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61st Session of the Commission for Social Development

Ministerial Forum: “Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

Tuesday, 7 February, 10:00 am-1:00 pm, Conference room 4

Draft Concept Note



1. Background

The Commission for Social Development will convene its sixty-first session from 6 to 15 February 2023 under the priority theme of “**Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”. The theme was decided by ECOSOC decision 2022/327.

The resolution “invites the Bureau of the Commission to continue to propose interactive dialogues, such as high-level events and ministerial and expert workshops that engage Member States and relevant stakeholders, so as to encourage dialogue and enhance the impact of its work, including by addressing the implementation of, follow-up to and review of the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda” (para 10).

In accordance with this decision, the Bureau decided that the Commission shall organize a Ministerial Forum on the priority theme. The Forum will provide an opportunity for Ministers and/or senior Government officials to share their national experiences in creating productive employment and decent work for all as a pathway to reduce inequality for accelerated recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and to fully implement the 2030 Agenda. The outcome of the Forum, together with that of the general discussion and the expected resolution on the priority theme will contribute to the work of the ECOSOC and the 2023 HLPF.

2. Context surrounding the priority theme

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened various forms of inequality. Uneven economic recovery is expected to further widen inequalities between countries unless effective policies are put in place. Chief among such policies are those that seek to create full and productive employment and decent work for all. Quality jobs are critical to tackling inequality through several pathways, notably, by increasing income and helping people escape poverty, promoting equality of opportunities, closing gaps between the rich and the poor, and empowering and improving the well-being of marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Workers in insecure forms of employment (particularly when involuntary), including those in temporary and part-time employment, self-employment, and workers facing irregular hours and interrupted working patterns, are at higher risk of informality and decent work deficits. This includes increased risks of unemployment, lower wages and income insecurity, higher occupational and health risks (due to poor induction, training, and supervision), weaker social security coverage, fewer training opportunities, and lack of access to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Over 2 billion workers around the world (or 60 per cent) work in the informal economy. Informal workers do not have the legal guarantees safeguarding their fundamental rights at work, including their right to equality and non-discrimination, social protection, voice and representation, and decent working conditions. Workers in the informal economy earn, on average, about 19 percent less than workers in formal employment, putting them at higher risk of poverty.

Informality is a major contributor to working poverty and inequality. A transition to formality is necessary if no one is to be left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Because of the multiple factors of informality and the heterogeneity within informal economy workers and enterprises, the transition to formality necessarily requires integrated, as well as nuanced and differentiated strategies. Strategies and interventions to support formalization should cover different types of policies – including integrated economic, social, and labour policies - to establish a comprehensive approach to formalization.

Certain disadvantaged socio-demographic groups face stubborn barriers in entering the labour market and accessing decent work. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and dramatically exacerbated inequalities in the labour market. The pandemic has hit hardest those groups who were already facing discrimination and marginalization in employment, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, as well as ethnic, religious, and other minorities in vulnerable situations.

Social protection benefits, including unemployment, maternity, disability, and sickness benefits, can ensure workers' income security, including in the case of shocks. At present, these benefits remain vastly underdeveloped. Only a third of the working-age population is covered by sickness benefits, 35.5 per cent of the global labour force has access to employment injury protection, and only 18.6 per cent of unemployed workers receive unemployment benefits.

3. Objectives

The objective of the Ministerial Forum is to facilitate the exchange of national and regional good practices and innovative approaches for creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the

COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Discussions will focus on national good practices implementing successful policies and strategies for creating more inclusive, equitable, and adaptable labour markets as well as policies that seek to create employment and decent work in new, sustainable, and growing sectors.

By facilitating exchange of national experiences and mutual learning, the Forum also aims to promote innovation in strategies and policies to leverage inclusive labour markets that can create productive employment and decent work opportunities to reduce inequality.

4. Structure and format of the discussion

The Ministerial Forum will be moderated by the Chair of the Commission. The Chair will open the session with brief remarks and then introduce the Ministers/Senior officials and invite them to make their interventions, which will be followed by an interactive discussion with questions and comments from the floor. Ministers/senior officials are requested to structure their interventions around concrete policies and strategies that are being pursued in their countries and regions and are effective in creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities. They are invited to highlight innovative approaches and lessons learned from their experiences. The outcomes of the discussions will be reflected in the Chair's summary, which will be one of the key inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC and the 2023 HLPF.

5. Guiding questions

- What policies and measures have been successful in your country or region in creating employment, enhancing the quality of jobs, fostering equal opportunities, and reducing inequalities in the labour market?
- What policies and measures have been enacted in your country and region to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19? Are these policies set to continue even as the main impacts of the pandemic are receding?
- The pandemic hit the most vulnerable hardest. What actions are needed to facilitate and support labour market inclusion of disadvantaged and excluded groups including, women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, minorities and indigenous peoples, and others vulnerable to discrimination and stigma?
- What type of integrated strategies can be taken to accelerate the transition from the informal to the formal economy?
- How can countries at different income levels achieve universal, comprehensive, and sustainable social protection systems, which cover all types of workers and are adapted to socio-economic transformations within societies?
- What policies and measures can support the creation of decent jobs in new, sustainable, and growing sectors, notably the green economy, platform economy, care economy, and social and solidarity economy?

Tentative time allocation for the panel discussion is as follows:

Speaker	Suggested Time
Chair: Opening remarks and introduction of panelists	15 minutes
Ministers/Senior officials	15 minutes per Minister
Moderated interactive discussion	Q&A (limited to 3 minutes per speaker)
	Dialogue with participants of the Commission (60 minutes)
Concluding remarks and Closing by the Ministers	5 minutes per minister
Concluding remarks and Closing by the Chair	5 minutes
	Total: 3 hours