

14th African Regional Meeting

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 3–6 December 2019

AFRM.14/D.4(Rev.)

Abidjan Declaration

Advancing Social Justice: Shaping the future of work in Africa

Realizing the potential for a future of work with social justice

Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates from 49 African countries having met at the 14th ILO African Regional Meeting from 3 to 6 December 2019 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in the ILO's Centenary year 2019, which also marked the 60th year of the Organization's presence in the continent, with the aim of forging a regional framework to unleash Africa's potential for inclusive growth and shaping a future of work with social justice;

Recalling the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019, and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, which provides a road map for a regional agenda;

Recognizing that transformative processes need to be accelerated, for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Free Trade Area;

Acknowledging that improvements have been made in economic growth, reduction of poverty, average real wages and average levels of education, and that with its largely young and energetic population of 1.3 billion, and its abundance of natural resources, Africa's potential for further growth is promising;

Acknowledging, however, that serious concerns remain with rising inequalities, unemployment, underemployment, informality, young people that are not in education, employment or training, child and forced labour, human trafficking, governance gaps, gender gaps, working poverty, low social protection coverage, and unsustainable rural–urban migration;

Acknowledging that climate change poses a major threat to sustainable development today and in the future;

Recognizing that addressing the development challenges requires structural transformation through value-addition across the broad sectors of agriculture, manufacturing and services, domestic resource mobilization, investment in the care economy and improving productivity;

Reaffirming that ILO governance should be democratized as a matter of priority by ensuring a fair representation of all regions and establishing the principle of equality among member States,

Adopt this sixth day of December of the year two thousand and nineteen this Declaration, which shall be known as the Abidjan Declaration.

Shaping an African Decent Work Agenda: Priorities

1. Building on the human-centred approach to the future of work, the main priorities for the African region will be built around the Centenary Declaration. We thus commit to:
 - (a) making decent work a reality for Africa's youth, developing skills, technological pathways and productivity for a brighter future in Africa, transforming Africa's informal and rural economy for decent work, and respecting international labour standards, promoting social dialogue and ensuring gender equality;
 - (b) strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through:
 - (i) investing in human capital by strengthening education, skilling, reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning to leverage technology and the new types of jobs it helps create;
 - (ii) tackling gender inequality and discrimination;
 - (iii) progressively extending sustainable social protection coverage;
 - (iv) supporting the role of the private sector as a principal source of economic growth and job creation by promoting an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, in order to generate decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all;
 - (v) supporting the role of the public sector as a significant employer and provider of quality public services;
 - (vi) targeted interventions in countries in situations of fragility;
 - (vii) creating decent work and productive employment for all, with particular emphasis on youth, women, persons with disabilities and other groups vulnerable to discrimination;
 - (viii) promoting entrepreneurship;
 - (ix) ensuring freedom to innovate and experiment, as well as voice representation and rights for youth;
 - (x) striving for an enabling environment for, and promoting where appropriate, cross-border social dialogue to foster decent work, including for vulnerable workers in global supply chains; and
 - (xi) continuing to promote the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy with strong emphasis on supporting the tripartite constituents;

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- (c) strengthening the efficiency of the institutions of work to ensure adequate protection of all workers through:
 - (i) strengthening institutions of social dialogue, tripartism, productivity improvement and labour administration;
 - (ii) reaffirming the continued relevance of the employment relationship as a means of providing certainty and legal protection to workers;
 - (iii) ensuring effective and comprehensive action to achieve transition to formality in conformity with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204);
 - (iv) strengthening and modernizing labour laws, regulations and processes, drawing on international labour standards and respecting, promoting and realizing fundamental principles and rights at work;
 - (v) promoting fair and effective labour migration governance; and
 - (vi) strengthening the capacity of the social partners to engage in social dialogue at all levels;
 - (d) promoting inclusive and sustainable economic development and growth, full and productive freely chosen employment and decent work for all, through:
 - (i) facilitating the promotion of structural transformation with emphasis on agriculture and rural economies and food security;
 - (ii) enhancing productivity;
 - (iii) improving working conditions, in particular occupational safety and health;
 - (iv) improving the environment for sustainable enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (v) promoting cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy; and
 - (vi) promoting growth towards a green economy and just transition;
 - (e) strengthening synergies between the ILO and institutions in Africa, namely the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, and the three labour administration training centres (African Regional Labour Administration Centre, *Centre régional africain d'administration du travail*, and Arab Centre for Labour Administration) as these play a supportive role in the implementation of the African Decent Work Agenda priority areas.

Time for action

2. In the period leading up to the 15th African Regional Meeting, we request the Office to provide constituents with enhanced support to achieve the above mentioned priorities by developing an implementation plan that will be presented to the 338th Session (March 2020) of the Governing Body. The implementation plan will contain the following:
 - (a) specific and concrete actions for creating an enabling environment for sustainable businesses;
 - (b) measures to enhance productivity growth;

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- (c) comprehensive policy guidance and technical support for skills development;
 - (d) comprehensive measures for removing policy and regulatory barriers to formalization, in line with Recommendation No. 204, and enhancement of competitiveness and sustainability of formal sector enterprises;
 - (e) comprehensive measures for progressive extension of social protection coverage;
 - (f) measures to address gender inequality and discrimination;
 - (g) comprehensive measures for a just transition;
 - (h) capacity building of social partners; and
 - (i) decent work and the reduction of inequalities.
- 3.** The implementation plan will be presented to a special meeting of the African Tripartite Group at the beginning of the 338th Session (March 2020) of the ILO Governing Body.
 - 4.** The adopted plan will be part of the document to be presented to the Governing Body as per requirement.
 - 5.** The mid-term review is to take place in 2021 on the margins of the 4th Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment to be held in Eswatini.
 - 6.** The Office will prepare a report on the implementation of the plan for review by the 15th African Regional Meeting.