

ILO High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth”

▶ Summary Note

29-30 Nov 2022 jointly organized by the Employment Policy, job creation and livelihoods Department (EMPLOYMENT) and the Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE)

“The world needs to move beyond platitudes about young people. We need meaningful opportunities for youth engagement in government systems, in the democratic process, peacebuilding and peace organisations”.

- Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

Due to the magnitude of the youth employment challenge and the heterogenous aspect of youth, youth employment policies cannot continue being developed without the participation of youth. Youth need to be part of the discussions in the context of a new social contract. Youth is a period in everyone's life when it is crucial to access guidance and appropriate structures and institutions to participate in society. If such guidance and structures are not accessible, the short- and long-term consequences are negative, not only for the disconnected youth, but for society as a whole.

The High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth” provided a much-needed platform for governments, social partners and youth from over 20 countries to share their experiences and together highlight solutions for making social dialogue more youth-inclusive and more youth-sensitive, as essential ingredients for devising sound youth employment outcomes.

Importantly, this ILO meeting was unique to the extent it featured youth representation alongside the ILO’s tripartite constituents – namely high-level representatives from 10 governments, and 10 employers’ and 10 workers’ organizations as well as ITUC, IOE and some inputs from international organizations.

The meeting commenced with a video message by the **ILO Director-General Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo**, who highlighted the key role social dialogue can and should play in building consensus and shaping effective labour market policies, through the inclusion of young people. In their opening statements, the directors of the organising departments Ms Vera Paquette Perdigao (GOVERNANCE) and Mr Sagheon Lee (EMPLOYMENT), draw

attention to the grim situation of young people in the labour market. Concerns were raised about the long-term structural damages if the youth are excluded from policymaking on issues that directly affect them, and hence, the pressing need for youth-inclusive and youth-sensitive social dialogue to avoid a lost generation.

This event was an opportunity to share the **findings of the ILO research report** entitled “Social dialogue with and for youth”. According to the report, while youth participation and engagement varied across countries, there is a discernible youth disconnect from policymaking and social dialogue processes. The pandemic had only worsened this situation. Hence, there is a pressing need for a recalibration of the relationship between youth and social dialogue actors and institutions.

Day one’s objective was to perform a **“reality check”**. Panels featured debates between social partners, governments and youth focusing on the various challenges – but also opportunities – in terms of achieving a youth-inclusive and youth-sensitive social dialogue within their own ranks and between them. Among other things panellists highlighted:

- The lack of youth participation in policy making: Youth voices are often missing from policy making and tripartite committees while social partners are not always equipped to reflect the interests of the youth.
- High levels of unemployment and lack of sufficient employment opportunities for young people in the formal economy and their overrepresentation in the informal economy. There are skill mismatches, persistent weakness in business ecosystems with overall high levels of vulnerability among the youth. For instance, in spite of the many government interventions aimed at business continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic, rarely these initiatives benefitted youth.
- The higher unemployment rates among the highly educated youth: Today, the youth prefer university education over skills acquisition and vocational training, pointing to a general lack of awareness when it comes to understating the skills needed for young people to access the labour market.
- Specific challenges faced by post-conflict countries where young people are or are running the risk to slip below the poverty line: For example, while Cambodia has the largest youth and adolescent population among ASEAN countries, more than 60 per cent of the employed workforce is self-employed with young people suffering from a lack of adequate and formal employment opportunities.

Day one provided a space for government representatives, **including ministers**, and workers’, employers’, and youth representatives to highlight **good practices** such as:

- Portugal's active social dialogue with and for youth to devise innovative initiatives that address youth needs, such as free kindergarten services for working mothers', financial support to companies that formally employ young people and an upskilling programme that brings together learning institutions, public employment services and the youth.
- Paraguay's experience in terms of shaping the National Employment Plan with a focus on youth, through tripartite consensus.
- Senegal's national youth council which promotes synergies in the context of exponential demographic growth, and a Presidential council for youth employment which promotes recruitment of youth in different sectors, and community projects and labour-intensive public projects that benefit youth.
- Ghana's recent establishment of a National Service Scheme which allows new graduates to gain their first job experience.
- Colombia's increased opportunities for greater participation of youth in policy making. As of now, half of the elected representatives in municipal councils are young participants.
- Australia's initiatives to improve youth participation in policy making, such as the Office for the youth, youth steering committees and youth advisory groups, and a youth affairs coalition.

The rich panel discussions on the day one of the high-level meeting steered our way on Day 2 towards identifying **solutions and a way forward** for effective youth-inclusive social dialogue.

On **youth-inclusive social dialogue** to better reflect the needs and views of the young:

- There was a call to involve youth in the social dialogue amidst successive economic crises, rising inflation, debt and potential job losses.
- It was emphasised that instead of having a fourth constituent representing youth, it is crucial to integrate youth in tripartite structures and bring young people to negotiations and discussions.
- Moreover, social dialogue needs to be much more grounded, realistic and naturally aligned to real youth needs.
- It was also recognised that the youth voices need to be present in the multilateral system and young workers should have a seat at the policy making table.
- Multilateral institutions need to factor in the impact of globalization on youth engagement, employment or the lack thereof, and the governments should be using the multilateral structures better.
- There is a need for a profound transformation in the productive system and it is important to believe in the potential of 73 million unemployed youth. The youth

component is also very important for solutions on digital, green and just transition.

- There is a need to overcome persistent precariousness among young workers dealing with informality and no social protection. Overall, the rights of the youth need to be respected and freedom of association should be maintained.
- It is important to ensure a change in mindsets of older generations participating in social dialogue and mentorship programmes within social dialogue forums.
- Some suggested effective engagement models included youth engagement through sports, cultural and community activities, promotion of youth role models for them to emulate and get out of despondencies,

On **youth-sensitive social dialogue** for better youth employment outcomes:

- There is a need for allocating adequate resources to skills development, employment funds for youth and women, targeted labour market policies for youth, flexible systems of lifelong learning, and looking at youth employment and productivity development.
- Youth is a unique and diverse group and thus no one size fits all approach will work, an integrated approach to decent work for youth development is therefore needed (such as the Portuguese Youth Guarantees).
- Youth sensitive programmes can include job-based upskilling, apprenticeships and internships, start-up incubation facilities, youth entrepreneurship circles, targeted skill development, digital freelancing jobs, vocational training, work oriented mentorship and career guidance initiatives.
- Recognising the heterogenous character of youth in a country is important in order to target youth with the right policies and programmes.

Workers' representatives highlighted the need for the voice of young workers to be heard when developing employment policies – not just youth employment policy, but more broadly employment policies. This needs to be done within multilateral frameworks, but also at the country and local (territorial) levels, leveraging and further strengthening existing tripartite frameworks of dialogue and collaboration. Workers shared that the goals and aspirations of young workers with regards to employment policy do not vary greatly from country to country and region to region and that is why young workers have been calling for a new social contract. They suggested initiatives like ensuring their rights like freedom of association, social protection and allowing them to find decent work that is both fulfilling uses their skills, and push towards equality for all – that can smoothen the process for young workers to be included in social dialogue. They stressed that work must be recognised as work for the young people – not training

or volunteerism. They mentioned how important is to have the youth at the main table, not just a side table, in order to engage youth in social dialogue. They also spoke about the youth need to be prepared for the social dialogue process as well and that preparation should also be looked into. They also reminded us that a young person is not young forever, so the work to ensure youth in social dialogue can never cease.

Employers' representatives stated that while there is no need to add a fourth constituent representing youth in social dialogue, existing tripartite structures should facilitate access of young people to social dialogue. Social dialogue needs to be more responsive to the new realities in the world of work and much closer to young people, as they closely relate to these new realities. Social dialogue for youth needs to shape better policies, such as in the areas of skills anticipation and enhancement, educational policies, shifting to green economy and finding green solutions. Improving the youth's access to technology can play a crucial role in bringing social dialogue closer to those issues that young people face. They also argued in favour of improved commitment on behalf of employers' organizations when it comes to dealing with youth and youth-related issues.

Youth representatives put forward their expectations, including:

- developing and strengthening learning rights,
- incentivising companies to train and hire,
- including youth entrepreneurship as part of education and training,
- addressing skills mismatch in a way that benefits the youth and not just the industry,
- free online and offline skill training - jointly designed by industries and educational institutions
- paid internships,
- a legal framework guaranteeing and regulating apprenticeships,
- better social insurance,
- youth in designing, implementing and policy in all levels of governance,
- youth better represented in unions for better policymaking,
- facilitate youth-to-youth dialogue,
- special protection and training for the marginalised, endangered and vulnerable groups,
- digital social dialogue - involve youth through digital mediums and social media
- global community leveraging technology to share best practices

To conclude, The ILO's report has highlighted a trend of decline in youth's trust in institutions and a "youth disconnect" from democratic institutions –including a disconnect from social dialogue- aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is part of a larger process of youth "civic disengagement". If left unaddressed, the risk of destabilized political and economic systems increases substantially.

The two-day meeting debates have highlighted some key building blocks for achieving an enabling environment for Social Dialogue With and For Youth. These include:

- Political will to better connect with young people, listen to the voices of Youth, but also translate these "voices" into concrete policies responding to their needs and goals.
- Strengthen the mandates of social dialogue institutions in terms of dealing with Youth-related matters (above all YE, educational policies, skills anticipation, green skills, just transition) and in terms of involving Youth in SD bodies systematically.
- Expand cooperation and partnerships between social partners and youth movements and networks
- Establish strong youth structures, such as "youth committees" "Youth advisory boards" "Youth networks"; and enable these structures to connect with formal social dialogue venues.
- At the UN/multilateral level provide opportunities for meaningful participation of Youth at the international level.

The debates of this 2-day meeting provided a wealth of information which will help the ILO to:

- Finetune the ILO research report and enrich it with good practices highlighted in the meeting and
- Help the ILO design and roll-out ILO activities to regions and countries on promoting "Youth-sensitive" and "Youth-inclusive" social dialogue.

Annexure: List of Participants

▶ Government Representatives

- **Mr Francisco Rivera**, Jefe Departamento Dialogo Social, Subsecretaria del Trabajo - Chile
- **Mr Eliel Hasson**, Agregado Laboral en la Misión de Chile ante los organismos de Ginebra - Chile
- **Ms Jeannette Jara**, Ministra del Trabajo y Previsión Social de Chile - Chile
- **Ms Ana Mendes Godinho**, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security - Portugal
- **Ms Carla Bacigalupo Planás**, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security - Paraguay
- **Mr Moustafa Bayram**, Minister of Labour, Lebanon
- **Ms Karim Cissé**, Directeur général du travail et de la sécurité sociale - Senegal
- **Ms Brenda Tambatamba**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour - Zambia
- **Mr M. Younes Sekkouri**, Ministre de l'Inclusion Économique, de la Petite Entreprise, de l'Emploi et des Compétences - Morocco
- **Mr Ramon Saura III**, Mediator- Arbitrer, Department of Labour and Employment, Bureau of Labor Relations – Philippines

▶ Workers' Representatives

- **Ms Anna Fendley**, Director of Regulatory and State Policy/Youth Committee United Steelworkers, AFLCIO/ITUC - USA
- **Mr Saad Muhammad**, Deputy General Secretary, Pakistan Workers Federation - Pakistan
- **Mr Aqeel Abdulla**, Assistant Secretary-General, Working Youth, General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) - Bahrain
- **Ms Madeline Northam**, Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) - Australia
- **Ms Isabelle Gagel**, International Representative of the DGB Youth, DGB - Germany
- **Mr Wale Lai-Ibrahim**, Acting General Secretary, Automobile Boatyards Transport Equipment and Allied Senior Staff Association - Nigeria
- **Ms Ruth Khakame**, Chairperson – National Youths Council, Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU-K) - Kenya
- **Ms Lieketseng Rosemary Leteka**, Advocate and Legal Representative, Independent Democratic Union of Lesotho - Lesotho

- **Mr Horacio Calculli**, Asociación Argentina de Aeronavegantes (AAA) – Argentina
- **Ms Emani Adjabi**, Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA) - Algeria

▶ Employers' Representatives

- **Mr Roberto Suarez**, Secretary General, IOE
- **Ms Harsh Juneja**, Advisor, Employers' Federation of India (EFI) - India
- **Mr Kingsley Agah**, Executive Assistant to the Director General, Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) - Nigeria
- **Mr Habibullah Neyamul Karim**, Immediate Past Vice-President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) - Bangladesh
- **Mr Ismail Suttar**, President, Employers Federation of Pakistan - Pakistan
- **Ms Siobhan Leyden**, Acting Social Policy and Transformation Director, Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) - South Africa
- **Mr Joseph Kingsley Amuah**, Director, Industrial Relations Ghana Employers Association (GEA) - Ghana
- **Mr Alex Frimpong**, CEO, Ghana Employers Association (GEA) - Ghana
- **Dr Fernando Mancera Coy**, Abogado de la Vicepresidencia de Asuntos Jurídicos, Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia (ANDI) - Colombia
- **Mr Sergio Ortiz-Luz**, Chair of ECOP Youth Employment Committee and Vice-Chair of PCCI Youth Committee - Philippines
- **Ms Miriam Pinto Lomeña**, Head of International Affairs, Department of Employment, Diversity and Social Protection, Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (CEOE) - Spain

▶ Youth Observers

- **Ms AnaMaria Meshkurti**, Head, Marketing, Communications and Engagement, Fondation Genevoise pour l'Innovation Technologique (FONGIT) - WEF
- **Ms Cecilia Vilchis**, Program Manager, Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) - Mexico
- **Mr Rada Rofek**, Member, United Nations Youth Advisory Panel Cambodia - Cambodia
- **Mr Taoekat Adigun**, Community Engagement Lead, Nigeria Youth SDGs Network - Nigeria
- **Ms Daniela Unigarro** - Colombia
- **Ms Ana Sofia Rivera** - Colombia
- **Ms David Rojas** – Colombia

- **Ms Joyanna Pelivani**
- **Ms Mia Touma**
- **Ms Yuli Chen**
- **Ms Alejandra Maria Diaz Fuentez**
- **Ms Joyce Zoe Banks**
- **Ms Raffaella Abbate**
- **Ms Mariapia Rueda**
- **Ms Laila Saidu**
- **Maja Markus**
- **Ms Luiza Valle**
- **Ms Kate Brockie**
- **Mr Dibayudh Das**
- **Ms Kanikka Sersia**

► Other Representatives

- **Ms Innocence Ntap**, Présidente du Haut Conseil du Dialogue Social du Sénégal; Présidente de l'Internationale francophone du dialogue social - Senegal
- **Ms Michelle Griffin**, Director, UN Common Agenda Team Executive Office of the Secretary-General, United Nations - USA
- **Ms Maria Mexi**, Research Fellow, The Graduate Institute
- **Ms Kitrhona Cerri**, Executive Director, TASC Platform, The Graduate Institute
- **Ms Salima Benhamou**, Économiste et cheffe de projet au département Travail, Emploi, Compétences de France Stratégie
- **Ms Ramatoulaye Kassé**, Chargée de mission à SKEMA PUBLIKA
- **Ms Claude Revel**, Directrice de SKEMA PUBLIKA
- **Mr Thomas Ruspil**, Ambassadeur- Référent CPGE, Skema Business School
- **Ms Béatrice Richez-Baum**, Director General, ecoDa - the European Voice of Directors
- **Ms Mary Menta**, Technical Officer, African Union Commission
- **Ms Helena Millet**, Project Assistant, THINKYOUNG
- **Ms Odette Sarr Bolly**, JLMP Programme Coordinator, African Union Commission

► ILO Attendees

- Vera Paquete-Perdigao - ILO
- Sangheon Lee - ILO
- Sukti Dasgupta - ILO
- Youcef Ghellab - ILO
- Maria Prieto - ILO
- Kostas Papadakis - ILO
- Juan Chacaltana - ILO
- Sher Verick - ILO
- Jacqueline Banya - ILO
- Rachel Bowie - ILO Papua New Guinea
- Eesha Moitra - ILO
- Yasuhiko Kamakura - ILO
- Ricardo Furman - South Africa
- Inviolata Chinyangarara - ILO ACTRAV Nigeria
- Frédérique Dupuy - ILO France
- Egidio Simbine - ILO Mozambique
- Matias Espinosa - ILO
- Carlien van Empel - ILO
- Nuran Tprun Atış - ILO
- Hichem Ouertani - ILO Tunisia
- Karine Sonigo - ILO United Kingdom
- Niall O'Higgins - ILO
- Ashwani Aggarwal - ILO
- Lena yan - ILO
- Sergio Quezada - ILO
- Josée-Anne Larue - ILO
- Karina Levina - ILO
- Valeria Esquivel - ILO
- Kee Beom Kim - ILO
- Rabia Razzaque - ILO Pakistan
- Cyril Cosme - ILO France
- Jonas Bausch - ILO Côte d'Ivoire
- Elisenda Estruch-Puertas - ILO
- M - Mariangels Fortuny - ILO
- Mélanie Jeanroy
- Alexio Musindo - LO Ethiopia
- Abdi Keynan - ILO Somalia
- Joesph Momo - ILO Côte d'Ivoire

- **Catarina Braga - ILO**
- **Mady Diagne - ILO Cameroon**
- **Milagros Leonor Lazo Castro - ILO**