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International Labour Conference – 109th Session, 2021

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Reports of the COVID Response Committee

Proposed resolution submitted to the Conference for adoption

This report contains the text of the proposed resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, submitted by the COVID Reponse Committee for adoption by the Conference.

The report of the Committee on its proceedings, as approved by the Officers of the Committee on behalf of the Committee, will be published on the Conference website in Record No. 5B after the closure of the session. Committee members will have the possibility to submit corrections to their own statements appearing in the report until 16 July 2021.

Resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,

Having received the proposal made by the Conference Committee on the Response to COVID-19,

Considering the urgent need for action to ensure a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient,

Adopts, this seventeenth day of June of the year two thousand and twenty-one, the following resolution.

A global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient

- 1.** The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is having a profound impact on humanity, underscoring the interdependence of all members of society and all countries.
- 2.** In addition to the tragic loss of life and damage to human health and communities, the pandemic has had devastating impacts on the world of work. It has led to increased unemployment, underemployment and inactivity; losses in labour and business income, especially in the most impacted sectors; enterprise closures and bankruptcies, particularly for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; supply chain disruptions; informality and insecurity of work and income; new challenges to health, safety and rights at work; and exacerbated poverty and economic and social inequality.
- 3.** The crisis has affected the most disadvantaged and vulnerable disproportionately, particularly individuals in the informal economy and in insecure forms of work; those working in low-skilled jobs; migrants and those belonging to ethnic and racial minorities; older persons; and those with disabilities or living with HIV/AIDS. The impact of the crisis has exacerbated pre-existing decent work deficits, increased poverty, widened inequalities and exposed digital gaps within and among countries.
- 4.** Women have suffered disproportionate job and income losses, including because of their over-representation in the hardest-hit sectors, and many continue to work on the front line, sustaining care systems, economies and societies, while often also doing the majority of unpaid care work, which underscores the need for a gender-responsive recovery.
- 5.** The crisis has profoundly disrupted the education, training and employment of young people, making it even harder for them to find a job, successfully transition from education and training to work, continue education or start a business and posing the risk of a reduced trajectory of earnings and advancement over the course of their working lives.
- 6.** Without concerted action by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and the international community, these differential effects will endure well beyond the pandemic itself, with profound implications for the achievement of social justice and decent work for all, including full, productive and freely chosen employment, and will further reverse gains and undermine progress towards achieving the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7. Urgent and coordinated action, including in the multilateral context, is also needed to ensure that all people have timely, equitable, affordable and global access to quality, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and preventive measures, such as health technologies, diagnostics, therapeutics, and other COVID-19 health products, with fair distribution across all levels of society, which is critical to safety and health, to curbing the growing inequality within and between countries, and to restarting economies and building forward better.
8. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019, with its human-centred approach, based on the unique tripartite structure and normative mandate of the International Labour Organization (ILO), provides the foundation for a recovery from the crisis that is fully inclusive, sustainable and resilient and supports a just transition. The Declaration offers a positive vision and a road map for how countries can build forward better. Accelerating its implementation through increased emphasis and investment must become a top priority of public policy, enterprise actions and international cooperation.

I. Urgent action to advance a human-centred recovery that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient

9. We, governments and employers' and workers' organizations, commit to working individually and collectively and with the support of the ILO for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis through the focused and accelerated implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration, thereby advancing progress towards an inclusive, sustainable and resilient development with decent work for all.
10. We commit to addressing the global dimensions of the crisis through enhanced international and regional cooperation, global solidarity and policy coherence across the economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and health domains, thereby enabling all countries to overcome the crisis and expedite progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.
11. We commit to placing the aim of full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work, the needs of the most vulnerable and hardest hit by the pandemic, and support for sustainable enterprises, jobs and incomes at the heart of strategies that are gender-responsive, to build forward better from the crisis, tailored to specific situations and taking into full account national circumstances and priorities, including by working to:

A. Inclusive economic growth and employment

- (a) provide for a broad-based, job-rich recovery with decent work opportunities for all through integrated national employment policy responses, recognizing the important role of the private and the public sector and the social and solidarity economy, including:
 - (i) supportive macroeconomic, fiscal and industrial policies that also foster equity and stability; and
 - (ii) appropriate public and private investment in sectors hit hardest by the crisis, such as hospitality, tourism, transport, arts and recreation and some parts of retail, and those with strong potential to expand decent work opportunities, such as the care economy, education and infrastructure development;

- (b) facilitate a speedy recovery towards a sustainable travel and tourism sector, bearing in mind its labour-intensive nature and its key role in countries highly dependent on tourism, including Small Island Developing States;
- (c) promote global solidarity through support for developing countries experiencing crisis-related reductions in fiscal and monetary policy space or unsustainable external debt obligations;
- (d) support business continuity and an enabling environment for innovation, productivity growth and sustainable enterprises, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, recognizing the important role of sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work;
- (e) provide incentives to employers to retain workers despite crisis-related reduction of business activity, such as through work-sharing and shorter working weeks, targeted wage subsidies, temporary measures relating to tax and social security contributions, and access to business support measures in order to maintain employment and income continuity;
- (f) strengthen national systems of employment services and national policies to provide quality employment services for workers and employers to mitigate crisis-induced economic and labour market disruption, recognizing, where appropriate, the complementary role of private employment services when properly regulated in line with international labour standards, including the prohibitions therein on charging fees and costs to workers;
- (g) support quality education, training and decent work for young people, to maximize their potential as a source of dynamism, talent, creativity and innovation in the world of work and as a driving force for shaping a better future of work;
- (h) strengthen public and private investment in skills development and lifelong learning, including through universal access to quality education and more equitable and effective access to training, including apprenticeships, career guidance, upskilling and reskilling, and through other active labour market policies and partnerships that facilitate successful labour market transitions and reduce skills mismatches, gaps and shortages, including for the low-skilled and the long-term unemployed;
- (i) foster more resilient supply chains that contribute to:
 - (i) decent work;
 - (ii) sustainability of enterprises along the supply chain, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (iii) environmental sustainability; and
 - (iv) protection of and respect for human rights in line with the three pillars of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy; supported by sustainable international trade and investment;
- (j) leverage the opportunities of just digital and environmental transitions to advance decent work, inter alia through social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation;

- (k) develop and implement comprehensive, innovative and integrated approaches to curb the spread of informality and accelerate the transition to the formal economy, particularly for the creation, preservation and formalization of enterprises and decent jobs, paying due attention to the rural economy;

B. Protection of all workers

- (a) provide all workers with adequate protection, reinforcing respect for international labour standards, and promoting their ratification, implementation and supervision, with particular attention to areas where serious gaps have been revealed by the crisis. This includes respect for fundamental principles and rights at work; an adequate minimum wage, either statutory or negotiated; maximum limits on working time; and safety and health at work with particular attention to the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (b) redouble efforts to address the increasing fundamental rights violations resulting from the pandemic, with special emphasis on the elimination of child and forced labour;
- (c) provide that workers at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 and those at greater risk of negative health impacts, such as healthcare workers and all other frontline workers, including those working transnationally, have access to vaccines, personal protective equipment, training, testing and psychosocial support, and that they are adequately remunerated and protected at work, including against excessive workloads;
- (d) strengthen occupational safety and health measures by cooperating with public institutions, private enterprises, employers, workers and their representatives on:
 - (i) the provision of tailored practical guidance;
 - (ii) support for risk management;
 - (iii) the introduction of appropriate control and emergency preparedness measures;
 - (iv) measures to prevent new outbreaks or other occupational risks; and
 - (v) compliance with health measures and other COVID-19-based rules and regulation;

recognizing that safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work;

- (e) introduce, utilize and adapt teleworking and other new work arrangements so as to retain jobs and expand decent work opportunities through, among other means, regulation, social dialogue, collective bargaining, workplace cooperation and efforts to reduce disparities in digital access, respecting international labour standards and privacy and promoting data protection and work-life balance;
- (f) uphold the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means to provide certainty and legal protection to workers, while recognizing the extent of informality and the urgent need to ensure effective action to achieve the transition to formality and decent work;
- (g) implement, through public policy and enterprise practice, a transformative agenda for gender equality by:

- (i) ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, supported inter alia by pay transparency;
 - (ii) expanding policies providing adequate paid care leave and promoting a more balanced sharing of work and family responsibilities;
 - (iii) promoting employment creation and lifelong learning policies that close gender skills gaps;
 - (iv) investing in education, healthcare, social work, the care economy and other sectors, addressing understaffing and improving working conditions;
 - (v) removing legal and other types of barriers to entry to and advancement in education, training, employment and careers, including by combating gender stereotypes; and
 - (vi) preventing and protecting against gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work;
- (h) execute across the public and private sectors a transformative agenda for equality, diversity and inclusion aimed at eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work and discrimination on all grounds, including race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction and social origin, and taking into account the specific circumstances and vulnerabilities of migrants, indigenous and tribal peoples, people of African descent, ethnic minorities, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons living with HIV/AIDS;

C. Universal social protection

- (a) achieve universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection, including nationally defined social protection floors, ensuring that, at a minimum, over the life cycle, all in need have access to basic income security and to essential healthcare, recognizing the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health as more important than ever;
- (b) enhance access to unemployment protection to ensure support for workers who have lost their jobs and livelihoods due to the pandemic and to facilitate transitions;
- (c) provide access to adequate paid sick leave, and sickness benefits and health and care services, family leave and other family-friendly policies for all workers, ensuring coverage in cases of quarantine and self-isolation and developing faster delivery mechanisms for benefits;
- (d) provide for equitable and sustainable financing for social protection systems through effective resource mobilization as well as reinforced global solidarity and coordination to ensure that no one is left behind;
- (e) reinforce the essential role of the public sector in supporting well-functioning economies and societies, recognizing in particular the important role of public health and care systems in times of a health crisis and in the prevention of future shocks and pandemics;

D. Social dialogue

- (a) build upon the role that social dialogue, both bipartite and tripartite, has played in the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic in many countries and sectors, based on respect for and the promotion and realization of the enabling rights of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

- (b) promote social dialogue in particular to support delivery of the outcomes set out in this global call to action, including through governments consulting with social partners on designing and implementing national recovery plans and policies addressing the need for retention and creation of decent jobs, business continuity, and investment in priority sectors and areas, both public and private, to ensure a job-rich recovery;
- (c) strengthen the capacity of public administrations and employers' and workers' organizations to participate in such dialogue as the means to develop and implement regional, national, sectoral and local recovery strategies, policies and programmes.

II. ILO leadership and support of a human-centred recovery that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient

- 12.** The ILO, with its mandate for social justice and decent work, must play a leadership role with its constituents and in the international system in advancing a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. Through focused and accelerated implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration, it will strengthen its support of Member States' recovery efforts and leverage the support of other multilateral organizations and international institutions while contributing actively to the efforts of the United Nations system to expedite delivery of the 2030 Agenda.
- 13.** In order to help governments and employers' and workers' organizations build forward better from the crisis, the ILO will use all its means of action to support the design and implementation of recovery strategies that leave no one behind. To this end, the ILO will strengthen its support of Member States' efforts to:
 - (a) create inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and social development, increasing support for the development of policies and approaches that:
 - (i) generate employment-intensive investment;
 - (ii) strengthen active labour market policies;
 - (iii) promote an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises;
 - (iv) boost productivity through diversification and innovation;
 - (v) harness the fullest potential of technological progress and digitalization, including platform work, to create decent jobs and sustainable enterprises, enable broad social participation in its benefits and address its risks and challenges, including by reducing the digital divide between people and countries;
 - (vi) promote skills development opportunities that are responsive to labour market needs and support effective transitions for young people from education and training to work; and
 - (vii) promote guidance, training and employment services that provide older workers with the facilities, advice and assistance they may need to expand their choices, optimize their opportunities to work in good-quality, productive and healthy conditions until their retirement, and to enable active ageing;

- (b) protect all workers, including by strengthening policy advice, capacity-building and technical assistance in support of:
 - (i) sound labour relations and the promotion of legal and institutional frameworks based on international labour standards, including fundamental principles and rights at work, and a particular emphasis on occupational safety and health in the light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - (ii) prioritizing and mainstreaming strategies to address the informal economy and insecure forms of work, which have been particularly affected by the crisis, including through research, development cooperation and policy interventions and guidance; and
 - (iii) preserving jobs and increasing the resilience of labour markets to crises and pandemics;
 - (c) achieve universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection, including floors, that ensures income security and health protection and enables people, including the self-employed and workers in the informal economy, to cope with challenges in life and work such as those precipitated by the COVID-19 crisis;
 - (d) strengthen the capacity of labour administrations, labour inspectorates and other relevant authorities to ensure implementation of rules and regulations, especially regarding social protection and occupational safety and health;
 - (e) use social dialogue to design and implement recovery strategies, strengthening the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations to engage in national recovery strategies and to support their members in the recovery, including through the International Training Centre of the ILO and its training partners.
- 14.** Underlining the importance of multilateralism, particularly in addressing the COVID-19 crisis' impacts on the world of work, the ILO will strengthen cooperation with relevant multilateral and regional organizations and processes to achieve a strong and coherent global response in support of national recovery strategies, including in order to:
- (a) coordinate the provision of technical and financial support to maximize its beneficial impact on employment and decent work, with a special focus on the most vulnerable and affected people and the hardest-hit sectors;
 - (b) prioritize in national policy and development cooperation: respect for fundamental principles and rights at work; ratification and implementation in law and practice of international labour standards; skills development and lifelong learning and other active labour market policies; gender equality; occupational safety and health; and financing of the business continuity of enterprises disproportionately affected by the crisis, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (c) assist Member States in developing and implementing financing strategies with global support for comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems with the objective of comprehensive, adequate and sustainable universal social protection, including floors, on the basis of international labour standards;
 - (d) coordinate decent work objectives and capacity-building assistance more closely with international trade and investment policies to widen the benefits of international trade and investment and promote decent work, environmental sustainability and sustainable enterprises in supply chains, taking into account the

strong, complex and crucial links between social, trade, financial, economic and environmental policies;

- (e) promote fiscal, monetary and trade and investment policies that aim at achieving inclusive, sustainable and resilient economic growth as well as full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work, including by improving understanding of the potential beneficial macroeconomic effects of the human-centred approach set out in the ILO Centenary Declaration;
 - (f) reduce inequalities, formalize the informal economy, address insecure forms of work and promote an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises;
 - (g) advance research and improve data on the potential of the Sustainable Development Goals to generate decent work in order to help focus financing for development strategies on employment-intensive investments and a just transition to environmental sustainability, including in the circular economy, as an integral part of the recovery process;
 - (h) promote international cooperation and solidarity mechanisms to work towards COVID-19 vaccine equity and non-discriminatory COVID-19-related certification.
- 15.** The ILO will work with other multilateral institutions to convene a major policy forum, with modalities to be determined by the Governing Body, aimed at mobilizing a strong and coherent global response in support of Member States' human-centred recovery strategies that are inclusive, sustainable and resilient, including through joint initiatives and enhanced institutional arrangements among international and regional organizations.