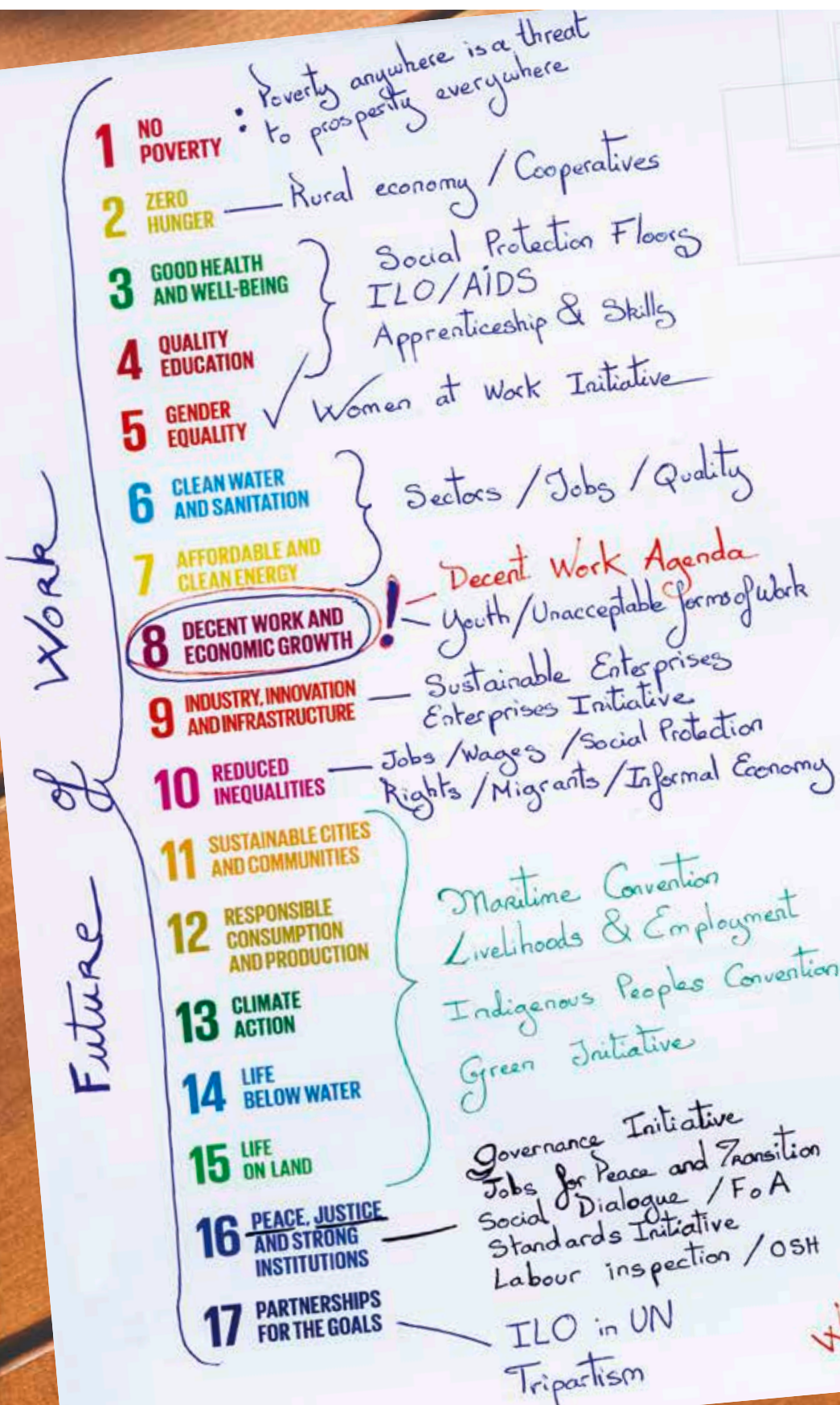




# The End to Poverty Initiative

## The ILO and the 2030 Agenda



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Report of the Director-General

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# **The End to Poverty Initiative: The ILO and the 2030 Agenda**

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## Preface

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As was the case for my three previous Reports to the International Labour Conference, this year's Report addresses a theme of key strategic significance to our Organization and the future direction of its work. On this occasion it examines the responsibilities and opportunities of the ILO and its constituents in the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It does this with three specific objectives in mind: to inform constituents about the decent work implications of the 2030 Agenda and the challenges they present; to advocate for the full and committed involvement of constituents in the implementation of the Agenda; and to seek guidance from constituents on what the ILO itself must do in support of those efforts.

The contributions of Government, Employer and Worker representatives will be crucially important in framing the End to Poverty Initiative, which has already been established as the vehicle through which the ILO will take this work forward.

So I would, as always, urge all participants to express their views frankly and concretely on an issue which stands so clearly at centre stage in the ILO's continuing mandate for social justice.

Guy Ryder



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# Chapter 1

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## The ILO and the 2030 Agenda

### From 1919 to 2030

“... conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required ...” *Preamble to the ILO Constitution, 1919*

“... poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; ... the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort ...” *Declaration of Philadelphia, 1944*

“... eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.” *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015*

### The new opportunity

1. When the world came together at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2015 to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development it resolved “between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources”. It resolved “also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities”.
2. The 2030 Agenda is the instrument that the international community has equipped itself with to complete one of the central missions set for the ILO when it was founded – making poverty history. It is a universal agenda for implementation by every member State. It is an ambitious agenda, moving forward from the eight self-standing Millennium Development Goals (2000–15) to a comprehensive, negotiated set of 17 goals which constitute an integrated vision for sustainable development. In so doing, it integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental, and conveys not just the magnitude, but also the urgency, of the challenges involved. As the UN Secretary-General has underlined, ours is the first generation in history with the capacity to eradicate poverty from the planet. But it is equally the last generation with the chance to save the planet.
3. There are very good reasons why the ILO and its global tripartite constituency should make the implementation of the 2030 Agenda a central objective of its activities over the next 15 years. Indeed they have already achieved much by mobilizing to ensure that the



2030 Agenda embodies to a remarkable degree the essentials of the Decent Work Agenda, not least through the Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development co-chaired by the UN Ambassadors in New York of Angola and Belgium. As the cover to this report illustrates, the Sustainable Development Goals, taken together, address each of the strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda – employment, social protection, rights and standards, and social dialogue.

4. That is most strikingly evident in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which commits member States to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. But the full extent of the alignment of the Decent Work Agenda and the 2030 Agenda is to be found in the totality of the inter-related goals, and the 169 targets which underpin them. It is today’s integrated global agenda for social justice, and as such a major opportunity for the ILO. With that opportunity go corresponding and special responsibilities in the implementation of the Agenda.

## The ILO’s role

5. In its own programme of activities and in its joint work with other organizations as a committed team player in the multilateral system, the ILO needs to take this opportunity and to assume this responsibility

6. In the organization of its own work the ILO is already well placed to take up that role. The End to Poverty Initiative – one of the seven centenary initiatives adopted by the ILO in the framework of its 100th anniversary in 2019 – has been designed specifically as the vehicle for this work to be taken forward. It is supported by a strong alignment of the policy outcomes of the Programme and Budget for 2016–17 with the SDGs which can be further strengthened when the Governing Body elaborates the ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2018–21.

7. Moreover, it will be important for the clear synergies between the End to Poverty Initiative and other centenary initiatives to be exploited to the full in recognition of their key importance to the 2030 Agenda and its integrated character. The Women at Work Initiative is an essential response to SDG 5 on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; the Green Initiative must be the ILO’s contribution to the urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts called for under SDG 13; the Enterprises Initiative opens new means of action and opportunities for partnership across the 2030 Agenda; the Governance Initiative aims to make the ILO’s own decision-making more effective and so improve its capacity to interact in the multilateral system; the Standards Initiative resonates strongly with the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice for all, and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions under SDG 16; and the very ambition of the Future of Work Initiative is to equip the ILO to better understand and respond to transformational changes acting on the world of work and so to pursue its social justice mandate – indeed, the 15-year scope of the SDGs provides an appropriate time frame of application for the mega drivers of change addressed by the initiative.

8. Positioning the ILO’s programmes, plans and initiatives in this way, to maximize their contribution to the 2030 Agenda, falls within the purview and responsibilities of the Organization’s own decision-making bodies, which have demonstrated their strong commitment to that endeavour. This is essential, but not sufficient, to ensure that the ILO’s role is played to the full. It needs to be supplemented by corresponding efforts to strengthen ILO cooperation and partnerships across the multilateral system, and to

reinforce the system's coherence as required by the interconnected nature of the 2030 Agenda.

## Partnerships and coherence

9. The ILO comes to the task of upgrading multilateral system coherence and delivery capacities with two distinct advantages.

10. First, the content of the 2030 Agenda reflects the understanding of the international community that decent work is both a means and an end to sustainable development. This is something for which the ILO has worked, with its constituents, for at least two decades. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, in which the ILO had a prominent role, established a consensus to place people at the centre of sustainable development, and pledged to eradicate poverty, to promote full and productive employment, to promote fundamental rights at work, and to foster social integration for stable, safe and just societies. Subsequently, the Director-General's Report to the 91st Session (2003) of the International Labour Conference *Working out of Poverty* set out the central role of decent work in poverty-reducing development and was a precursor of much of the rationale of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Second, and in parallel, the ILO has been a consistent and long-standing advocate for greater functional and substantive policy coherence in the international system. That has been seen in many individual initiatives from past years and in the current emphasis on the strengthening of partnerships in more recent ILO reform processes. But from the institutional perspective it is the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization which most firmly commits the ILO to the cause of strengthened coherence, and it will be recalled that the impact of the Declaration is being evaluated at this year's session of the Conference. It recognizes the important contribution of other international and regional organizations to the integrated approach to the realization of decent work and, in its follow-up framework, instructs the Director-General to promote "effective partnerships within the UN and the multilateral system".

12. The progress made in winning multilateral system recognition of the key role of decent work in sustainable development and in promoting the coherence of the system in working for its realization constitutes a promising starting point for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. But it also highlights two further challenges: the need for all member States to take full ownership of the Agenda; and the need to make the functioning of the multilateral system more "fit for purpose" as a vehicle for delivery of the Agenda. It is encouraging that concerted efforts are being made to identify ways of strengthening system performance and capacities. The ILO is taking all opportunities to contribute to these exercises. But it is to the initial challenge of integrating the 2030 Agenda, and its decent work components, into national policy strategies that attention should first turn. Being an avowedly universal agenda, this is the business of every one of the ILO's 187 member States – advanced, emerging or developing.



## Chapter 2

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### National ownership, international support

13. The basic proposition that the action of member States is indispensable to its success is strongly endorsed in the 2030 Agenda: “Cohesive nationally owned sustainable development strategies, supported by integrated national financing frameworks, will be at the heart of our efforts”.

14. But it is stated, with equal strength, that these national strategies have to be backed up by appropriate international action: “National development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance”.

15. The universal coverage of the 2030 Agenda means that this coming together of national and international efforts will need to address a huge diversity of circumstances in member States. That reality reminds us of two fundamental lessons from ILO history and experience. The first is that, while national strategies will obviously have to address very different challenges and priorities, they must be designed and implemented in ways which are mutually supportive of, and not damaging to, the legitimate interests and objectives of others. There has to be a careful balancing and reconciliation of States’ responsibilities to their own citizens and to the citizens of other States. This idea is not new. The Preamble of the ILO’s founding Constitution famously states that “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries”. This very aptly captures the mutual responsibilities inherent in the 2030 Agenda and points directly to the importance of international cooperation in its realization. Indeed these imperatives now apply with greater force than they ever have because today’s economic, social and environmental challenges are so obviously global in scale and nature and, for this reason, have tightened the bonds of interdependence.

16. The second lesson comes from the experience gained in the interaction of national and international inputs in the pursuit of agreed objectives. Here again the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization is a key reference point. Having underlined that “interdependence, solidarity, and cooperation among all Members ... are more pertinent than ever in the context of a global economy”, it provides that the member States must themselves determine how they achieve the strategic objectives of decent work, subject to existing international obligations and fundamental principles and rights at work and with due regard, *inter alia*, to national conditions and circumstances and the priorities of representative organizations of employers and workers. The responsibility of the ILO is then to understand better the resultant needs of its Members, and to organize its activities to support and assist their efforts, including through partnerships and cooperation with other organizations of the multilateral system.

17. With this, and its more detailed supporting guidance, the Declaration is a remarkably helpful framework for the coordination of national and international contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## Building national 2030 strategies

18. The most concrete demonstration of national appropriation of the 2030 Agenda by member States will be the progress that they make in formulating, and then implementing, national 2030 strategies. It will be critically important to ensure that decent work is as thoroughly present in these strategies as it is in the Agenda itself. The best guarantee of that will be for the Ministries of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, and the organizations of employers and workers represented at this session of the International Labour Conference, to be centrally involved in the planning process, as well as in the implementation and monitoring of the Agenda.

19. Therefore, ILO constituents will want to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place, or existing mechanisms adjusted, to allow full tripartite input into national 2030 strategies. The added value of the engagement of workers' and employers' organizations alongside governments stems from their practical knowledge and experience of the world of work, and their capacity to monitor progress and insist on accountability for results and the equity and legitimacy that accountability brings. Social dialogue will not only add to the probability of national strategies actually working but also help to win broad-based popular support for them.

20. The challenge of making this tripartite dimension truly effective should not be underestimated. The framing of national 2030 strategies is likely to be – and indeed should be – a “whole of government” exercise, with Ministries of Finance and Planning and other government agencies taking central roles and civil society being actively involved. That is the nature of the multistakeholder partnerships called for in the 2030 Agenda. There may then be a danger of tripartite participation being relegated to a marginal or merely formal role. That, and still more its exclusion entirely, would be at variance with the rationale of the 2030 Agenda itself, and the strong presence of the Decent Work Agenda in it.

21. So ILO constituents need to assert their role forcefully and the ILO needs to help them.

## The decent work dimension

22. SDG 8 – The promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – stands at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, and of its decent work dimension as well. The wording of this goal makes clear that the aim is to stimulate economic strategies in which more and better jobs generate the purchasing power that promotes investment, which in turn lifts productivity and brings competitiveness and success in a global market. But this process will not automatically be sustainable nor inclusive. That will require a framework of institutions, organizations, laws and policies, and a culture of social dialogue, to govern the world of work and the functioning of labour markets.

23. The ten substantive targets set under SDG 8 provide more detailed guidance on how this is to be achieved:

- ❑ sustain per capita economic growth with a target of at least 7 per cent per year in least developed countries;

- ❑ enhance productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, and a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors;
- ❑ promote decent job creation, entrepreneurship, and the formalization and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises;
- ❑ decouple economic growth from environmental degradation;
- ❑ achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value;
- ❑ reduce substantially the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training;
- ❑ eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and all forms of child labour;
- ❑ protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants and those in precarious employment;
- ❑ promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs;
- ❑ enhance access to financial services for all.

24. The pertinence of existing ILO activities and programmes to these targets is striking, and is further underlined by the reference in the accompanying “means of implementation” targets for SDG 8 to the implementation of the ILO 2009 Global Jobs Pact and a global strategy for youth employment. But the full extent of the ILO’s responsibilities extends also to a series of additional targets under other SDGs:

- ❑ implementing social protection systems, including national floors, is a target of SDG 1 on ending poverty;
- ❑ technical and vocational skills figure in three targets under SDG 4 on education and lifelong learning;
- ❑ ending all discrimination and violence against women and girls, and recognizing unpaid care and domestic work are targets under SDG 5 on gender equality;
- ❑ rural workers are referenced under SDG 2 on sustainable agriculture; health workers under SDG 3 on health and well-being; education workers under SDG 4; and migrant workers under SDG 10 on reducing inequality;
- ❑ promoting industrial employment and integrating small-scale industrial and other enterprises into value chains are targets under SDG 9 on infrastructure, industrialization and innovation;
- ❑ adopting policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieving greater equality are referred to under SDG 10;
- ❑ promoting the rule of law and protecting fundamental freedoms figure under SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies.

## Some key features

25. This admittedly selective presentation of the goals and targets that make up the 2030 Agenda highlights some key features which will need to inform the work that the ILO must do to support the implementation strategies of its member States.

26. First, the Agenda has a strong normative character and sets a truly human rights-centred path for sustainable development. The vision is of “a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity”. That underlines the correspondingly central role of international labour standards in its realization. In addition to the specific individual and collective reference to fundamental rights at work, full respect of all ratified Conventions is an integral part of the rule of law. Moreover, it is through observance of these standards that the institutions and policies for sustainable development need to be framed.

27. Second, the Agenda gives strong and explicit recognition to private business activity, investment and innovation as key drivers of productivity, growth, jobs and, hence, sustainable development. The contributions of all types of enterprises – from micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals – are identified as important, lending relevance to all aspects of the ILO’s activities to promote a conducive environment for sustainable enterprises. As the only international organization with representatives of both sides of the private sector in its ranks, the ILO has a real comparative advantage in this area.

28. Third, there is a strong sectoral focus in the 2030 Agenda which includes extensive treatment of agriculture and rural development, and of industrialization, combined with more specific reference to the health and educational sectors and to tourism. Coming at a time when the ILO is called upon to consider how to maximize the added value of its sectoral activities, this approach may offer new avenues to explore and in any case is well-suited to concrete tripartite initiatives and partnerships.

29. Fourth, the importance of infrastructure investment, both in creating the potential for sustained growth of production and in directly providing employment, is stressed in several of the Agenda’s goals, including those addressing water and sanitation, energy and sustainable cities. Maximizing the decent work potential of this investment requires a complex combination of far-reaching choices on the labour intensity of construction, training, small enterprise promotion, and compliance with labour law and labour standards, in all of which the ILO can provide practical expertise.

30. Fifth, the integration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development means that the 2030 Agenda gives particular attention to climate change and recognizes that failure to address it effectively will compromise the achievement of many SDGs. The Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was adopted after the 2030 Agenda at the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change held in December. It highlights “the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities”, and this will need to be taken fully into account in implementing SDG 13 on combating climate change and its impacts as countries build their “nationally determined contributions” on climate change into their 2030 strategies. The ILO tripartite “Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all” can play a vital role in this respect.

## Fighting poverty and inequality

31. These areas of key interest – and others which might be added to them – are sufficient to confirm that the ILO’s contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda cannot

be confined to certain areas of its work but instead must be an “all of organization” effort, touching on all aspects of the Decent Work Agenda. Indeed the idea that the 2030 Agenda is a close fit as a contemporary statement of the ILO’s mission in the pursuit of social justice is strongly supported by the overarching priority it accords to ending poverty and combating inequality.

32. The Agenda proclaims that “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are linked to each other and are interdependent”. In other words, we will do all of this or we will do none.

33. The centrality accorded to poverty eradication in a universal agenda is not without its difficulties. While the 2030 Agenda takes the US\$1.25 a day income figure as a global indicator of extreme poverty and calls for it to be ended, it equally calls for a reduction at least by half in the proportion of men, women and children living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. Most countries do have such definitions, and in higher-income ones the monetary definition of the poverty threshold will be higher than in lower-income countries. But they still define a state of deprivation, albeit relative, which is considered socially intolerable and needs to be eliminated.

34. It is this that makes poverty a genuinely universal challenge; all the more so since income poverty is strongly correlated with its other expressions, such as educational poverty, energy poverty, poverty of opportunity, and exposure to unhealthy or dangerous living and working conditions.

35. The achievements of the Millennium Development Goals have accelerated and drawn attention to progress made in reducing levels of poverty in the first part of this century. But that progress has not been linear or even, and has slowed under the impact of the global crisis which broke in 2008.

36. ILO analysis of World Bank data on income poverty shows that in 2015 an estimated 327 million working people were living in extreme poverty, and 967 million in moderate or near poverty, in developing and emerging economies. In the advanced economies, the share of the population living in absolute poverty, according to national definitions, actually increased by one percentage point between 2007 and 2011. In some advanced countries most affected by the crisis and the policies adopted to counter it, those poverty rates actually doubled.

37. The ILO’s role in the fight against poverty derives not only from its historically mandated responsibilities but also from very contemporary realities. Poverty does not simply “happen” to the world of work. Rather, our world of work and our labour markets are generating poverty, or at least proving inadequate to get rid of it.

38. Unsurprisingly, adverse developments in employment have a direct and identifiable impact on the incidence of poverty. High levels of joblessness and underemployment, coupled with stagnant or sluggish real wages, since 2008 have led to a stalling of earlier poverty reductions in many countries. But more detailed work is required for a full understanding of the poverty-eliminating potential of labour markets and labour market policies.

39. *World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Transforming Jobs to End Poverty*, to be published shortly before this year’s session of the Conference, is a contribution to meeting that need. In addition, the clear importance of social protection systems for countering the risk of individuals and families falling into poverty, coupled with the reality of their inadequate coverage, is why the ILO has stepped up its work on universal social



protection floors. Similarly, there has been renewed interest in introducing or strengthening minimum wage systems, particularly where collective bargaining is weak, as a way of tackling working poverty.

40. Added to these established activities, the ILO has recently made determined efforts to address areas of the world of work which have been major reservoirs of poverty and have proven hard to reach. Formalization of the informal economy and the rural sector are policy outcomes in the current programme. Issues surrounding fragility in societies have been made the focus of one of the new global flagship programmes. Other areas of innovation might follow; current interest in the living wage – a concept as old as the ILO itself – and in guarantees of a universal minimum income could point the way for some.

41. The interdependence of poverty and inequality identified by the 2030 Agenda is an explicit call for action to combat and reduce inequalities in and among countries which have reached levels that are now widely recognized as constituting not only gross social injustice and a threat to social cohesion, but also a serious obstacle to economic growth and job creation. This alignment of social and economic considerations will give added force to the pursuit of SDG 10, which aims to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average, and envisages an assault on discrimination and implementation of reinforced pro-equality measures, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies.

42. Policy interventions in these areas will mostly address inequality and poverty together, in an integrated way, and as such will be critically important in responding to the injunction to “leave no one behind”.

43. And the fact that so many of those now being left behind, or prevented from getting ahead, are girls and women gives a sharp focus to the gender dimension of the 2030 Agenda. This is present not only in SDG 5 on gender equality and empowerment but in every one of the 17 goals. It resonates strongly with the ILO’s record of achievement on gender, where it has been an important agent of the substantial progress made in many countries, and also with its understanding that the fight for equality remains unfinished business which requires innovative new thinking and action. This is exactly the rationale of the Women at Work Initiative and its objective of identifying and countering the diverse sources of persisting inequality, from overtly discriminatory practices to deeply embedded structural causes, in all of their complexity.

## Achieving transformation

44. The 2030 Agenda is comprehensive, ambitious, complex and demanding. That is no accident, because it was consciously designed as a framework for the transformation of the process of global development. No credible transformative agenda could be simple or unchallenging. The process of formulating this Agenda and adopting it unanimously through an elaborate process of multilateral negotiations should be recognized for the remarkable success that it is. Its true worth lies not only in the technical achievements it embodies, now being completed by the adoption of the indicators which make its implementation measurable and subject to accountability, but also in the collective political commitment that it represents.

45. Consequently, as attention now turns to the arduous task of implementing the 2030 Agenda, one challenge which does not have to be tackled is that of convincing member States and the ILO’s tripartite constituency of its relevance or importance. That is a given by virtue of the decisions taken by the General Assembly last September which make the Agenda common property, a common interest, and a common responsibility of

every one of the ILO's Members, of the ILO itself, and of the multilateral system to which it belongs.

46. This being so, the question becomes how the ILO and that international system need to position themselves to be equal to the challenges that member States have set themselves in agreeing on transformative change for sustainable development and social justice.



## Chapter 3

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### Building global partnerships

47. The Preamble to the 2030 Agenda expresses determination to mobilize the means for its implementation “through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people”.

48. But what is the concrete meaning of the global partnership, and what are its implications for the ILO?

### Means of implementation and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda

49. In sharp contrast to the Millennium Development Goals, the question of financing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was a major issue in the negotiations leading to its adoption. Just two months previously, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development agreed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which subsequently became an integral part of the 2030 Agenda itself.

50. The result is that the 2030 Agenda contains a goal – SDG 17 – which is dedicated exclusively to means of implementation and global partnership and sets out in detail the key financing considerations. In particular, it sets out respective national and international responsibilities and the role of private and of public funding. Moreover, it is recognized that the targets under SDG 17 and the implementation targets under all other SDGs are “of equal importance”.

51. As regards the national–international issue, and in line with the principle of overall national ownership of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is underlined that each country has primary responsibility and that integrated national financing frameworks need to be at the heart of partnership efforts. But this is complemented by emphasis on the important role of international public finance, including official development assistance, and on international financial institutions supporting the policy space of each country.

52. As regards public and private responsibilities, it is recognized that domestic resources are first and foremost generated by economic growth, which in turn highlights the crucial contribution of private business activity and the need for an enabling environment for it. The 2030 Agenda calls upon businesses of all types to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges. It commits to fostering a dynamic business sector and protecting labour rights and environmental and health standards in accordance with international instruments, including ILO standards and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

53. Beyond this, SDG 17 addresses a series of wider enabling issues which include enhanced global macroeconomic stability and policy coherence; access to technologies; debt sustainability; investment promotion; trade; capacity building including through South–South and triangular cooperation; and data and monitoring.

## The ILO and partnership with member States

54. The global partnership envisaged by the 2030 Agenda is ambitious and elaborate – and its proper functioning is recognized as crucial to the Agenda’s ultimate viability. How does the ILO fit into it?

55. The answer begins at the country level, with the ILO partnering with its tripartite constituents to make a reality of national ownership and to give the Decent Work Agenda the place in national 2030 strategies that it has in the global agenda. Constituents may face challenges less in identifying decent work issues which are relevant to such strategies – because there are multiple opportunities – and more in being able to frame these opportunities in a coherent and practical manner commanding wider national support. The Office should be alert to the need to raise constituent awareness of the 2030 Agenda and should seek to facilitate, where necessary, tripartite input to it and to support such input with appropriate technical advice.

56. In this context, there is obvious advantage in making the ILO’s key national-level programming mechanism – Decent Work Country Programmes – the vehicle for this area of partnership, as and where the timing of planning cycles makes that possible. The logical next step is to seek to have these elements integrated fully into the advice and support being offered by UN Country Teams. As increasing interest is being accorded to having the UN system deliver as one, national 2030 strategies could be a test of the ILO’s ability to work effectively at the national level with the rest of the UN development system, but also of that system’s capacity and readiness to give the place and importance to the Decent Work Agenda that the international community has so unequivocally directed that it should. Both challenges will need to be met if the objective of delivering an integrated UN support plan for integrated national 2030 strategies is to be achieved. Getting that far would already constitute important progress.

57. There will also be considerable scope to lever existing regional and subregional frameworks to advance these national initiatives. They already play an increasingly important role in the integration of markets and thus generate common development challenges across countries. Where regional and subregional institutions are instrumental in the making and implementation of mutually supportive policies, it is in the logic of the 2030 Agenda that such collective action be brought to bear in support of national strategies.

58. The ILO is already taking action to strengthen its capacity to respond to national and regional needs. We have begun to shift resources to new technical positions in decent work teams around the world. Cooperation with regional development banks and the regional coordination mechanisms of the UN Development Group is being stepped up, and there is potential to intensify work with the UN’s regional economic and social commissions too. Similarly, interaction with specific regional and subregional groups whose scope of activity takes in relevant issues – such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, MERCOSUR, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community – should pursue the same rationale.

59. In this context, the ILO’s own Regional Meetings, whose role is currently under review in the context of the Governance Initiative, could take on added responsibilities in

respect of 2030 Agenda implementation. The first such meeting since adoption of the Agenda was for Africa and took place in December 2015. It adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration: Transforming Africa through Decent Work for Sustainable Development, which will mesh closely with the African Union's own Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development adopted in 2004, and the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

60. This experience could be instructive in the preparation of future ILO regional meetings – in Asia and the Pacific at the end of 2016, Europe in 2017 and then the Americas in 2018 – and their potential merits careful examination.

61. The effectiveness of these efforts will be significantly dependent on the technical capacity of ILO constituents to engage substantively on issues which will often be complex and sometimes contentious. The need for capacity building is explicitly recognized in the 2030 Agenda and the ILO's associated responsibilities are long standing. Nevertheless, there is a real challenge to ensure that those responsibilities are discharged effectively, by making sure that activities undertaken really do result in demonstrable and lasting improvements in relevant areas. The International Training Centre of the ILO must be strategically placed to ensure that the ILO's contribution has real impact.

62. Nor should it be forgotten that the 2030 Agenda also makes demands on the capacities of the ILO itself. The drive for technical excellence and the reinforcement of research and analytical capacities have been a key focus of organizational reform in recent years and are showing results. This has two major implications for implementation of the Agenda.

63. First, it constitutes the indispensable starting point for the creation and sharing of knowledge on world of work issues. There is tremendous demand from constituents across the world for information on how their counterparts around the world are addressing policy challenges that they themselves face. They want to know "what works", and it is a major part of the ILO's job to provide answers. That means not only collecting and processing information on comparative experiences, but also making sure that it is made available promptly to those who need it in a useful form. Information and communication technologies provide extensive new opportunities for getting this done and, like everybody else, the ILO needs to exploit them to the fullest.

64. Second, it provides the platform for the ILO to participate and advocate effectively in international policy-making to advance decent work objectives in the framework of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A strong and distinctive feature of the Agenda is that it stresses enhanced global economic governance aimed at providing an enabling international economic environment for sustainable development, and commits to the pursuit of policy coherence as a key means of implementation. The increasingly substantive inputs of the ILO to policy formulation in, for example, the G20, the UN and, more recently, the BRICS (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) settings stand as promising precursors of what it can and should now offer to this broader aspect of 2030 Agenda implementation.

65. These capacity issues are closely related to the statistical and data-related matters which are addressed in some detail in the Agenda. One of the final, and at the time of writing ongoing, contributions of the ILO to the Agenda's formulation has been in the design of 241 indicators to be used to measure progress in the achievement of agreed targets. The dual responsibilities of the Organization in this field will be to ensure that the necessary data can be collected to make these indicators operative and to provide support to member States in developing their own capacities. In this regard, the 2030 Agenda

underlines the need for high-quality data, disaggregated, inter alia, by gender, race, ethnicity, migratory status, and disability.

## The ILO as partner in the international system

66. The closely interrelated nature of the SDGs that make up the 2030 Agenda is generally understood to require an integrated response from all parts of the international multilateral system. So, one dimension of the global partnership for its implementation is partnership across the system. That recognition has already generated considerable attention as to what can be done to make the system fit for purpose and to equip it to play its full part in delivering as one on its responsibilities. These efforts have included discussions in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which brings together the executive heads of the system's specialized agencies, and in other entities, and the establishment by the UN Economic and Social Council of an independent team of advisers to look into the long-term positioning of the UN development system in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

67. One way of identifying what improvements could be made is to start with what may go wrong under existing arrangements.

68. The most obvious danger is a retreat into institutional silos based on an overly defensive or narrow interpretation of each organization's mandate. Even a cursory reading of the list of SDGs shows how easy it would be for individual organizations to match up their own interests and responsibilities to one or more goals, in whose adoption they may already have had an active role, to claim exclusive ownership of them, and to decline any implication in all of the others. In the interest of full disclosure, that temptation exists for the ILO in respect of SDG 8, but is mitigated significantly by the major decent work content in several others.

69. Two factors exacerbate the danger of this negative institutional reflex. The first has to do with funding. Current circumstances mean that there is real, and sometimes acute, pressure on the regular budgets and extra-budgetary financing of most international system organizations. That can have the effect of intensifying dysfunctional competition for increasingly scarce voluntary contributions. Some development partners are already expressing concern about this. Indeed, if the imperatives of financing sustainable development were to be distorted into a scramble to finance different parts of the multilateral system it would be a major step backwards, rather than the progress that all need to commit collectively to achieve.

70. The second relates to the institutional difficulties that may impede inter-organizational cooperation. Quite properly, each organization is accountable to its own members for the outcome of the work that it does, and the ILO is among those which have sought to meet its members' expectations of more rigorous results-based management approaches. Equally understandably, specialized agencies in particular are conscious that the added value they provide stems from their capacity to fulfil their individual mandate expertly and fully. The downside of this is that effort and resources expended on inter-organizational cooperation may not show up fully in the results systems by which performance is assessed, and may also be interpreted by members as permitting encroachment in specific areas of responsibility and dilution of technical expertise and competence. Such concerns can be complicated further if different organizations bring divergence to a given theme. SDG 8 is an interesting example: there may be quite divergent ideas among organizations about how to get to global full employment, just as there are among ILO constituents.

71. The objection could be raised that none of these potential pitfalls is insurmountable, that they can be overcome perfectly well given the right mindset, leadership and commitment. But just as they should not be exaggerated, neither should they be underestimated. The point is that there are features of the multilateral system which unwittingly tend to make it easier for organizations to work individually and which result in an absence of incentives to real partnership. It is as if there were a gravitational force pulling all actors away from each other, and it will take some significant countervailing force to come into play to move them closer together.

72. From this assessment of the current situation, and given the nature and significance of the 2030 Agenda, one avenue for forging stronger partnerships presents itself. This might consist of the establishment of a number of thematic platforms for system cooperation in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Such platforms should be firmly anchored in one or more of the SDGs and participation in them should be open to all bodies on the basis of demonstrated commitment and competence to contribute concretely to target implementation. Encouragement should then be given to the channelling of available extra-budgetary resources through these platforms in a manner which could alleviate competitive pressures and help improve coherence.

73. Certainly, major questions would need to be answered in respect of leadership, of decision-making authority, and of accountability in the operations of any arrangement of this type. Without seeking to anticipate how they might be resolved, it is likely that objections could centre on possible loss of autonomy and constituent prerogatives within organizations, and fear of marginalization if resource mobilization and allocation responsibilities were externalized. Moreover, resistance to any perceived loss of organizational sovereignty might be expected to be strongest at the ILO because, exceptionally, decision-making there is made by employers and workers, as well as by governments. Nevertheless, it will be recalled that by taking the conscious decision to align its medium-term planning cycle with that of the UN, starting with the ILO's Strategic Plan for 2018–21, its tripartite constituents have already signalled a firm commitment for the ILO to programme its own activities in coordination with the rest of the system.

74. With the machinery for 2030 Agenda implementation now being put in place, and with the entry into office of a new Secretary-General in 2017, it is apparent that a window of opportunity to make changes to more firmly implant the concept of global partnership in the working of the multilateral system is open. It remains to be seen what use will be made of it. In the meantime, there is every reason to act now to build partnerships whenever the opportunity and the will exist. The ILO was pleased to act on the call of the Secretary-General to take a lead in the creation of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, which was launched in February 2016 with the participation of 21 UN bodies; the preparations for the launch of Alliance 8.7 – Working together to end child labour and modern slavery – provide a further example.

75. The UN is already well advanced in putting into place the systematic follow-up and review mechanisms called for in the 2030 Agenda which will provide for accountability in its implementation. These are to be at the national, regional and global levels. Member States have been encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress and to identify the most suitable regional forums for this purpose.

76. At the global level, a High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is envisaged in the 2030 Agenda to operate under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and is to have the central role in overseeing follow-up and review. The exact format of the Forum's annual review process is still being decided but it is expected that it will examine global reports on progress and review voluntary



national reports and regional reports emanating from the UN system. Once every four years, starting in 2019, the Forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly to provide high-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation.

77. All of these mechanisms, if used effectively, provide added opportunities to encourage and to provide incentives to partnership.

78. Measurability – through the system of indicators now being finalized – and accountability – through their follow-up and review mechanisms – are critically important to the success of the 2030 Agenda, and an integral part of the global partnership between member States and the international system, and across that system. The ILO will continue to fulfil its obligations in respect of them both.

## Chapter 4

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### Turning the tide

79. The global context in which the 2030 Agenda has been negotiated and adopted, and must now be implemented, is one of heightened political and social tensions and great uncertainty about countries' individual and collective futures. People are increasingly questioning the capacity of the institutions and actors of public life to provide solutions to their most pressing concerns, or even the sincerity and legitimacy of their attempts to do so. New approaches and simple answers are in demand and some of those on offer do violence to the values of democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity.

80. Our times provide many sharp reminders that social justice is indeed the best guarantee of lasting peace. It is precisely because the realities of so many people's lives provide such compelling evidence that the course of global events is moving against the direction of social justice, that the prospect for peace and stability is called so widely into question.

81. This is not to deny the improvement seen in the lives of many millions of people. But if the global economic system continues to confer its benefits so heavily on the top 1 per cent and very much less, or not at all, on those in, near, or threatened by poverty, then there can be no sure prospect of a more secure future for anybody.

82. Nor can such a future be achieved without the urgent action required to safeguard the future of the planet.

83. What matters most about the 2030 Agenda is that it offers the prospect of reversing these sombre trends. If implemented, it would turn the tide back in the direction of global social justice by eradicating poverty and reducing gross inequality. It would provide a path to economic, social and environmental sustainability. It would tackle at source those things which more than any others bring anger, desperation, resentment, division, confrontation, intolerance, extremism and inhumanity into the world.

84. What is at stake makes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda everybody's business, and not least the business of the Government, Employer and Worker representatives whose responsibility it is to guide the work of the ILO.

85. It is surely within their capacities, as well as their responsibilities, to pick up the tools offered by the End to Poverty Initiative and to use them to put the world firmly back on the path of social justice.