
COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Inclusive Social Development



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Sixty-first session of the Commission for Social Development

Multi-stakeholder Forum on the priority theme

“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”

Thursday, 9 February 2023, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Conference room 4

Chair’s summary

The Commission for Social Development held a Multi-stakeholder Forum on the priority theme “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 9 February 2023.

The forum was opened by **H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani**, Chair of the 61st session of the Commission, and moderated by **Ms. Jean Quinn**, Chair of the United Nations NGO Committee on Social Development and Executive Director of UNANIMA International.

The forum featured the following panellists: **Mr. Paul Añoover**, Assistant Secretary for Employment and Human Resource Development at the Department of Labor and Employment of the Philippines; **Mr. Matías Sotomayor**, General Director of the International Relations and Institutional Communication of the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies of Argentina; **Ms. Maryam Abdulla Al-Thani**, International Projects Manager at the Office of the Minister of Social Development and Family of the State of Qatar; and **Ms. Hafsa Qadeer**, CEO and Founder of ImInclusive.

The forum focused on the approaches taken by actors from different sectors – government, public, private and civil society – to create full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Social policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

Panellists noted that national governments had reacted promptly to shield their constituents from the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They implemented economic, labour, financial and social policies that proved essential to cope with the loss of jobs and income, and the increase in poverty and undernutrition associated with the pandemic. These measures supported not only individual households and workers, but also businesses, in the short and medium terms. The measures provided temporary assistance through both existing and new social protection schemes, as well as through new executive and legislative labour measures to ensure health, job safety and job security.

In the **Philippines**, financial assistance was provided to low-income households and workers, including formal, informal, self-employed and displaced marginalized workers, such as own account workers. Funds, access to credits and loans, tax incentives and training were given to businesses affected by the pandemic, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

In **Argentina**, unemployment benefits were extended and training were provided to workers. Financial or food assistance was given to groups in vulnerable situations, including pregnant women, children, youth and older persons. Access to credits and a reduction in taxes were available to businesses affected by the pandemic, especially MSMEs. Extraordinary financial assistance was also allocated to security, defense and health personnel as they were frontline workers during the pandemic.

Qatar invested USD20 billion into the private sector to overcome the crisis, with priority given to MSMEs. Working from home was enforced for up to 80 per cent of the work week for all employees and female workers and entrepreneurs were provided financial support to sustain their income.

Broad-based partnerships for economic recovery and inequality reduction

To accelerate recovery from the pandemic required a whole-of-society and whole-of-government effort. Many countries also took an integrated approach and forged broad-based partnerships with both the public and private business sectors, international development partners and civil society organizations.

In the **Philippines**, operational frameworks placed businesses and workers at the core of a whole-of-society effort to restart economic activities, restore business confidence, upgrade and retrain the workforce, and facilitate labour market access, in an enabling environment supported by good governance and infrastructure. Measures included the promotion of youth employability programmes, assistance to business establishments and provision of social protection to population groups in vulnerable situations, but also wage subsidies for private sector workers. Over 900,000 jobs were created, more than 1.3 million workers received training and over 200,000 individuals were able to use employment facilitation services. In total, over 6.5 million individuals and 300,000 business establishments benefitted from the measures.

In **Argentina**, the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies generated spaces for the main social actors at the local, provincial and regional levels to discuss, design, enhance and influence public policies aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. A genuine exchange of experiences, dialogue and collective learning were carried out. This implied a social, participatory commitment to identify pressing problems and their possible solutions. The National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies deepened its collaboration with public companies and firms for a coordinated implementation of management-oriented and business-oriented policies that contributed to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

Measures to reduce the gender gap in employment

Women and girls were often disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic because of their increased family and caregiving responsibilities, gender-based violence and loss of jobs.

To reduce the gender gap in employment and promote women's empowerment, the **Philippines** implemented anti-discrimination policies and practices in hiring, promotion and pay. In **Argentina**, the Programme for Gender Equality at Work, Employment and Production aimed to reduce gender gaps in access to jobs, promotion, violence and harassment, and turnover rate. Within the framework of this programme, the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity promoted a set of good practices to achieve gender equality standards of the design and implementation of policies.

The **Qatar** National Vision 2030 was paying special attention to empowering women and enhancing their skills and abilities through a standing goal that would ensure women's rights to work and enable them to participate both economically and politically. It was expected that the percentage of economically productive women in the country would reach 57 per cent in 2023.

Measures to protect population groups in vulnerable situations

Social justice should be available to all and guaranteed by the state. Overcoming inequality had to include defending the rights of women and children, and protecting young people, persons with disabilities and older persons to ensure that they were partners in decision-making processes or played a more leading role in society. Social protection was an essential link in the chain of efforts aimed to reduce disparities in access to basic social services.

In this respect, **Argentina** provided beneficiaries of child benefits and pregnant women with additional cash transfers, while also strengthened food aid for school and community kitchens. The National Plan for Equality in Diversity 2021-2023 promoted gender equality in work, employment, rural areas, disability and sport. In 2021, it enacted a law that promoted the access to formal employment for all people of different gender and sexual orientations.

Qatar enacted successive strategies to leave no social group behind, including divorced women, children and senior citizens. A national legislation had been allocated to each group that guaranteed their rights to have jobs, decision-making positions, care, security and education. In the **United Arab Emirates**, the Government of Abu Dhabi, supported

a youth-led organisation called ImInclusive to help persons with disabilities get jobs and train employers in the private sector to become inclusion-ready.

Measures to formalise employment

Informal work was associated with low productivity, reduced tax revenues, poor governance, poverty and income inequality. Addressing informality was needed to boost long-term development.

The **Philippines** was able to reduce labour informality and accelerate the transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy by simplifying business registration and compliance procedures. The country offered training and education programmes to workers in the informal sector that addressed the lack of skills and knowledge needed to compete for jobs in the formal economy. It also extended labour laws and regulations to ensure that fundamental rights at work were protected.