WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

SOMALIA

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2026

WORKERS NEED DECENT WORK

The trade unions of Somalia present this comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting deep structural crises that continue to undermine sustainable development, despite modest progresses made in certain areas.

With more than half of the population unable to secure basic necessities, economic growth is not translating into human well-being. A profound lack of decent work opportunities and widespread precariousness dominate the labour market. Meaningful resources have not been allocated to essential public services, even after Somalia reached HIPC competition point. There is no universal social protection floor despite the World Bank funded safety net programme. Lack of a national wage floor leaves the expanding workforce exposed to extreme underpayment and exploitation. Structural inequalities are widening and deepening, leaving youth and women heavily marginalized from equitable participation.

While trade unions under the ambit of the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU) acknowledge the progress made, particularly the National Transformation Plan (NTP 2025-2029) and the revised Labour Code after 52 years. However, they emphasize that greater effort is needed to ensure effective application and enforcement. There is a need to operationalise the NTP and the newly amended Labour Code, strengthen labour inspection systems and expand social protection coverage.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Somalia aligns its development with the SDGs through the upcoming National Transformation Plan (2025–2029) and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The government coordinates multi-stakeholder consultations involving state institutions, civil society and social partners. Through the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU), workers' perspectives enter these processes. The primary mechanism is the Somali National Tripartite Consultative Council, uniting government, trade unions and employers. This dialogue, which mainly focused on development labour and employment policies and regulations, has yielded successes like the revised Labour Code of 2025.

While SDG 8 (Decent Work) is central, union advocacy targets interconnected goals, such as social protection (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), marginalized worker protections (SDG 10), just climate transitions (SDG 13) and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Despite these platforms, trade union participation in policy design at the federal level improving while at the state level remains limited. There is a need to fully institutionalise cross the board. Engagements with certain governmental institutions are ad-hoc and social dialogue mechanisms are rarely used to shape crisis responses in the Federal Member States (FMSs). While trade union inputs are reflected in plans when consulted, there is urgency to translate into concrete policy actions or true decision-making influence at all levels of governance, both Federal and State levels. Additionally, unions warn of insufficient SDG funding and severe data gaps that hinder progress evaluation, while the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS) made important progress in the past 2 years to develop the necessary and accurate data while a lot needs to be done.

Trade unions acknowledge efforts to open consultation spaces but stress the need for sustained and systematic social dialogue. To ensure SDG implementation addresses the realities of all workers, especially those in informal and downtrodden conditions, tripartite mechanisms must be accountable across all planning and monitoring stages.

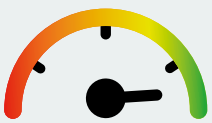
TRANSPARENCY

Regular access to limited information .

CONSULTATION

Ad hoc or informal consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Tripartite instances in place to carry out and monitor SDG national plans

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IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

FESTU and its affiliated trade unions, as the ITUC can attest, emphasize that deep structural deficiencies, a breakdown of regulatory enforcement and absence of timely, reliable data on SDG indicators continue to hinder progress across all core targets.

- **SDG 1:** Progress remains severely stalled, with more than half of the population unable to meet their basic needs. **On target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)** with more than 2/3 of the population living under the international poverty line. Furthermore, a staggering **78.2%** of employed individuals lived below the national poverty line in 2025, peaking at **80.4%** for youth aged 15–24; employment alone is often insufficient to lift workers out of poverty. Somalia is ranked 192nd out of 193 countries on the Human Development Index, indicating severe challenges in income, education and health. The total absence of a social protection floor leaves workers, families, older persons and persons with disabilities entirely without safety nets. National statistics on **target 1.a (end poverty in all its dimensions)** spending on education accounted for just over 8% of the government budget in 2025, which trade unions consider insufficient.
- **SDG 5:** It is difficult to assess progress on **target 5.4 (care and domestic work)** due to the complete lack of data on unpaid care work, which limits gender-responsive policy formulation. Indicators relating to **target 5.5 (women's full and effective participation)** show while women's representation in parliament increased from 8.0% in 2006 to 19% in 2025, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions despite a legal requirement that 30% of parliamentary seats be reserved for women. Trade unions note that the absence of gender budgeting practices shows that gender equality is not integrated into national financial planning.
- **SDG 8:** The labour market is defined by widespread precarity and severe job insecurity. For **target 8.3 (support decent job creation)**, vulnerable work remains exceptionally high at 46%, affecting **60.2%** of women and **40.2%** of men in 2025. On **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**, trade unions report failures in job creation, vocational training and inclusive employment policies. Signed Decent Work Country Programme is still pending for its full implementation. The official unemployment rate stood at **11.1%**, while youth unemployment reached a concerning **17.9%** (**19%** among young men) in 2022. Average gross monthly wages are critically low at **Sh150,000**, while gender wage gap reporting is entirely nonexistent. For **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)**, indicators were alarmingly high at **51%** in 2022, rising to **58.3%** among young women. For **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments)**, there is a total absence of reporting on workplace injuries. National compliance with labour rights scored a very low **1.5 out of 10** in 2023. Despite the formal ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 in 2014, practical enforcement remains weak..
- **SDG 10:** Economic gains fail to reach the broader workforce. Regarding **target 10.4 (adopt policies to achieve greater equality)**, labour income accounts for only **37.5%** of GDP in 2026. A low labour share reflects weak wage regulation, limited bargaining power and an unequal distribution of economic gains. Without a legally enforced wage floor, workers remain vulnerable to extreme underpayment, informality and precarious employment.
- **SDG 13:** The impact of climate shocks and economic pressures continues to undermine development gains. Under **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into policies)**, there has been strong evidence of national social dialogue frameworks engaging social partners to achieve a Just Transition, where the Federal Government and FESTU engaged through social dialogue that resulted just transition now enshrined into law, NTP clearly makes realisation of just transition a national priority and Somalia NDC 3.0 spells our national commitment for just transition.
- **SDG 16:** The **ITUC Global Rights Index** places Somalia in Category **5+** ("No guarantee of rights" due to the wider breakdown of the rule of law). This rating indicates systematic and severe violations of freedom of association and collective bargaining, despite the country's formal ratification of relevant ILO conventions.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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FESTU and its affiliated trade unions call on the Federal Government of Somalia to ground its recovery and development strategies in full compliance with international labour standards by implementing the following measures:

- Establish a statutory national minimum wage framework through tripartite dialogue to guarantee a decent standard of living that accurately reflects the real cost of living.
- Expand national social protection systems to comprehensively cover all workers, particularly those in the informal economy, supported by dedicated and sustainable budget lines.
- Judiciously and timely implement Decent Work Country Programme to realise the priorities of decent work agenda.
- Enforce the newly revised Labour Code fully by comprehensively strengthening labour inspection systems to monitor compliance, eradicate exploitation and address child labour.
- Generate climate-resilient and green employment opportunities as a core component of a just transition realisation provisions that are embedded within the law and the National Transformation Plan.
- Implement strictly enforced, gender-responsive policies to eliminate workplace discrimination and gender-based violence, while actively ensuring equal pay for equal work.
- Institutionalize social dialogue by reinforcing the Somali National Tripartite Consultative Council and the federal member states to guarantee trade unions' structured engagement in all development policies to advance people-centred progress.

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