



International
Labour
Organization

ECOSOC Coordination Segment
**Session on “People-centered and inclusive recovery from the pandemic,
including through strengthening social protection”**

Mr. Guy Ryder, Director General, ILO

New York I03 February 2022, 10:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., EST

- **Lessons Learnt from the COVID-response**

Globally, the labour market suffered unprecedented losses in working hours in 2020 and 2021 relative to the pre-pandemic level – the equivalent of 258 million and 125 million full-time jobs, respectively. Job recovery has been uneven, with much faster recovery in advanced economies than developing countries and uneven progress within countries, leaving already disadvantaged and hard-hit groups (women, youth, informal workers) further behind.

Many low- and middle-income economies in particular are struggling to get back to pre-pandemic levels of employment and job quality. Insufficient access to vaccines is putting pressure on their healthcare systems, while tight fiscal space is limiting the ability of governments to use stimulus measures to support their labour markets.

These deepened inequalities impede economic and social recovery, the prospects for which remain weak and uncertain in 2022 and beyond. In 2022, we project that working hours will stay 2 per cent below that the pre-pandemic level, which is equivalent to 52 million full-time jobs.

The eventual outcome will be strongly influenced by policy choices and actions. Our experience to date confirms that achieving an inclusive, job-rich recovery requires placing decent jobs at the centre of recovery efforts with strong linkages to social protection and increased investment in areas having particular potential for job creation (e.g., green, digital, and care economies).

There is a high risk that without concerted international support, many developing countries will continue to face significant challenges in implementing policies for decent job creation and transformative and inclusive economic growth.

A clear bright spot in the pandemic has been the crucial role that social protection has played in an unprecedented policy response worldwide.

Countries that already had strong social protection systems were able to use them to guarantee access to healthcare, ensure income security and protect jobs.

However, countries without such strong systems had to adopt measures quickly, but often lacked the administration and resources needed to ensure a speedy and broad roll-out and therefore an adequate protective response.

And, while these extra measures have been incredibly valuable, the crisis revealed large pre-existing gaps in the coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness of social protection.

It illuminated the precarious plight of 4.1 billion people who have no social protection at all. It also exposed especially troublesome weak spots in provision such as limited unemployment or sickness benefits.

COVID-19 has been a terrible crisis, but it has also given us a unique policy window to pursue a quite different path.

By building universal social protection systems we can take the 'high road' to a human-centred recovery.

As countries fight to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, the world is facing unprecedented environmental challenges related to climate change, pollution, and plummeting biodiversity. No less than 1.2 billion jobs, or 40 per cent of the global workforce, depend on healthy ecosystems and a stable environment. The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting low-income countries, and within them, the most disadvantaged and marginalized social groups that have contributed least to the climate crisis and that often have the least means at their disposal to adapt.

The COVID-19 response and the response to the climate crisis cannot be disconnected, nor can they be sequenced. There is an imperative to act concomitantly on both, and to drive a strong, coordinated, and sustainable recovery.

Compelling evidence exists that the ecological transition can be a positive narrative, with job net creation and the advancement of social justice. Some 100 million new jobs are possible through a transition towards low-carbon and circular economies by 2030. However, 80 million jobs could be lost across the world. Consequently, it is essential to carefully manage the transition to sustainability, fully mindful of the scale and difficulty of the structural transformations required.

To that effect, a just transition – one that maximises economic and social gains from climate action, while minimizing risks of social disruption – is indispensable for ambitious and integrated actions on employment, social protection, and climate change.

- **Progress on the Global Accelerator**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented loss of jobs and livelihoods, exacerbated income insecurity around the world, particularly for the more than half of the global population without any access to social protection, especially those working in the informal economy.

The UN Secretary General's call for a ***Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions***, announced in September 2021, aims to increase the level and coordination of the multilateral system's efforts to help countries create 400 million decent jobs, including in the green, digital and care economies, and to extend social protection coverage to the 4 billion people currently excluded, accelerating progress towards a carbon-neutral economy.

The Accelerator includes three mutually reinforcing pillars. Pillar 1 supports the development of **integrated national employment and social protection strategies** that accelerate a fully inclusive, human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and a just transition. Pillar 2 addresses the challenge of resource mobilization, complementing **domestic fiscal efforts with international financial support**, including from international financial institutions. As effective action under pillars 1 and 2 is contingent on stakeholder commitment to a common roadmap, Pillar 3 aims to **enhance multilateral cooperation**, including by establishing a high-ambition coalition of countries.

At the initial stage, the Accelerator will be implemented in a selected number of countries (pathfinders) which have considerable potential to amplify investments in jobs and social protection and have expressed a commitment to do so. The Accelerator's **implementation strategy** will be adapted to each country's specific context and circumstances, including those in fragile and post-conflict settings, and through strong system-wide country-level coordination. The ILO will work closely with the UN system and we appreciate the strong support already expressed by many of our UN partners.

For the Accelerator to succeed, engagement of Member States, international financial institutions, the social partners, civil society and the private sector will be critical to define a **common roadmap** and institutional mechanisms for enhanced cooperation and financing in pathfinder countries.

Finally, I would like to add that the ILO is convening a **Global Forum** on 22-24 February to develop concrete proposals for a **multilateralism** that is more networked, inclusive, and effective, in pursuit of a human-centred recovery, has as one of its aims to examine how to generate the **investments and resources** required to meet the Secretary-General's ambition of creating at least 400 million new jobs, primarily in the green and care economies; extending social protection floors to the 50 per cent of people who are currently excluded; and scaling up climate action for jobs so as to accelerate progress towards a carbon-neutral global economy. I welcome you to connect to the virtual meeting.

Thank you.