

► Foreword

Integrating trade and decent work is at once timely and timeless.

We live in a moment of stark societal inequality, and a hardening discontent with the direction of the global economy. Work that makes the case for social justice as the basis of global peace could hardly be more timely.

This research volume makes that case in a careful, rigorous manner that draws on the need to rebalance the global economy. It offers a thoughtful overview of the contemporary landscape, with perceptive examples drawn from various parts of the globe. The editors understand their responsibility to look beyond the growing number of theories cataloguing mechanisms for trade and labour standards, explaining an increasingly dense environment of regulatory experimentation. The volume's singular contribution is to foreground the ways in which monitoring, cooperation and dispute settlement mechanisms actually engage with the interface of trade and decent work – and, in the process, help to recentre social justice.

Contributions to this edited collection centre on the purposes of global trade. The collection closely aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which include economic growth and decent work. The book's purposive approach stretches contemporary thinking across disciplinary boundaries – from economics to law, and from corporate social responsibility to gender studies. Contributors innovate with approaches that combine trade policy and decent work. By enabling women's access to decent work in formal employment, for example, we learn that trade policy can help to transform societies.

The kinds of initiatives foregrounded in *Integrating trade and decent work* do not arise spontaneously. They are cultivated over time, with a range of prudently honed actions by tripartite-plus actors that include, but extend beyond, governments and employers' and workers' organizations, and that are attentive to policy coherence. For example, researchers invite us to shift our conventional analytical lenses just enough to recognize that if we are concerned to address environmental sustainability, notably in agriculture, we must pay close attention to the labour, livelihood and food security issues faced by farmers and farmworkers themselves.

The measures in this volume are also cultivated across space. The contributors appreciate that to relegate distributive justice exclusively to the national level is to shackle the very initiatives that are necessary to achieve sustainable

development goals. Rather, *Integrating trade for decent work* explains that the purposes of trade must also be creatively pursued, transnationally.

It is especially important to note that this volume emerges out of century-long initiatives from the International Labour Organization (ILO), showcasing the research that the Organization has repeatedly demonstrated it can not only convene but also co-create. The volume canvasses a range of themes on which the ILO has long shown leadership, through its 1919 and 1944 constitutional self-understanding; through its influence on the 1948 Havana Charter, which would have established a relationship between the proposed International Trade Organization and the ILO; through groundbreaking research undertaken alongside the World Trade Organization; and most recently through the space it holds open to convene research and dialogue, pragmatically and constructively offering policy options on pressing global concerns including global supply chains. As ILO Director-General David Morse affirmed upon accepting the Organization's 1949 Nobel Peace Prize, "the ILO has provided the nations of the world with a meeting ground, an instrument for cooperation and for dialogue among very different interests". This volume is an example of the ILO assuming that distinct role.

I fully expect that *Integrating trade and decent work* and the ongoing work of the ILO Research Department will catalyse sustained social dialogue about how to make trade fair and foster social justice. Decent work is not simply an idealistic ambition; in our current, far too often polarized world, the ILO's noble vision is as urgent and compelling now as it was in 1919. Its research role is an excellent example of how the Organization has "patiently, undramatically, but not unsuccessfully, worked to build an infrastructure of peace". In that sense, this work is timeless.

Adelle Blackett

Professor of Law and Canada Research Chair in Transnational Labour Law,
McGill University