

► Foreword

In June 2023 the “World of Work Summit: Social Justice for All” event during the ILO’s annual International Labour Conference served as a platform for the leaders from multilateral organizations involved in trade and human rights, as well as governments and representatives of workers and employers, to reflect on the crucial social aspects of trade. The discussion underscored that international trade has undoubtedly brought about significant advancements in the world, fostering prosperity and interconnectedness. It also emphasized that concerted efforts must be made to ensure that workers and firms that have not yet reaped the benefits of trade have their fair share of them in the future.

The question is not whether countries should participate in international trade, but rather how they should do so in a way that more fully takes account of both the quantity and quality of the jobs being generated. This volume, the first of a two-volume set entitled *Integrating trade and decent work*, offers a framework for analysing and taking action to address this challenge in a more rigorous and structured way. It utilizes a specific set of decent work indicators tailored to the unique circumstances of each country to conduct comprehensive assessments of the effects of trade on the labour market at the macro, sectoral and micro levels. Such analysis can better inform policies to promote trade while enhancing the well-being of workers.

The volume also explores the role of labour market institutions and the policies necessary to sustain them. These include strengthening legislative and institutional frameworks to support decent work; providing adequate assistance for workers who are affected; creating an enabling environment for firms; and fortifying the domestic institutions responsible for implementation, particularly in the context of specific labour market needs linked to informality and skills. Ultimately, supporting meaningful tripartite dialogue between governments and the social partners – workers’ and employers’ representatives – is crucial if we are to foster a sustainable pathway for empowering workers and improving the competitiveness of enterprises. By undertaking these concrete actions, we can pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous society.

Finally, the volume highlights the important ways in which the ILO has offered support to promote decent work within the context of international trade. Established over a century ago, the Organization has been dedicated to fostering fair and equitable working conditions within and across borders. The principle embedded in the preamble to the ILO Constitution – that

neglect of humane labour conditions by any nation poses a formidable barrier for other nations aspiring to enhance the welfare of their own citizens – remains as relevant today as ever.

This volume is part of a larger body of work which the ILO is undertaking to carry forward the “human-centred approach” framed by its Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019). Representing the interests of its 187 Member States, including their social partners, the ILO has a crucial role to play in global discussions concerning trade and labour. We hope this volume helps to strengthen the foundations of policy dialogue, development and coherence within and between nations and international organizations on this crucial topic.

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