

Statement by the Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Round Table on Social Justice and Decent Work

Honourable Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Expanding social support programmes is a key prerequisite for addressing new challenges faced by societies and for ensuring sustainable development.

Azerbaijan has built a strong and inclusive social protection system, placing the protection and development of **human capital** at the centre of our reforms. Our country ranks **second among developing nations** on the Inclusive Development Index. Within a short period, Azerbaijan has transformed from a transition economy into an **upper-middle-income country** with a high Human Development Index. As a result, both poverty and unemployment rates have fallen to **5 percent**.

Over the past six years, Azerbaijan has implemented **five major social reform packages**, covering **40 percent of the population**.

One of the central goals of our socio-economic policy is the **protection of workers' rights** and the promotion of **decent work**. Ensuring occupational safety remains a national priority, and significant steps have been taken to expand employment opportunities for socially vulnerable groups.

Over the past seven years, comprehensive efforts to combat informal employment have led to a **43 percent increase in formal employment contracts**, driven mainly by private sector growth.

The **Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan until 2030**, the **Law on Unemployment Insurance**, and the **Law on Employment** set out a framework for employment-oriented growth, flexible financial mechanisms, and a new model of employment services. Programmes such as **wage co-financing**, **self-employment schemes**, and other targeted initiatives continue to support job creation in partnership with employers.

The **employment quota programme** has been expanded to create opportunities for individuals from vulnerable groups. At the same time, the **vocational training programme**, aimed at developing workforce skills, has been strengthened — with private sector training centres now fully engaged.

Digital transformation remains a cornerstone of our reforms. More than **90 percent** of the **159 services** provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection are now digitalised.

The **DOST Centres**, established to ensure transparent and efficient delivery of public social services, have become a national brand of Azerbaijan. These centres provide **161 services** through a single platform and have served **3.9 million citizens**, achieving a **98.4 percent** satisfaction rate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past five years, Azerbaijan has fully restored its **territorial integrity and sovereignty**. The **Great Return Programme** is being successfully implemented in the liberated territories, ensuring sustainable livelihoods and improved welfare for returning citizens through active employment and infrastructure development.

Beyond our borders, Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian and development assistance to **more than 140 countries**, including **43 of the 44 least developed countries**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan contributed medical equipment, vaccines, and financial support to **over 80 countries in need**.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan remains determined to advance initiatives that promote **peace, stability, and social prosperity**.

I wish this round table every success in promoting **social justice and decent work worldwide**. Thank you.