SDG Action Segment for Goal 8

Organized by ILO, UNIDO, Business and Industry Major Group, Workers and Trade Unions Major Group

1. Background and objectives

The SDG 8 Action Segment explored how innovative collaborations can leverage technological advancements to promote inclusive economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all. Key topics for the discussion included the impact of technological developments on labor markets, rights and protections, productivity; governance; social dialogue, and how new and emerging partnerships can help to ensure the transition to digital economies benefits all workers, businesses and regions. It brought together a wide range of stakeholders and eminent speakers including Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill, Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies, Ms. Sonya Mohamed Janahi, IOE Vice-President for Asia, Ms. Paola Simonetti, Director of the ITUC Equality Department, Ms. Sarah Steinberg, Head of Global Public Policy Partnerships at LinkedIn, Mr. Adarsh Desai, Principal at Deloitte, and Mr. Marco Pérez, Member, International Policy Secretariat at UGT Spain. Member state representatives and the Major Group on Children and Youth also contributed to the Segment with was moderated by Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Special Representative to the UN and Director of the Office for the United Nations, and Mr. Ralf Bredel, UNIDO Director and Representative to the UN in New York.

2. Key issues discussed

- Technological transformations including generative AI is driving rapid changes in the world of work, the scope of occupations, and how people work within existing occupations;
- Digital technologies can contribute to economic growth, job creation and innovation, enhance productivity and competitiveness, optimize supply chains, and help MSMEs specially form developing countries connect to new markets;
- At the same time, generative AI brings about disruptions raising questions about job quality, labour rights and protections, access to skills and technology and social and political implications;
- Infrastructure bottlenecks, limited computing capacity and the cost of and unequal access to skills and technology can affect the ability of developing countries to harness the benefits of digital technologies;
- To this end, it was important to ensure that this transformation does not broaden existing productivity divides and digital gaps, replicate inequalities, lower labour standards or come at the expense of workers.

3. Partnerships and opportunities

- There was a need to foster genuine partnerships bringing relevant stakeholders including governments, international organizations, employers', and workers' organizations and civil society together to address digital transformations and drive sustainable economic growth;
- Governments, education providers, the private sector and youth organizations should work together to ensure educations systems are geared towards the skills of tomorrow;
- Social dialogue and collective bargaining is essential in the development of appropriate policy and governance frameworks ensuring the digital transformation benefits all workers;
- The involvement of the private sector including through public private partnerships is equally important;
- A concrete example was the Tech-Labor Partnership between the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and Microsoft which focusses on sharing in-depth information on AI technology trends; incorporating worker perspectives in the development of AI technology; and helping shape public policy that supports the technology skills and needs of frontline workers.

4. Policy recommendations for enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships

- There is a need for appropriate policy, governance and regulatory frameworks to bridge productivity, digital and gender divides, promote business sustainability, workers' rights, innovation and investments, and ensure digital technologies benefit all workers, businesses and regions;
- This should be supported by international collaboration, capacity development, and investment in digital infrastructure, data collection and research;
- It was important to ensure a just transition towards digital economies including through continued skilling, reskilling and upskilling; the promotion of labour rights, social protection, and the protection of data and privacy; algorithmic transparency; and a particular focus on women, young people and people with disabilities;
- To leverage opportunities presented by digital technologies, special emphasis should be placed on supporting MSMEs, including through capacity-building, addressing regulatory burdens and facilitating access to finance;
- Reference was made to the upcoming discussion at the International Labour Conference around a standard setting process on platform work and the importance of collective bargaining and occupational health and safety in this context;
- More broadly, technological advancements should be leveraged to accelerate the implementation of SDG 8.