

2025 HLPF Thematic Review
Briefing on the outcomes of Expert Group Meetings on in-focus SDGs in preparation for
the 2025 High-level Political Forum
Thursday, 27 February 2025
Conference Room 12
3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Technical Briefing on the UN Expert Group Meeting on SDG 8

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Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Colleagues.

On behalf of Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Special Representative to the UN and Director of the Office for the United Nations, I would like to share a few issues discussed and recommendations made at the Expert Group Meeting on SDG 8 held in New York on 6 and 7 February 2025, and organized by UN DESA and ILO together with partner UN entities.

The purpose of the meeting was to review progress on SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth and develop technical, evidence-based policy recommendations to inform the 2025 High-Level Political Forum. The meeting gathered 65 experts, and 73 written contributions were provided from academia, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society.

The EGM focused on a number of thematic areas, reflecting pressing challenges and opportunities related to SDG 8. These were around the following areas:

Global Economic and Employment Trends. Participants noted:

- Sluggish economic growth, rising inequalities, and labor market fragmentation;
- That the potential of emerging sectors remained untapped; and that
- Technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence and automation redefined labor markets and skill requirements.

On SDG 8 Monitoring and Data Quality, reference was made to:

- Improvements regarding data availability, harmonized approaches and labour force surveys; and
- Persistent gaps regarding institutional capacity, data disaggregation, informal employment, and the complexity of work arrangements.

Regarding Digital Economies and the Future of Work, it was noted that

- Platform work lacked regulatory protections which left workers vulnerable, and that
- AI and automation presented both opportunities and challenges for employment.

Regarding the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, participants stressed that

- Informality remained a systemic issue, especially for women and vulnerable groups, and noted

- Barriers such as limited access to finance, weak legal frameworks, and inadequate social protections.

On Decent Work in Fragile contexts, it was noted that

- Conflicts and crises exacerbated decent work deficits, with displaced populations facing unique employment challenges, and that
- A lack of investment and economic infrastructure hindered job creation.

Fundamental principles and rights at work were:

- Affected by implementation gaps challenging their effective exercise, and the
- Continued prevalence of forced and child labor called for reinvigorated action.

The criticality of social protection to promote decent work, inclusive growth and resilience was emphasized

On trade and Investment, participants observed that:

- Global trade shifts and supply chain disruptions impacted employment stability;
- The impact of regulations and compliance requirements on SMEs should be taken into consideration, and that
- Trade policies needed to uphold standards while ensuring SMEs were not left behind.

It was also observed that

- Youth employment and skills mismatch remained challenges, while
- Older workers faced discrimination despite increasing workforce participation rates.

And finally, on financing the implementation of SDG 8, reference was made to fiscal constraints limiting progress, particularly in low-income economies.

I would now like to highlight eight key recommendations coming out of the EGM. These are:

- To foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, macroeconomic strategies that generate employment, reduce inequalities, and empower women economically should be considered. This should be complemented by economic diversification and sector-specific policies, with a focus on SMEs. Labour market institutions and social dialogue should be strengthened to ensure fair labour practices and improve working conditions.
- To expand social protection and address informality, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that safeguards workers in all types of employment and reduces financing gaps to ensure coverage. Policies that encourage the transition to formal employment will contribute to more inclusive labour markets.
- To align the digital transformation with decent work, it is essential to improve working conditions and strengthen protections in the digital and platform economy. At the same time, access to digital skills and technology should be promoted.
- To enhance labour rights and eliminate exploitation, it is essential to promote poverty eradication, access to education, and social protection. Strengthening compliance with international labour standards is crucial to uphold workers' rights and foster fair employment practices.

- To leverage trade and investment for decent work, it is important to foster productivity growth and economic diversification. This should be complemented by integrating labour provisions into trade agreements and promoting sustainable supply chains.
- To bridge generations and ensure inclusive labour markets, it is crucial to expand skills development, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship programs for youth while at the same time supporting lifelong learning and reskilling initiatives for older workers. Leveraging opportunities in emerging sectors, such as the care economy, can drive job creation and foster economic inclusion for all age groups.
- To ensure a just and inclusive transition to a sustainable economy, it is important to promote investments in green jobs and industries, and support reskilling and upskilling in emerging sectors.
- And finally, to ensure sustainable and innovative financing for SDG 8, it is essential to mobilize blended finance models leveraging diverse funding sources.

In terms of next steps:

- The Meeting report will be finalized with detailed policy recommendations; and
- Substantive policy inputs will be refined and incorporated into a technical paper for the 2025 HLPF review of SDG 8.

In conclusion, the UN Expert Group Meeting on SDG 8 provided a critical forum to review trends and address challenges and opportunities in achieving sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. The refined policy recommendations will guide deliberations at the HLPF this year ensuring decent work for all in an evolving economy and world of work.