

“ILO is more than a UN agency: it is an economic actor”

Panel of experts discuss the Future of Work Report at top DC think tank

The Director of the ILO Office for the United States, Kevin Cassidy, and the Ford Foundation Director on the Future of Work, John Irons, join a panel in discussing the challenges ahead for the future of work and the importance of data and consensus in developing policies and putting them into action.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) hosted a report launch on the ILO’s Global Commission on the Future of Work: Work for a Brighter Future on Tuesday, February 12, 2019 in Washington, DC.

Opening the session as a key speaker, Director Kevin Cassidy presented an overview of the Future of Work Report to an audience of a full room of more than 50 researchers, policy consultants, and civil society organization members. Following the overview, Mr. Cassidy joins Federica Saliola, Chief Economist at the World Bank, and John Irons, Director of the Future of Work at the Ford Foundation, as CSIS Senior Adviser and former Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne led as moderator.

<https://youtu.be/1icqhWWaUQY>

Focus on the People

“Literature around the future of work are very negative,” observed Saliola about the fear-mongering news and op-ed angles about automation and the future of work. She describes that publicly accessed literature analysing the future of work tends to err on “apocalyptic”. These misconceptions about technology and the future of work distract the public from focusing on people and their needs in supporting their re-skilling and social protection.

“We need to treat workers as people, not commodities,” added Irons, regarding the workers being viewed as numbers or human capital. He also stresses that the need to “work together to ensure that [the Report’s] ideas don’t just live in the report [but that] they’re translated into lives of workers everywhere”.

Global Governance on Technology

“At more point than ever, it’s not just [letting] technology happen to us, but how do we guide the path to technology in the future?” underlined Irons. Technology has been constantly at the forefront of discussions in the future of work but the increasing pace of technology presents an opportunity for people to pursue lifelong learning and for businesses to identify skills needed in changing jobs and how to incorporate re-skilling their workers by human investment.

Regarding global governance on technology, audience members shared skepticism on technology platforms and consensus of national actors. A Nepali student rose concern over

trusting different platforms present in her home country and asked the panel on challenges in tech-based solutions.

“[The Future of Work Report] calls for human command of data,” emphasized Mr. Cassidy, echoing Irons in guiding technology policy.

Building Consensus and Putting Recommendations into Action

To put forward national strategies and work towards global governance, Mr. Cassidy stressed the need for dialogue for all parties involved through multistakeholder engagement, which includes not only ILO’s traditional tripartism of workers, employers, and government but also civil society organizations.

“The ILO is more than a UN agency: it is an economic actor,” explained Mr. Cassidy on the role of the ILO. “The ILO’s work addresses the nexus between social and economic concerns.” With knowledge-sharing being one of ILO’s many roles, Mr. Cassidy highlighted the significance of investing in data and the advantages of data-collecting in both developed and developing countries.

He says, “Analysis has to be driven by data. Data and data quality are always a concern, so investment in methodology, terminology and accuracy of data is critically important.” With data-driven analysis, countries can better adapt recommendations and transform them into policies for action.



This event is made possible through the support of ILO and CSIS. Watch the recording of the event [here](#).