



B7/L7 Joint Statement for G7 Kurashiki Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting in Okayama

April 22, 2023

Climate change, inflation as well as the cost-of-living crisis, increasing poverty, informality and inequalities impact millions of workers and businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up more than 90 percent of most G7 economies. The current state of instability and uncertainty deriving from the pandemic, the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation, and other armed conflicts further aggravate the crisis. These challenges affect social cohesion as well as our labour institutions and social protection systems and demand urgent action by G7 members.

The B7 and L7 groups jointly call for deliberate and systematic efforts to reduce inequalities by promoting decent work, respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, invest in human capital and social protection, foster sustainable development and a just transition to carbon-neutral economies, productivity, innovation, decent job creation, inclusive economic growth, and ensure an economic order based on social justice.

Investing in decent work and human capital would require G7 nations to place access to sustainable universal social protection, safety and health, education and skills development high in the national development agenda. It is about people and talent. It is also about promoting an enabling environment for decent work, entrepreneurship, and sustainable enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Universal and sustainable social protection systems are a crucial investment for society. The G7 has a critical role in supporting low-income countries to establish social protection floors with financing and capacity building and assist developing countries in implementing the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation.

The G7 members have a responsibility to protect all from occupational safety and health risks and promote a robust preventive culture. Respecting and protecting the right to organise and collective bargaining are important levers for safe workplaces. The governments should assure that the fundamental right to a healthy and safe working environment is implemented, in accordance with the principles of ILO Convention 155 and Convention 187, which are now recognized as fundamental conventions. For that purpose, they should provide adequate training and equipment, conduct regular inspections, and ensure that workers have the right to refuse unsafe work.

Policy levers that governments can use to contribute to addressing the challenges of skills shortages include 1) Strengthening education systems, to ensure access to quality education for all, but also focusing on Technical and Vocational Education and Training to assist a smooth transition from the world of education to the world of work (and vice versa). 2) Establishing skills councils to foster social dialogue with employers and worker representatives. This social dialogue modality can be used to develop skills anticipation tools and develop timely policy recommendations and interventions. 3) Fostering a culture of lifelong learning at the societal and corporate levels, including developing and strengthening core work/social skills.

We call upon G7 members to promote social dialogue including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation to ensure all workers enjoy adequate protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, considering: (i) respect for their fundamental rights; (ii) an adequate minimum wage, statutory or negotiated; (iii) maximum limits on working time; and (iv) safety and health at work. It is also about investing in the real economy. Collective bargaining, social dialogue, and tripartite cooperation can also play a role in achieving a just transition and building new infrastructure. Other policy levers such as strengthening active labour market programs, apprenticeships, work-based learning, diversity and inclusion programs, and access to finance and incentives, can promote inclusion, entrepreneurship and help under-represented groups such as youth, women, migrants and persons with disabilities enter the labour market and access better jobs. Promoting policies that respond quickly to labour market shocks can be of great help. They will also help mitigate employment disruptions caused by market failures or from the green and digital transitions. In the current context of cost-of-living crisis, governments should adopt policies that promote social dialogue including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation in order to ensure at least adequate minimum wage, statutory or negotiated, for all workers.

G7 Leaders need to review the current migration policies, including labour migration policies. Unequal treatment of migrant workers contravenes the principles of dignity and solidarity, violates human rights obligations, and creates a barrier to job creation and access to skilled jobs. Facing the prospects of an increasingly old population, the G7 should invest now in the health sector and in the care economy with a view to achieving quality services, formalise decent jobs and create new ones. Policymakers need a holistic approach that ensures that social protection systems are robust and sustainable, labour migration regulations are inclusive and efficient and healthcare systems offer quality services accessible to all. The B7 and L7 groups, which represent the collective voice of the world of work, are ready to offer ideas, advice, and support on sharing good practices and policy recommendations.

The B7 and L7 call for concrete actions to support social dialogue towards transitioning to a formal economy and promoting decent work and entrepreneurship to contribute to poverty reduction and a just transition.