

Trade Unions and Sustainable Development Goals
A South-South Learning Exchange and Training Workshop
Manila, 2-5 December 2019

Conclusions

We, representatives of trade unions from 15 countries, regional confederations and the ITUC, gathered in Manila, Philippines, on 2-5 December 2019 for the South-South Learning Exchange Workshop on “Trade Unions and Sustainable Development Goals organized by ILO/ACTRAV.

The workshop presented an opportunity to discuss the relevance of Agenda2030 for trade unions and to share experiences of trade union advocacy on SDGs at national, regional and global level; in particular, the discussion included lessons learnt, challenges and opportunities for trade union participation in the processes related to national governments’ development plans, Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), Regional Forums on Sustainable Development organized by the UN Regional Economic Commissions and the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Moreover, ILO/ACTRAV priorities and the strategy of the ITUC’s Trade Union Development Cooperation Network (TUDCN) on Agenda 2030 were shared, as ways to enhance trade union engagement in SDG implementation also in the framework of the UN reform.

Based on our analysis, we agreed on the relevance of Agenda2030 as a key opportunity to advance trade union priorities towards sustainable development, and as a key tool to build a New Social Contract based on the pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. However, we are aware of the great challenges in terms of achieving the goals and of the need to accelerate action. We know that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the objectives of the Agenda 2030 in record time. Concerning the objective of decent work for all, as highlighted by the ILO World Employment and Social outlook 2019, “at the current rate of improvement, SDG8 is unlikely to be achieved by 2030”. It is thus important for trade unions to up their game in terms of actions on promoting the implementation of Agenda 2030 at national, regional and global levels.

The workshop emphasized the central role of trade unions and especially social dialogue in the advancement of SDGs at all levels. Thus, we need to ensure effective trade union participation from the design to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans and national voluntary review mechanisms. For that to happen, trade unions have to strengthen their capacities to better and pro-actively engage in SDGs implementation at all levels.

In terms of follow-up strategy, we prioritize the following pillars:

- Mainstreaming SDGs in the work of trade unions at all levels: all the elements of the trade union agenda are directly related to the SDGs. Thus, we need to better mainstream the promotion of SDGs in our agendas, and whenever possible, our trade union structures should be aligned to accommodate the work on SDGs. On a more practical level, it is crucial that trade union

organizations consider appointing focal points on Agenda 2030. Moreover, all work promoted by trade unions on SDGs have to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality.

- Advocacy at the national level: our strategies should include capacity building processes on SDGs (eg. advocacy and communication strategies; data collection); engaging with decision makers including government Ministries and departments in charge of SDGs; sharpening our inputs in national development plans, including SDG responsive budgeting; ensuring regular dialogue with ILO and other UN agencies on SDGs; guaranteeing parliamentary or congressional oversight vis-a-vis the SDGs; promoting coordination and coherence between the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes and the national development plans. With regard to the Reformed UN processes, we need to advocate to uphold the role of the ILO within the UN, and to ensure workers' and employers' organizations are designated as key entities with which the UN Resident Coordinators should engage at the country level in the formulation and implementation of the Common Country Assessments and the UN Development Assistance Frameworks, inline with the ILO Governing Body at its 335th session (March 2019).
- Trade Union Reports: we recognise the relevance of producing “alternative” trade union country reports, as useful tools to monitor SDGs implementation and provide our own view on national progress. In order to prepare the reports, we need to strengthen our data collection capacities to ensure reliability of our data. Moreover, we need to ensure that the content of the reports are as a result of wider consultation within our organizations to ensure organizational ownership. Once the reports are ready, we need to give them widespread dissemination (e.

national press conferences; social media; videos; sharing with schools and universities; translation into local languages), regularly update them and monitor their impact.

- Advocacy at the regional level: we need to strengthen the regional TUDCN work and promote experience sharing on trade union advocacy on SDGs and VNRs among countries. As far as the UN Regional Fora on Sustainable Development are concerned, we need to ensure meaningful participation of trade union representatives in those spaces (including parallel meetings with governments and international organizations, organization of side events and alliance building with like-minded civil society organizations).
- Advocacy at the HLPF: we propose that the process of governments' reporting on SDG progress should be mandatory and annual. Moreover, the reports should be shared in advance with social partners and National Tripartite Constituencies in order to ensure our views are reflected in the report. During the HLPF, we consider it useful to organize trade union Side Events, to give visibility to the trade union country reports, ensure adequate speaking slots in official HLPF meetings, engage with government leaders well ahead of the HLPF and ensure continuous engagements with government representatives throughout and after the HLPF.

- Campaigns: we commit to engage in the ITUC's "#timefor8" Campaign, as a tool to show the centrality of SDG 8 on decent work for the achievement of the overall 2030 Agenda, advocate unions' involvement in sustainable development discussions with governments and employers, connect unions actions with the broader Agenda 2030, and engage in alliances with other civil society organizations to ensure that they assist us in advancing our priorities. It is also important that at the national level, trade unions develop campaigns that are most relevant to their national and regional context.
- Partnerships: we consider important to uphold alliances within the trade union movement and with other actors, including civil society organizations, academia and international organizations, as a way to increase the impact of our advocacy and accelerate the implementation of SDGs. In this regard, we look forward to more South-South as well as South-North Global Exchange of experiences and strategies on Agenda 2030 moving forward.
- Resources and Tools: We look forward to the finalized ILO-ACTRAV Trade Union Guide on UN Reform Governance in order to assist in better equipping trade unions to influence the UN processes at national, regional and global levels.
- We also look forward to the ongoing efforts by ILO-ACTRAV on material development related to Development Cooperation, Financing for Development especially Blended Finance and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) from a trade union perspective in line with Agenda 2030

For successful implementation of the trade union efforts, we count on the support of the ITUC and of ILO/ACTRAV, as fundamental in terms of capacity building, technical and political support.