

**INFORMAL SPOTLIGHT SESSION - BUILDING BACK BETTER FROM THE BOTTOM UP:
COLLABORATION WITH MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION**

**2 February 2022, 12:00-12:50 EST
Concept Note**

Updated: 20 January 2022

Organizers: International Organisation of Employers (IOE), in collaboration with ILO/IOE/UNCTAD/ Associations representing MSMEs at local level.

Background:

The Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2019, has had a staggering start due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been taking millions of lives, and affecting the livelihoods of billions. Strong and continued progress on poverty eradication, employment creation and sustainable growth, education and gender equality has been slowed or even reversed. Without coherent collaboration with all stakeholders and across various systems there is a real risk that the 2030 Agenda will not be met.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and have specific challenges in building capacity to achieve the SDGs. They represent over 90% of companies and over half of employment globally therefore, it is critical they are given particular attention and efficient support in building back better. MSMEs, particularly in developing countries, suffered the most from the pandemic, with 60% of micro and 57% of small businesses strongly affected, compared with 43% of large firms. The pre-COVID-19 resilience score of micro and small firms was 16% lower than that of medium and large firms, according to a survey-based index constructed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the ILO Bureau for Employers Activities (ACT/EMP). Research has shown similar results with the share of enterprises considering closing temporarily or permanently being significantly higher for small and microenterprises (6 per cent for small enterprises and 12 per cent for microenterprises) when compared to medium-sized businesses and large enterprises, 3 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. Furthermore, a World Bank survey of more than 120,000 companies in 60 countries reported that only one in ten companies surveyed in low-income economies had received some sort of public support, compared with half of all businesses in high-income countries. There were also substantial disparities by firm size, with the probability of accessing policy support ranging from 25 per cent for micro firms to 43 per cent for large firms (World Bank 2021b).

This Spotlight Session will focus on MSMEs, their struggles and priorities in the current context and how multi-stakeholders' partnerships can support them, provide concrete and practical examples of collaboration with the private sector that can enhance recovery and reaching the SDGs.

The session will present reflections and stories from MSMEs - the backbone to all economies as reflected in the multi-media initiative "Business Heroes", launched by IOE. These businesses state their challenges and show how they have adapted to and survived during the past years facing the COVID-19 pandemic. The stories illustrate MSMEs struggles, resilience and successes, from addressing informality to promoting good governance and legislative frameworks.

This Spotlight Session would draw on experiences and lessons from this multimedia work and diverse participants from different sectors, international organizations and countries. It will showcase the importance of working together and providing targeted support to MSMEs during the COVID-19 recovery.

This session will seek to create open and practical dialogue focused on work on the ground and on accelerating the best practices with a record of success.

Objective:

- This session will focus on the role of MSMEs as the backbone to economies and how their needs could be addressed to support a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and accelerate SDG implementation.

Tentative agenda

Moderator – Akustina Morni, IOE Senior Adviser

12:00-05 Introductory video on Business Heroes from MSMEs

12:05-40 Interactive panel discussion on three themes:

MSME challenges, regulatory requirements- environment and government support, collaboration and partnerships with international institutions

- **Farid Hegazy**, ILO Bureau for Employers Activities (ACT/EMP) Specialist, Egypt
- **Patricia Veringa-Gieskes**, Business owner and entrepreneur, Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Dr Chantal Line Carpentier**, Chief of UNCTAD New York Office

12:40-50 closing video and remarks