



High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on “The Future of Work”

*Organized on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the
International Labour Organization – ILO*

10-11 April 2019

#ILO100 #MyFutureOfWork

Background

The year 2019 represents an important milestone for the United Nations as its first specialized agency, the International Labour Organization (ILO), marks its one-hundredth anniversary. The ILO was founded on the realization that clear rules were needed to ensure that economic progress went hand in hand with social justice, prosperity and peace for all. Such principles remain fundamental today as new forces driven by technological advancements, structural transformations, changing demographics, globalization and climate change rapidly reshape the world of work.

The future of work presents countless opportunities to reverse long-term decent work deficits, but it also presents serious challenges that could increase inequalities and joblessness if not well managed. How well countries adapt to such changes will be a major determinant in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As was the case in 1919 when the ILO was founded, decisive action is needed from all stakeholders in order to forge a positive development path that unlocks new opportunities for the future of work while mitigating growing inequalities and other uncertainties.

The onset of new technological advances – artificial intelligence, automation and robotics – are already creating vast opportunities for new jobs. Yet, those who lose their jobs as result of new technologies may be less equipped to seize new opportunities and may be added to the ranks of the long-term unemployed. Global dependence on technology means that the skills in demand today will not match the jobs of tomorrow. Skills acquisition and lifelong learning will be required for workers to remain agile and employable. The greening of economies holds the potential to create millions of new decent jobs as sustainable practices and clean technologies are adopted. Coherent policies are needed to provide a just transition for workers as existing jobs, working methods and skills are redefined. Changes in demographics with growing youth populations in some parts of the world and ageing populations in others place pressures on labour markets and social security systems. Yet, demographic shifts also mean new possibilities to transform more inclusive societies.

Over the last decade, there has been a rise in part-time employment, especially among women and youth. In the majority of countries with available information, part-time jobs

outpaced gains in full-time jobs between 2009 and 2015. In some cases, non-standard forms of work can be the entry door to the job market. However, these emerging trends can also lead to widespread insecurity.

In order to achieve the goal of decent work for all, increased efforts are necessary to ensure the full and equal participation of women in the labour market. Globally, women are paid less and are more likely to work in vulnerable categories of work, such as domestic workers. In the majority of countries, women in the informal economy live in households that are poor. Women also continue to bear the brunt of unpaid care and domestic work.

With more than 64 million unemployed youth worldwide and 145 million young workers living in poverty, youth employment remains a global challenge. Investing in lifelong learning mechanism in particular digital skills, in entrepreneurship and sectoral strategies that expand decent jobs and address the vulnerabilities of the most disadvantaged should be among the top policy priorities. Developing countries are experiencing additional challenges with high levels of informality and the need to transition these workers to formal employment which can help increase protection as well as enhance revenue for governments to improve and expand the provision of social protection measures, make investments in education and infrastructure. Additionally, many countries face the challenge of diversifying their economies away from low-productivity agriculture to higher value sectors like banking and finance, service provision, mobile and digital technologies, communications and manufacturing.

Forging a new path requires commitment and action from all stakeholders but particularly from governments and employers' and workers' organizations who will play a key role in devising human-centred policies that benefit economies and people. Social dialogue is key to developing effective policy responses that can help shape the future of work to achieve the best possible outcome for societies rather than technology determining our futures. Skills development, social protection, social dialogue, equal opportunity, occupation safety and health and adequate labour market regulations are essential components of the policy response to shape a future of work with sustained and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all.

Mandate

On 15 January 2019, the General Assembly in its resolution 73/282, decided to devote one day, during its seventy-third session, to the commemoration, within existing resources, of the one-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the International Labour Organization under the theme "The future of work" and to convene a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, to be held on 10 April 2019.

Objective

The overarching objective of the meeting is to share best practices, concrete solutions and ambitious recommendations for shaping the future of work with decent work for all.

Participants

UN Members States and Permanent observers of the General Assembly at the highest political level, including Heads of State and Government and ministers.

UN System Principals and multi-stakeholders including representatives from the private sector, workers' organisations, employers' organisations, youth representatives, academia and civil society.

Format

The high-level plenary meeting will be structured as follows:

- On 10 April, the opening and the commemorative plenary meeting will take place in the General Assembly Hall, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. under agenda item 14 entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields".
- In the afternoon, two consecutive interactive panels will be held from 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.
- On 11 April at 10:00 a.m. the commemorative plenary meeting in the General Assembly Hall will continue until the list of speakers is exhausted, to be followed by a closing segment.

The themes of the two afternoon panels will focus on:

1. Addressing Unfinished Commitments to Achieve Decent Work for All

New forces that are transforming the world of work come on the back of existing challenges which they threaten to exacerbate. Unemployment remains unacceptably high and billions of workers are in informal employment. 344 million jobs are needed by 2030, in addition to the 190 million jobs needed to address unemployment. Conditions of work need to be improved for the roughly 300 million working poor who live on \$1.90 a day. Millions of men, women and children are victims of modern slavery. Too many still work excessively long hours and millions still die of work-related accidents every year. Wage growth has not kept pace with productivity growth and the share of national income going to workers has declined. Inequalities remain persistent around the world. Women continue to earn around 20 per cent less than men. Even as growth has lessened inequality between countries, many of our societies are becoming more unequal. Millions of workers remain disenfranchised, deprived of fundamental rights and unable to make their voices heard.

2. Shaping the Future of Work

The transitions in the world of work driven by rapid changes in technology, demography and climate change will require decisive action. Extraordinary opportunities to improve the quality of working lives will come together with important challenges. A reinvigorated social contract is needed to make economic growth more inclusive and sustainable and provide working people with a fair share of economic development. A new set of regulations and policies should be designed to address non-standard forms of employment, social protection and employment relations, new business models and collective bargaining.

Outcome

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/282, the President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the panel discussions, which will be transmitted as an input to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in July 2019, as well as to the high-level political

forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the General Assembly to be held in September 2019. The summary will also be transmitted as an input to the deliberations of the 108th International Labour Conference in June 2019.

Guiding Questions

- Is the world on track to fulfil the SDG8 promise to achieve full employment and decent work for all by 2030? Is full employment still an attainable objective? What measures can be taken to overcome decent work deficits and accelerate the progress on the SDGs?
- How can developing countries and those furthest behind harness new technologies and opportunities to move people to more productive, better paid jobs that also promote environmental sustainability? What concrete solutions and best practises could be proposed to address these issues?
- What can be done to close the gender gaps in the labour market, empower women and promote gender equality? What are the opportunities and challenges to overcome inequalities?
- What are the skills needed to meet the future of work needs? How can comprehensive lifelong learning systems be built to enable people to acquire skills, reskill and up skill? What measures are needed to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and facilitate school to work transition?
- How can the social protection systems and floors be extended and evolve with the future of work to provide universal and sustainable protection from birth to old age in form of basic income guarantee and social services? What would be the most appropriate financing mechanisms and sources?
- What are the jobs of the future and how will the terms of employment differ? What are the types of regulations and policies needed to guarantee the respect of fundamental worker's rights and adequate living wage to all workers, including in the gig economy, regardless of their contractual arrangement or employment status? What should be done to address the non-standard forms of work?
- How could workers' and employers' organizations strengthen their representative legitimacy through innovative organizing techniques that reach those who are engaged in new business models, including through the use of technology?

Wednesday, 10 April 2019	
10:00 a.m. - 10:20 a.m. General Assembly Hall	Opening segment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés – President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly</i> • <i>H.E. Mr. António Guterres – Secretary-General of the United Nations</i> • <i>Mr. Guy Ryder – Director-General of the International Labour Organization</i>
10:20 a.m. - 10:50 a.m. General Assembly Hall	Statements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King – Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and President of the Economic and Social Council</i> • <i>Ms. Sharan Burrow – General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation</i> • <i>Mr. Erol Kiresepi – President of the International Organisation of Employers</i> • <i>Ms. Jolly Amatya – Secretariat of United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth</i>
10:50 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. General Assembly Hall	Commemorative plenary segment <i>Statements by the chairs of the regional groups and the host country</i> <i>Statements by Heads of State/Government</i> <i>Statements by Ministers</i> <i>Statements by Member States representatives and observers.</i>
3:00 p.m. - 3:10 p.m. Trusteeship Council Chamber	Welcoming remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés – President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly</i> • <i>Mr. Guy Ryder – Director-General of the International Labour Organization</i> • <i>H.E. Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker – President of the European Commission (video message)</i>
3:10 p.m. - 4:25 p.m. Trusteeship Council Chamber	Panel 1 – Addressing Unfinished Commitments to Achieve Decent Work for All Moderator: <i>Mr. Steven Greenhouse – Author, Former Labor and Workplace Reporter, New York Times</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Mr. Ernesto Murro – Minister of Labour, Uruguay</i> • <i>Ms. Reema Nanavaty – Self Employed Women's Association - SEWA, India</i> • <i>Mr. Mthunzi Mdwaba – CEO, TZoro IBC</i> • <i>Mr. Jeffrey D. Sachs – Director of the Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University</i>
4:25 p.m. - 5:45 p.m. Trusteeship Council Chamber	Panel 2 - Shaping the Future of Work Moderator: <i>Ms. Zain Asher – CNN International</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Ms. Anniken Hauglie – Minister of Labour of Norway</i> • <i>Mr. Ángel Gurría – Secretary-General, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)</i> • <i>Mr. Rob Acker – CEO, Salesforce.org</i> • <i>Ms. Winnie Byanyima – CEO, Oxfam</i> • <i>Ms. Laura Ripani – Principal Specialist at the Labor Markets Division, Inter-American Development Bank</i>
5:45 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Closing segment
Thursday, 11 April 2019	
10:00 a.m. General Assembly Hall	Commemorative plenary meeting (continued)
	Closing segment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés – President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly.</i>