international mechanism of accountability that should inform the global accountability mechanism and national review systems of the international development agenda. However, a holistic approach defining the integration of development and human rights in one normative and binding instrument seems to be by far the best option.

Global Governance and the Right to Development

The post 2015 Global Governance should reaffirm the spirit of the 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development, recognising that states are accountable for a wider range of external policies, like trade, debt, and finance in particular, that could undermine the sustainable development agenda beyond their borders. This requires national-level regulation that prevents the extraterritorial infringement of human rights by business/private sector.

Given the shift in the global development settings, **the issue of shared responsibility should not be limited to state entities only but should pertain to 'non-state actors' as well**, such as private business and multilateral organisations.

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) must be built upon and adhere to the same principles that underpin the Sustainable Development Agenda and the UN Declaration, and must be based on fundamental principles, such as: "mutual accountability", "democratic ownership", and "inclusive partnerships". The success of a governance mechanism will depend on the capacity of the process, at all levels, to convene different actors, on equal ground to contribute in a genuine and fully participatory manner to the review and implementation of the SDGs.

For more information about the **positions of the Workers and Trade Unions Major Group**, please see: http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/SD2015_Position_Paper_Workers&TradeUnions.pdf

To read the full **Trade Union position paper on Means of Implementation, Accountability and Global Governance**, visit: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/post-2015-trade-union-perspective?lang=en>