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Update on the Alliance 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Summary: This document presents an overview of the purpose, structure and progress to date of Alliance 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It describes the process of establishing the Alliance, its governance, key implementation milestones and main upcoming activities.

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Related documents: GB.332/POL/3.

Background and rationale of Alliance 8.7

1. Some 40 million people globally are victims of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking; 25 million of them are in forced labour and 15 million in forced marriage, with girls and women disproportionately affected. There is little evidence of a reduction in the prevalence of forced labour since the first statistics were gathered in 2005. While child labour declined by 38 per cent from 2000 to 2016, the pace of progress has slowed. Some 152 million children – 88 million boys and 64 million girls – are in child labour; 73 million of them are in hazardous work. Girls are particularly vulnerable to a “double burden” of involvement in child labour outside the home, as well as spending long hours doing domestic work in their own homes.
2. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls upon the international community to respond urgently to these challenges. Under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 on decent work and economic growth, all countries committed to achieving target 8.7: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”
3. At the current rates of progress, we will fall short of target 8.7; there is an urgent need to accelerate action. This requires filling data gaps, coordinating research agendas and improving knowledge-sharing arrangements. In some areas, the problems and solutions need to be better understood and, in others, innovative solutions offer the possibility of accelerating gender-sensitive action. New approaches need to be tested, the potential of technology must be fully exploited, and new and enhanced funding streams must be secured.
4. Strengthened collaboration between governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations and other public, private and civil society organizations, and across the United Nations (UN) system, offers an invaluable opportunity to achieve the needed breakthrough. This is recognized by SDG 17 on the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, which calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. A step change in financing for development is needed; domestic resource mobilization must be strengthened, and developed countries need to implement fully their official development assistance commitments and deepen trade ties with developing countries.
5. The close linkages between SDG 8 and target 8.7 and other SDGs, notably SDG 1 on ending poverty, SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions are patently apparent. An integrated response is needed and that requires, among other measures, taking steps to ensure a particular focus on forced labour and child labour in efforts to achieve related SDGs.
6. Against the backdrop of UN reform, the Alliance aims to promote greater coherence and synergies among UN agencies and at national levels. In driving cooperation and policy coherence, Alliance 8.7 provides a means to ensure that the ILO’s value added in the UN – tripartism, normative action and social dialogue – is fully recognized and incorporated in national, regional and global SDG processes as well as in UN reform measures.

Establishment and objectives of Alliance 8.7

7. In September 2016 the Office, along with other UN agencies, governments, social partners and development partners supported the launch of Alliance 8.7, an inclusive global

partnership committed to achieving target 8.7.¹ Alliance 8.7 has three strategic objectives: (i) increasing collaborative action on target 8.7, ensuring acceleration, focus and coherence; (ii) driving innovation and scaling up solutions; and (iii) providing a platform to engage in dialogue and to share knowledge and information.

8. To inform the strategy of Alliance 8.7, ensure the concerns of the ILO's tripartite constituents were reflected in it, and to secure the required commitment, the Office carried out a careful consultation process. Meetings were held with countries from South Asia (Thimphu, July 2016); West and North Africa (Abidjan, September 2016); South-East Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, September 2016); the Americas (Buenos Aires, February 2017); sub-Saharan Africa (Addis Ababa, June 2017); Europe and Central Asia (Budapest, June 2017); and the Pacific (Nadi, October 2017).
9. In February 2017, the Office convened a workshop at Wilton Park, United Kingdom, to further gather input from UN partners, governments, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society, and to set the initial strategic direction of Alliance 8.7.
10. In November 2017, the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour was held in Buenos Aires. For the first time, this Global Conference also included forced labour as a thematic topic, furthering alignment of the worldwide movement against child labour with target 8.7. The outcome document, the Buenos Aires Declaration,² reinforced the global commitment to achieving target 8.7; in addition, 96 countries and organizations made concrete pledges to this end.

Governance structure and partners

11. Alliance 8.7 is led by a Global Coordinating Group (GCG) that meets regularly to review progress and provide strategic direction to the Alliance, and liaise with other SDG partnerships. The composition of the GCG reflects the diverse partnership base of the Alliance. Seats are allocated to governments representing geographical regions, workers' and employers' organizations, civil society, UN and regional intergovernmental organizations.³ The Alliance is currently chaired by Australia, and Argentina is the deputy chair. The chair and deputy chair positions will rotate.
12. The Office serves as the secretariat of Alliance 8.7.
13. Alliance 8.7 Action Groups have been established covering four themes: (i) Migration, co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF; (ii) Rule of Law and Governance, chaired by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); (iii) Conflicts and Humanitarian Settings, chaired by UNICEF; and (iv) Supply Chains, chaired by the ILO. These Action Groups support country-level implementation by conducting research, disseminating knowledge, developing tools and mobilizing resources.

¹ See: <https://www.alliance87.org/>.

² See: https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_597667/lang-en/index.htm.

³ See: <https://www.alliance87.org/about/the-alliance/>.

14. There are currently over 150 partners in the Alliance, who support or implement initiatives towards achieving target 8.7. Partners commit to promote or realize international human rights standards, including applicable international labour standards. Partnership is open to governments, international and regional organizations, workers' organizations, employer and business membership organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions and other relevant stakeholders and networks.
15. Global commitments are translated into direct action through a "pathfinder country" strategy. Pathfinder countries are those that commit to going further or faster to achieve target 8.7. They implement new actions, try new approaches and share the learning derived from this. Any UN member State may become a pathfinder.
16. The ILO Flagship International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) is the main means by which the Office supports the implementation of the Alliance 8.7 strategy. Operational in 51 countries, IPEC+ provides support to member States, constituents and communities to combat child labour and forced labour. It also supports global research and advocacy.
17. The ILO business networks on child labour and on forced labour contribute to the work of the Supply Chains Action Group of Alliance 8.7, and provide a forum for frank exchange of experience in addressing child labour and forced labour in supply chains.⁴ They also promote collaboration, consultation and joint action in ILO member States.

Results and next steps

18. Alliance 8.7 has assembled a broad coalition committed to collaborating to achieving target 8.7. Forced labour and child labour have been accorded greater priority in the strategies of numerous governments and other institutions that participate in the Alliance, an essential step in accelerating progress. The focus on upholding internationally recognized human rights, particularly as enshrined in fundamental ILO Conventions, and a tripartite approach has facilitated a more coherent and integrated approach to tackling these challenges.
19. Alliance 8.7 has received financial support, including through support to IPEC+, from development partners including the Governments of France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States. In addition, ILO business networks receive support through public-private partnerships with member companies and the UN Global Compact, as well as from state development partners. The Office has allocated Regular Budget funding to provide the secretariat of Alliance 8.7; however, additional resources are needed to strengthen the Alliance 8.7 communications strategy and the implementation of the pathfinder country strategy.
20. Three of the four Action Groups have held planning meetings, agreed initial plans of action, and facilitated enhanced collaboration, not least among UN agencies.
21. The opportunity to become an Alliance 8.7 pathfinder has received a robust response. To date 15 countries have formally requested to participate as pathfinder countries: Albania, Chile, Fiji, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uganda and Viet Nam. A national strategy workshop took place in Madagascar (October 2018), resulting in an initial road map to achieve target 8.7.

⁴ See: <https://www.alliance87.org/action/business-networks/>.

22. At the regional and subregional levels, Alliance 8.7 works closely with initiatives aimed at achieving target 8.7, such as the Regional Initiative: Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour,⁵ as well as with other regional and subregional initiatives of the African Union, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation,⁶ the Bali Process⁷ and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Alliance 8.7 is also closely working with other relevant organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and groups of countries such as the G20.
23. Significant progress has been made in fostering the sharing of data and knowledge. In 2018, the UN University, a partner of Alliance 8.7, launched the Delta 8.7 Knowledge Platform, which brings together the most useful data, evidence, research and news, analyses cutting-edge data, and helps users understand the data so that it can be translated into effective policy.⁸
24. During the 2017 UN General Assembly, the Alliance presented global estimates of child labour and of modern slavery, to provide governments and other stakeholders with an updated statistical analysis of the challenge ahead. In 2018, the ILO, as a contribution to Alliance 8.7, published global reports on both child labour and forced labour. Drawing on the data from the Global Estimates and other research, these landmark reports distilled key lessons learned about what mix of policies and programmes are most likely to accelerate progress, and under what conditions.
25. In 2018, a G20 Strategy to eradicate child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery in the world of work,⁹ was endorsed at the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting. This Strategy requests the support of Alliance 8.7 in identifying high-risk sectors, developing appropriate policy responses, building capacities, and measuring progress.
26. In 2019, Alliance 8.7 will publish a report to take stock of existing evidence on the prevalence of child labour and forced labour in global supply chains, in response to a request made by the G20 in 2017.
27. During the ILO Centenary, at the next high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) in July 2019¹⁰ and during the UN General Assembly in September 2019,¹¹ countries will review progress towards achieving SDG 8, including target 8.7, including under the voluntary national review mechanism. At the HLPF, Alliance 8.7 will publish a global report on efforts made in pathfinder countries to tackle forced and child labour, and the catalysing role of Alliance 8.7. Also in 2019, progress in implementing pledges made at the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour will be assessed.

⁵ See: <http://www.iniciativa2025alc.org/en>.

⁶ See: <http://www.saarc-sec.org/>.

⁷ See: <https://www.baliprocess.net/ad-hoc-group/working-group-on-trafficking-in-persons/>.

⁸ See: <https://delta87.org/>.

⁹ See: <https://g20.argentina.gob.ar/en/documents>; and <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/2018-09-07-employment.html#annex2>.

¹⁰ See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019>.

¹¹ See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/summit2019>.

28. The V Global Conference on Child Labour will provide Alliance 8.7 partners further opportunity to take stock of progress made, generate more political will, accelerate action and adjust the G20 Strategy as needed.
29. The Supply Chains Action Group will hold a planning meeting in Africa in 2019 to provide a forum for exchange of experiences and develop a second work plan, covering 2020–21. The Rule of Law and Governance Action Group will hold its initial planning meeting in 2019.
30. To implement the pathfinder country strategy, in 2019 Alliance 8.7 will organize planning workshops in 14 countries. These workshops result in joint plans of action that serve as Alliance 8.7 road maps in the countries concerned. The successful implementation of the pathfinder strategy will be critical to the overall success of the Alliance.