



C20 inputs at the 2nd G20 Employment WG

Working patterns, business organisation and production process in the Digitalisation Era

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1. Labour and Human Rights

The G20 has a special responsibility due to its dimension and its economic and political power. As civil society organizations from all over the world, we think this responsibility is particularly relevant in the way G20 member countries shape, regulate and protect **labour and employment**, that is all the persons participating in the productive process. The guiding reference to play this role is provided by the **2030 Agenda** and, more strongly, by the framework of **Human Rights**, which clearly set the universal commitment for justice, equal treatment for women and men, no distinctions, decent work for all. More clearly they show how **labour and human economic activity are the participation to the building of a dignified human society**. But recent decades have been marked by a falling labour share of income, rising inequalities and the increasingly difficult international and regional co-operation. These disparities could be further influenced by technological diffusion, including the automation of tasks and intermediary functions but also the outsourcing and segmentation of process delivery along value chains enabled by new communication systems. The G20 has the duty to ensure internally a full respect of the HRs and, beyond its borders, to contribute to strengthen the multilateral frameworks responsible for protecting, this way, labour and employment. For this, we recommend a renewed commitment of G20 within the ILO to broaden and strengthen international and national laws protecting decent work. But we request as well G20 members to undertake responsibility while signing international trade agreements that directly and indirectly provide or deny spaces for Human Rights and decent work in partner countries.

More widely, **Business and Human Rights (BHR) framework** is one of the most important issues to address human rights in the global supply chains of the business conducts. There has been strong political momentum for BHR in the international community since the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) have been adopted in 2011. This year will mark the 10th anniversary since the adoption, which requires all countries to launch a National Action Plan including Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD). There is a strong trend to legislate the mandatory HRDD, especially in Europe, but the progress made is not enough at the global level. Therefore we call G20 in assuming a strong initiative to *approve internally National Action Plans with HRDD and to foster this international initiative.*

2. A demanding transition

For several years the world has been engaged in a **demanding transition**, due to different factors. The challenges coming from climate change and environmental degradation, the evolution and change of economic power among nations and regions, the drastic advancement of digitalization and scientific and technological innovation (STI) pushed the productive systems towards a transition difficult to drive. In this context, the COVID-19 disaster made a dramatic impact forcing the economies to fast measures, forcing

remote working everywhere, with sometimes destructive consequences on workers and in general on the world of work.

The impact of the reaction to the COVID emergency, reaching an already changing context, will produce a strong influence on the organization of productive systems, with possible permanent changes and a highly increased relevance of remote working and use of digital opportunities. This change won't be neutral and **calls for all public actors on a special responsibility** to avoid that such a transition, while increasing opportunities in particular from the consumer side, could have a dangerous impact on workers and citizens, increasing exploitation and fuelling inequalities, undermining the social fabric and, ultimately, weakening our societies.

The concern on the evolution of labour and on the political response needed to provide respect and protection to all people involved in the productive process has to be built with a **holistic approach to the role of the economy**: the guiding coherence that obliges to social protection and to ensure decent work must lead to ask a **clear co-responsibility of all economic actors** who have to scrupulously contribute in sharing resources with the community through the tax payment. This is particularly relevant in this transition. The technical evolution provides increasing opportunities for hiding profits and bending the rules. That's why the political effort to shape the future of labour and economies has to be accompanied by a coherent and rigorous set of rules protecting the proper role of economies within the societies. In other words we can't speak about *just transition* if we don't provide *tax justice* and *just re-distribution*.

During these times of crisis, uncertainty, and rapid transformation, we need G20 governments to be able to respond more proactively to emerging problems. We need public interest concerns about economic rights, racial justice and fairness, and human, civil and political rights to be the focus of conversations in full transparency about rewriting the rules governing data and technology.

3. Elements for a just transition

The dramatic digitalization fastened by the health emergency started a process with diverse impacts according to socio-economic capacities, opening new not completely predictable perspectives that have to be managed in the framework of Human Rights and sustainability.

Environmental sustainability and Climate Change

There is no question that the transition towards a sustainable future comes with challenges. But not taking the needed steps could result in irreversible catastrophic impacts for everyone, especially vulnerable populations. **Just Transition** of the workforce from dirty industries like coal, oil and gas, towards other better, qualified and sustainable jobs is also needed. A **Climate-safe future** has many new industries and services that can make humanity thrive, but at the same time, some technologies and practices need to fade away. A transition towards a sustainable future must *take into account the livelihood of those workers and communities who depend in the existing industries*. Governments must provide conditions for the transition to be fair and equitable **in order to achieve environmental and social justice**.

Digitalization and new works

Digitalization in a post-Covid world, especially from a low-middle income country, has played a critical role in bridging the knowledge and capacity gaps to deal effectively with COVID, maintaining social distancing and providing access to health and even on door food services. However, in the long run this process **risks to adversely affect the job markets** and especially those who do not have the skill to utilize digital

platforms to their advantage. Therefore, a solid mechanism of capacity building of vulnerable communities should be ensured.

The evolution of information technology, led by transnational IT platforms, is **changing the nature of employment and labour**, workers' rights, and workers' safety. The people who will be most affected by this challenge are the essential workers. Platform works are even changing the nature of work, from an opportunity to contribute to the society, supplying a good or a service and contributing this way to the social fabric, to just a way to earn some income, with no relation or involvement with customers nor with colleagues, gradually fragmenting human relations. At the same time, there is **growing concern about the control that Big Tech exerts over so many aspects of public life**, especially through anti-competitive behaviour. Therefore, the following are considered necessary and to be prioritized:

- Full labour rights for **platform workers** must be guaranteed. In the labour relations of platform workers, it is necessary to fully guarantee the right of collective bargaining and the right of collective bargaining of trade unions.
- The rights of workers to be **protected against isolation**, fragmentation and their consequences should be actively and positively guaranteed.
- Occupational safety should be fully protected. **Comprehensive social protection** must be ensured. Social security for occupational accidents, non-communicable diseases, mental illness and injuries should be expanded.
- In addition, in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, dramatic improvements in the **wages and working environments of Essential Workers, Care Workers and others** are needed.

Social protection, redistribution and tax justice

Today, the evolution of information technology has led to the rapid globalization of revenue structures led by transnational IT companies. However, the tax systems and social security mechanisms are fragmented by country, which has led to a situation of widening inequality and disparity inside and among countries. We as C20 therefore urgently call upon G20 members to put political muscle and weight behind addressing and prioritizing the work to institutionalize "**Fair Distribution**" for a "**Just Transition**", tackling all aspects of tax justice, trade and financial markets regulations, both at national and international level.

In order to ensure **global social justice** and that "no one is left behind," a huge level of resource mobilization, a mechanism that enables global re-distribution, and a political framework to develop an enabling environment, are crucial. Realizing a global "just re-distribution" is essential to make these goals possible. Hence developing a global re-distribution mechanism that complements the national mechanism of wealth re-distribution by realizing global solidarity taxes, including financial transaction taxes and currency transaction taxes by utilizing the advancing digital technology is mandatory. In the same perspective a *global fund for social protection* has to be considered.

There is a need to go further in ensuring a **human-centred use of new technologies**, including AI, in the workplaces. To do this, it is essential to enhance the digital citizenship capabilities of workers and more broadly of citizens, and civil society organizations, as well as a regulatory task force is needed to build a monitoring and ethical enforcement architecture that can curtail the spread of abuse in digital platforms and networks. It is therefore necessary to develop focused global investment and financing efforts related to digital skills education in an inclusive manner across regions, sectors, gender, and age groups.

4. Gender, women and girls

Digitalization can be a powerful enabler of women and girls' economic empowerment. In order to make this real, social and cultural **gender stereotypes** as well as bias that amplify existing gender inequalities in society need to be eradicated. Women are still under-represented in some of the most dynamic sectors, including ICT, which offer higher pay and better career opportunities. In fact, the ICT sector is mainly male dominated and to ensure women can access tech jobs on an equal footing with men, gender stereotypes regarding science being a "male" field must be dismantled. With this view, increasing the number of girls studying STEM subjects is for sure something needed and continuing to promote greater participation of girls in educational pathways that ensure rapid entry into the labour market, including in scientific and technological disciplines is therefore necessary. Conscious that having young women graduate in STEM doesn't necessarily mean having more young women employed in STEM jobs, gender stereotypes need to be eliminated as well as lack of social infrastructure that can prevent women from accessing those jobs need to be urgently closed. G20 governments must take the necessary measures to promote the employment of girls in STEM fields and monitor their development in the coming years

G20 leaders already highlighted the importance of access to STEM education and occupations for women's inclusion, nevertheless, when women enter the workforce of a male dominated industry, salaries drop because of the **gender pay gap** and the loss of prestige of that field. Therefore, regulations and policies to close the gender pay gap are essential. To this end, it should be pointed out that alongside the **Brisbane targets** set by the G20 countries, it is not enough to look only at the gender gap and at least one target concerning the absolute increase of women's employment should be set.

A relevant problem is **violence against women** in the workplaces. Cooperation is needed to ensure women can work in enterprises without experiencing discrimination and violence. Laws, funds and policies addressing this issue must be reinforced. Very important is also the capability to prevent domestic violence. The measures taken for the COVID outbreak, implementing remote working everywhere, are increasingly widespread the exposition of women to domestic violence. Specific programs to assist the survivors are needed, including providing paid domestic violence leave and adjustments to working patterns for women.

The digitalization process, so important in the productive systems, creates also relevant vulnerabilities, within and beyond the work dimension. This is the case of Gender-Based Violence in the digital space, which is still unregulated. This issue must be urgently addressed. We need more cooperation among states and the ICT sector to make the virtual space safer for women and girls, as well as for all vulnerable persons, including children.

5. Training, role of education systems, lifelong learning

We appreciate the effort of the G20 Employment WG in considering the implementing policies that promote **lifelong learning and skills upgrading** as crucial as well as the ones that foster transitions in the labour market and ensure the socio-economic inclusion of all citizens. Digitalization in fact can cause the exclusion of women and girls and of vulnerable and marginalized groups including youth, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, nomads, children facing the risk of child labour, people with mental health issues, rural and remote communities, and those living in crisis caused by conflicts and natural disasters. In order to achieve actionable policies to increase representation of marginalized groups in employment, public policies, calling the private sector on responsibility, have to encourage and support investments both in lifelong learning and skills upgrading and in infrastructure and technological tools. As per the *G20 Joint declaration of Education and Employment working group* last year: *G20 Global Pandemic*

Preparedness, Attending to Access to Education & Employment, the C20 continue to consider **investing in education as the main leverage to affect inequalities and restore equality of opportunity**. This means to consider lifelong learning as a fundamental way to build a democratic culture, able to protect common goods and human rights, and lead to view “Education 4.0: Global citizenship” as the main transversal competence to be citizens of the future.

Since the **access to workplaces and schools** was, and continues to be, off-limits for millions of workers and students worldwide, in particular for girls, bold policy responses, in scope and scale, are required in order to put human beings before profit interests. This means that education systems must be adequately funded, and they must be oriented towards achieving suitability for jobs which offer dignified remuneration and empowering life prospects. New public sector jobs must be generated through initiatives such as Green New Deals or a New Social Contract. Civic spiritedness, global solidarity, harnessing technology for learning and labour needs must be fostered as well as ambitious and dedicated internationalisation of education, embedding Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in formal, informal and non-formal education settings, to equip youth with the tangible competencies of a modern worker (ref. ILO, 2018).

Preparing young people for future skills and future jobs with capabilities for new jobs covering both technical and GCE skills in the interest of fostering the competencies of a global worker is essential. Therefore we call for G20 to recognize that provisions in education and employment are crucial during and post the global health emergency.