

*Please check against delivery*



**International  
Labour  
Organization**

**High-Level Event on Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication  
Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond**

28 September 2021  
United Nations Headquarters, New York

Statement by  
**Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General**

---

**Mr. Secretary-General,  
Prime Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am honoured to follow Secretary-General Guterres and Prime Minister Holness in introducing this High-Level Event on Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication.

And I particularly want to thank Jamaica and Canada for their crucial leadership in the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond Initiative.

The pandemic is continuing to take human lives across the globe.

It has also thrown the world into profound economic and social crisis, adding to the suffering and misery it has inflicted.

In 2020, the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs were destroyed, and \$3.7 billion was wiped off income from labour.

The impact has been four times greater than that of the great financial crisis of 2008-9.

The struggle to overcome the virus continues but the pressing need before us now is to act to stimulate economic recovery which is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, and which puts the world on track to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To do this, I think we must learn the lessons of the last year and a half, and two of those lessons are already glaringly apparent.

Firstly, that the human cost of the pandemic has been a direct consequence of past policy failures.

The world was unprepared and millions were vulnerable because the majority of people had no social protection whatsoever.

Because six out of every ten work in the informal economy.

Because we had failed to invest in the basics of human security.

The unprecedented response measures put in place governments – including nearly 1,700 ad-hoc protection measures have certainly provided emergency relief for many – but the question is what happens next?

That brings us to the second lesson.

It is of course encouraging that the world has returned to an economic growth trajectory.

But it is equally alarming that it is so dramatically uneven.

Because the advanced countries have both the fiscal firepower to boost recovery and because they have access to vaccines they are, notwithstanding the great uncertainties and obstacles of the moment, bouncing back towards pre-crisis macro-economic aggregates.

But the situation for many of the developing and emerging economies is very different.

And this means, as the Secretary-General has reminded us, that the world is on a path of a “great divergence” which, if not corrected, would mean the exact opposite of leaving no one behind.

The contrary of building back better.

An abandonment of the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

A world of heightened inequality, poverty, instability and conflict.

The Secretary-General has already highlighted what the consequences of this would be, and pointed us towards the alternative of renewed global solidarity and a renewed social contract in “Our Common Agenda”.

This General Assembly, together with the international institutions participating today are uniquely placed to inject the financing and the political will to reset the recovery process accordingly.

The Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection proposed by the Secretary-General is designed to help to do just this.

To channel national and international, public and private financial flows to provide social protection floors for the 4 billion people who fall outside any existing coverage and to the creation of decent jobs, above all, in the green economy and the care economy on the scale which is now urgently needed.

The level of ambition is high because it would be irresponsible to be less ambitious.

The operationalisation of the Accelerator can build on solid foundations which are already in place.

The Climate Action for Jobs Initiative can and must be scaled up to promote just transition to carbon neutrality as we head for COP 26.

The USP 2030 Global Partnership must be the rallying point for universal social protection.

Excellencies,

The advances made through the Financing for Development Initiative likewise need to be taken forward and to scale not just to alleviate imminent debt crisis, but to unleash investment in inclusive recovery.

The IMF's allocation of \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights provides extraordinary opportunity for us to match needs with resources.

The Accelerator provides a mechanism for this.

The Global Call to Action for a Human-Centred Recovery adopted by the ILO Conference last June commits our organization to work with all others in the international system to these ends.

We will be convening national dialogues in our Member States for maximum ownership and buy in to national recovery strategies and a multilateral forum early next year with a view to reviewing progress and to scaling up commitments.

These, ladies and gentlemen, can be our milestones on the road to the World Social Summit proposed by the Secretary-General for 2025, but this is a road that we need to design and to finance today.

Thank you very much.