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WEBINAR

How employment and decent work can contribute to peace and social cohesion in the time of the COVID-19 crisis

Concept note and programme

28 September 2020

Objective

The virtual event is an ILO initiative in partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to **discuss the key contribution of employment and decent work to peacebuilding, social cohesion and social justice**, in particular in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The event, which will be moderated by INTERPEACE, will also showcase good practices and challenges, and foster debate among participants.

Background

The ILO has been engaged in peacebuilding since its foundation in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended the first World War, in line with its constitutional principle that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.

The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) also plays a central role in the United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve deadly conflict around the world, by fostering international support for nationally-owned and nationally-led peacebuilding efforts.

Conflicts and disasters have serious implications for the world of work, while poverty, unemployment and decent work deficits can themselves become triggers of vulnerability and fragility. Decent work, employment and predictable sources of income are not only central to discouraging conflict, they are a means



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to share peace dividends. Engaging in productive work is often effective in bringing people together and addressing grievances through improved governance, social dialogue, employment, protection and a rights-based approach. These opportunities are essential for rebuilding broken communities and increasing resilience to future shocks, in particular in the current COVID-19 crisis.

Countries that are already experiencing fragility, protracted conflict, climate change and forced displacement will face multiple burdens as a result of the pandemic.

At the same time, the recent violence and demonstrations in several countries show the levels of discontent and mistrust and that social cohesion cannot be maintained if lack of opportunity, particularly for youth and women, lack of contact and interactions across different social groups, and grievances over inequality and social injustice are not dealt with properly.

Indeed the COVID-19 crisis could potentially ignite or exacerbate these grievances, especially over access to health services, decent jobs and secure livelihoods, which are fragility and conflict drivers that could further undermine development, peace and social cohesion.

With the adoption in 2017 of the landmark [Recommendation on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience \(No. 205\)](#) and the launch of the [Jobs for Peace and Resilience global flagship programme](#), the ILO has recently reinvigorated its mandate in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and fully equipped itself to contribute to more peaceful and resilient societies through the promotion of employment and decent work.

In June 2019, at the Centenary International Labour Conference, the relevance of the ILO in the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus was re-emphasized through [the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#).

An ILO, PBSO and Switzerland partnership to enhance the contribution of employment and decent work to peace

The ILO, the PBSO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank have jointly developed an [analytical framework](#) and principles for action to strengthen the peacebuilding impact of employment interventions.



While evidence on the direct contribution of employment to peacebuilding processes is scarce, research findings confirm that **unemployment, decent work deficits (such as lack of social dialogue and fundamental rights) and lack of access to livelihoods can be key contributing factors to conflict through three main drivers:**

- Lack of **opportunity** such as youth employment, women's economic and social empowerment;
- Lack of **contact and social cohesion** across different social groups; and
- Existence of ***grievances arising from inequality, exclusion, and feelings of injustice.***

Based on this conclusion, the ILO and the PBSO are reinforcing their cooperation to sustain peace and foster development through employment creation and decent work in conflict-affected situations with the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (United Nations and International Organisations Division, Directorate of Political Affairs). In particular, they have agreed to:

- Achieve greater peacebuilding impact of employment interventions in conflict-affected countries by strengthening the employment expertise of PBSO and the peacebuilding expertise of ILO and its constituents;
- Enhance the ILO and PBSO capacity to build and share knowledge on the contribution of employment to peacebuilding through different facilities including the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and events such as the annual Geneva Peace Week; and
- Strengthen linkages between the PBSO and Geneva-based peace initiatives.

This webinar comes as a concrete initiative in the framework of the joint ILO/PBSO/Swiss programme in order to highlight the key role of employment and decent work in building peace.



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Programme

Date: 28 September 2020

Time: 3.30 p.m.-5 p.m. (Central European Time)

9.30 a.m.-11 a.m. (Eastern Time)

Opening Remarks:

- **Mr. Guy Ryder**, Director-General, ILO
- **Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco**, Assistant Secretary-General, PBSO
- **H.E. Mr. Ambassador Félix Baumann**, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

Panellists:

- **Mr. Maman Sidikou**, Executive Secretary, G5 Sahel
- **Ms. Muferihat Kamil**, Minister of Peace, Ethiopia
- **Ms. Jenan Mubarak**, Chairperson of the Iraqi Center for Women Rehabilitation & Employment (ICWRE) and Head of Iraqi Peace Net
- **Ms. Elvia Mejía Fernandez**, Manager of the Territorially Focused Development Program (PDET) of the Sierra Nevada and Perijá, Colombia
- **Mr. Omar Faruk Osman**, General Secretary, Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU)
- **Ms. Lindiwe Sephomolo**, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Lesotho Employers and Business

Moderator:

Ms. Renée Larivière, Senior Director for Programme Management, INTERPEACE