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# COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

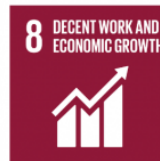
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## Sixty-first Session of the Commission for Social Development

### Ministerial Forum

**Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Tuesday, 7 February, 10:00 am-1:00 pm, Conference room 4**

### Chair's Summary (draft)

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The Commission held a [Ministerial Forum](#) on the theme of, “Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” on 7 February 2023.

The forum was [opened](#) and moderated by H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani, Chair, Commission for Social Development. Panellists included H.E. Ms. Hanna Sarkkinen, Minister, Social Affairs and Health, Finland; H.E. Mr. Admir Adrović, Minister, Labor and Social Welfare, Montenegro; H.E. Ms. Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad, Minister, Social Development and Family, the State of Qatar; Hon. Doreen Sefuke Mwamba, Member of Parliament, Minister, Community Development and Social Services in Zambia; H.E. Mr. Christian Guillermet-Fernández, Vice-Minister, Multilateral Affairs, Costa Rica; H.E. Mr. Anar Karimov, Deputy Minister, Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Ms. Carmela I. Torres, Undersecretary, Employment and Human Resources Development, Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines.

Ministers shared their national experiences in creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Discussions focused on successful national policies and strategies to promote employment and decent work and tackle inequality, with a particular focus on groups traditionally excluded and marginalized in the labour market.

### **Supporting decent jobs creation and the employment of people in vulnerable situations**

Decent work was a precondition for human dignity and critical to tackle inequality and poverty, improve the wellbeing of people and empower people in vulnerable situations. To promote decent work, linkages had to be strengthened between rights-based approaches and labour market institutions. Effective labour market institutions – including minimum wages, collective bargaining, employment protection legislation and labour laws – supported employment growth, enhanced the quality of jobs and reduced inequalities.

**Finland** noted that in Nordic countries, collective bargaining through social dialogue had created fair working conditions and equal wages for all. **Montenegro** highlighted that through social dialogue and the active participation of social partners, the rights of employees as well as the flexibility in the labour market had improved. The country was currently harmonizing labour laws with international standards. In **Azerbaijan**, social dialogue was conducted through the Tripartite Commission on Social and Economic Issues. It operated as a permanent body with its secretariat since 2016 at the initiative of the ILO as a new institutional framework for social partners. It served as a major platform for discussions and coordination of joint actions of important labour related matters, including amendments to Labour Code, unemployment, pensions, minimum wages and others.

**Türkiye** stressed that the growth of employment in new, sustainable and growing sectors, including in the care, digital and green economies, would be important for supporting the transition to formality.

Investing in education, re-skilling and skills upgrading was a key strategy, especially in the green, digital and care economy. The **Philippines** TVET Authority (TESDA) had promoted upskilling of workers and certifications benchmarked against international standards. The country had developed its Labor Market Information Systems that provided job seekers and employers with real-time data to help match workers with suitable jobs.

**Costa Rica** stressed that a human rights-based approach made social dialogue possible by placing people at the centre of policies and decisions. To ensure human rights for everyone, employment policies had to be adapted to population groups in vulnerable situations, including to their locations, through universal policies, complimented with targeted measures.

A particular focus on labour market policies for young people, women, migrant workers and persons with disabilities were needed to combat poverty, discrimination and exploitation at work, often caused by the lack of formal job opportunities.

The **Philippines** noted that several of its existing policies promoted equal opportunities for women, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Policies included anti-discrimination policies and practices in hiring, promotion, pay and the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. Gender mainstreaming, inclusion and accessibility were likewise main considerations in all programmes.

In **Zambia** the employment code act provided equitable remuneration of men and women, equal wages for work of equal value and prevented gender-based discrimination. In **Finland**, parental leave arrangements and the availability of affordable high quality childcare services contributed to women's high labour force participation. The experience of Finland showed that these investments in gender equality paid off. The country also noted that its Economy of Wellbeing approach was making informal and unpaid care visible as an important productive sector, without which the rest of the economy could not manage.

Young people felt disproportional consequences of the pandemic due to interruptions in schooling, difficulties in entering the labour market for the first time and an overall deterioration in the quality of employment. **Montenegro** therefore developed the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, to enable every young person within four months after leaving education, training or becoming unemployed, to receive a quality job offer, internship, further training or continued education. Similarly, **Zambia** had prioritized youth development and empowerment through initiatives such as enhanced skills training and the disbursement of empowerment funds, which had increased significantly in recent years. The country remained committed to the implementation of the 10 per cent quota for persons with disabilities in all types of employment. **Türkiye** also enabled persons with disabilities to participate in employment through quotas and active labour market policies to improve skills and qualifications. In a similar vein, **Ukraine** noted measures to improve the conditions of employment for persons with disabilities.

**Qatar** noted the pivotal role of migrant workers in building the country's infrastructure. It provided basic services to migrant workers, afforded legal protections and provided various services, including education, health, housing and social protection. The country also facilitated the sending of remittances. In **Costa Rica**, the Migration Labor Traceability System (SITLAM), introduced in the middle of the pandemic, continued to be used to monitor compliance with labour rights and obligations of migrant workers, who primarily worked in the agricultural sector. As a country of overall net out-migration, the **Philippines** noted its efforts to support overseas workers to weather the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

### **Measures to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19**

While the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated inequalities in the labour market, important economic and social policies had been taken to cushion the pandemic's impacts. Several countries, including **Montenegro** had used digital technologies to support social protection responses, deferred tax obligations for employers and preserved jobs and wages for workers. In the **Philippines**, this took the form of a fund to support businesses affected by the pandemic, tax incentives, access to credit, training programmes and the implementation of a loan programme for micro, small and medium sized enterprises. The country also implemented an executive measure

called the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) that provided cash assistance to low-income households.

**Azerbaijan** had adapted employment policies and regulations to preserve existing jobs. It also initiated wage subsidies and implemented temporary exemptions from taxes and customs duties in the private sector. These initiatives aimed to assist the sustainability of enterprises, particularly assisting small and medium sized enterprises. To protect population groups in vulnerable employment situations, including low-skilled workers, around 90 thousand paid public jobs were created as short-term work schemes. The country also supported informal workers and unemployed persons through a lump-sum cash payments and start-up incentives, including training and skills development. More than two-thirds of the self-employment programme consisted of women, young people and persons with disabilities.

### **Achieving universal, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems**

Investments in comprehensive social policies contributed to sustainable economies through higher productivity and greater economic and political stability. As a pillar of decent work, social protection systems, including nationally defined social protection floors, were particularly effective for eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and building resilience, trust, civic engagement and social cohesion.

Social protection was a front-line response of governments to protect people's health, jobs and incomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Zambia** launched the Emergency Cash Transfer to support household incomes and food security. It also implemented the 1,000 days social cash transfer nutrition sensitive cash plus initiative, targeting pregnant women and adolescents, lactating mothers and children below 2 years of age. Additionally, the country empowered vulnerable but viable farmer households by providing them with inputs and services for enhanced household food and nutritional security.

**Montenegro** implemented the Integrated Social Welfare Information System (e-Social Card) to assure easier and faster access to cash transfers, as well as better targeting of transfers. The country also established new social services centers to deliver transparent and efficient services for everyone. Ninety per cent of the services were delivered through a single platform and centralized electronic information system, which automated the collection and processing of information of necessary information. **Ukraine** also stressed the importance of digitalization in improving the possibility to operate its social protection programmes in the current context.

### **Multilateral action to overcome inequalities**

**Finland** highlighted that its broad-based, fair and effective progressive tax system was a precondition for its universal, comprehensive and sustainable social protection system and that it ensured the necessary resources for social investments, public services and social protection system. It noted the importance to learn from each other and to strengthen the taxation capacity of all countries and co-operate against global tax erosion. **Costa Rica** concluded that the world was suffering from multidimensional crises, including climate change and biodiversity loss, which called for more financing for climate change adaptation.