



## **Sustainable Development Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

### ***Review of Progress and Prospects***

*An Expert Group Meeting in preparation for HLPF 2019:  
Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*

**3-5 April 2019, ILO Headquarters, Geneva**

*Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in partnership  
with the International Labour Organization and UN partners*

### **DRAFT Concept Note**

(Status: 15 February 2019)

#### **Introduction**

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will be convened in New York from 8 to 19 July 2019. Its overall theme will be *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*. The HLPF is mandated as the central forum in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2019, the HLPF will be convened both at the level of ECOSOC and the General Assembly. In particular, the ECOSOC HLPF will carry out an in-depth review of SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (economic growth and jobs), SDG 10 (inequality), SDG 13 (climate change), and SDG 16 (peaceful societies, access to justice, effective and inclusive institutions), in addition to SDG 17, which is considered each year. The SDGs under review will be examined in terms of progress made and challenges encountered in their implementation, as well as in terms of their relationships with the rest of Agenda 2030.

In preparation for the 2019 HLPF, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA/DSDG) in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and UN partners is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on SDG 8 progress, policies and implementation.

#### **Objective**

The objective of the meeting is to take stock of where we are in terms of progress towards SDG 8 through data-driven assessments; share knowledge as to success stories, collaborations, programmes, good practices and challenges; identify particular areas of concern; and suggest ways forward in terms of policies, partnerships and coordinated actions at all levels. These messages will help inform the HLPF, assist in planning its sessions, and serve to influence collaborations and programmes of work going forward from 2019.

#### **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

In “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” (General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1), UN Member States expressed their determination “...to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.” They resolved to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities (para 3). Member States underlined

that sustainable development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion, all of which are linked to each other and are interdependent (para 13). Furthermore, Member States emphasized that sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is essential for prosperity; that it requires addressing income inequality, eradication of child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking; promoting dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, youth employment, women’s empowerment, and decent work for all; and that everyone would benefit from a healthy and well-educated workforce with the knowledge and skills needed for productive and fulfilling work and full participation in society (para 27).

## SDG8

SDG 8 specifically calls on the international community to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. It thus captures two main economic themes that are strongly interlinked – economic growth and employment/decent work. More people in decent jobs and healthier workforce can lead to stronger and more inclusive economic growth, and vice versa. It is a strong relationship that deserves more attention in decision-making. With the 2030 Agenda, the world has a once-in-a-generation chance to make a real change in this respect and improve the lives of billions. Putting job creation at the heart of economic policy-making and development plans, will not only generate decent work opportunities but also more robust, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth. It is a virtuous circle that is as good for the economy as it is for people and potentially for the planet as well. Decent work is both a means and an end of the 2030 Agenda.

There are twelve targets underlying SDG8. Targets 8.6 and 8.B are to be achieved by 2020, all the others by 2030 (see table 1).

*Table 1. Table. Official targets and indicators under SDG8*

	Targets under SDG8	IAEG-SDGs Indicators agreed by Statistical Commission
Economic growth, technology, and diversification	8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries	8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita
	8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors	8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person
Global resource efficiency	8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead	8.4.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP. 8.4.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP.
Inclusive Employment	8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.	8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex

	8.5	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value	8.5.1 8.5.2	Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities. Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.
	8.6	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training	8.6.1	Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training
	8.9	By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	8.9.1 8.9.2	Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate. Number of jobs in tourism industries as a proportion of total jobs and growth rate of jobs, by sex
	8.B	By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization	8.B.1	Existence of a developed and operationalized strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy.
<b>Labour rights, health and safety at work</b>	8.8	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment	8.8.1 8.8.2	Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status Increase in national compliance of labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status
<b>Forced labour, child soldiers, and child labour</b>	8.7	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms/	8.7.1	Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age
<b>Financial access</b>	8.10	Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all	8.10.1 8.10.2	Number of commercial bank branches and automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults. Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider
<b>Aid for trade</b>	8.A	Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries	8.A.1	Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements

Source: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>

According to the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018, progress in SDG8 has been mixed recently. Globally, labour productivity has increased and the unemployment rate has decreased. However, more progress is needed to increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce informal employment and labour market inequality (particularly in terms of the gender pay gap), promote safe and secure working environments, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth.

In 2017, real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita grew at 2.5 per cent globally, close to the 2.4 per cent average growth rate recorded in 2010–2016. For low income countries, the growth rate in

2017 was 1.8 per cent – a notable improvement over the average growth of 0.1 per cent between 2010 and 2016, but well below the average growth rate of 2.6 per cent between 2005 and 2009 (and certainly way below the 7 per cent lower bound suggested by SDG target 8.1 for LDCs). Only five LDCs reached the SDG 8.1 ambition of sustaining at least 7% GDP growth per year in 2017.

Labour productivity at the global level, measured as output produced per employed person in PPP 2011 US dollars, grew by 2.2 per cent in 2017. This is the fastest growth registered since 2011.

Globally, 61 per cent of all workers were engaged in informal employment in 2016. Excluding the agricultural sector, 51 per cent of all workers fell into this employment category. The global unemployment rate in 2017 was 5.6 per cent, down from 6.4 per cent in 2000. The decline has slowed since 2009, when it hit 5.9 per cent. Youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, with the global youth unemployment rate at 13 per cent in 2017.

Data from 45 selected countries suggest that gender inequality in earnings is pervasive in these countries: in 89 per cent of them, the hourly wages of men are, on average, higher than those of women, with a median pay gap of 12 per cent.

In high-income countries, almost every adult has an account at a bank or other financial institution, compared to only 35 per cent of adults in low-income countries. Across all regions, women lag behind men in this regard.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are crucial for meeting SDG8 and other SDGs. They contribute a major share of total private sector entities in both developed and developing countries, and when the informal sector is included, they account for about 9 out of 10 jobs in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> They are typically the main income source for the poorest population segments, especially in rural areas, and tend to employ a larger share of the workforces in vulnerable sectors. But MSMEs continue to face challenges, including limited access to finance and lack of capacity and knowledge, particularly with regards to business development, marketing and strategic management skills, and, especially in developing countries, also weak political, institutional and regulatory mechanisms.

The ILO estimates that there are around 340 million occupational accidents and 160 million victims of work-related illnesses annually, and an ongoing WHO/ILO study suggests that the mortality from these diseases and injuries remains high.

### **Overall approach and substantive preparations**

In view of the wide scope of SDG 8 including the macroeconomy, resource efficiency and labour markets, the Expert Group Meeting will examine progress towards SDG8 by focusing on individual SDG8 targets. It is important to note that SDG 8 contains targets of varying scope – some narrowly defined, others broader, serving to as expressions underlying principles such as peaceful and inclusive societies.

Discussions will be data-driven and also assess challenges, enablers and interlinkages across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. While the discussion will be informed by progress along the official indicators agreed by IAEG, it will go beyond their frame and draw on scientific, civil society and business data where appropriate, in line with the much wider scope of the goal and the targets themselves.

The Expert Group Meeting will be organized into thematic sessions. Well before the meeting, participants and other experts will be requested to provide written responses to key questions for each of the sessions. The Secretariat will compile and synthesize the responses. It will also produce

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<sup>1</sup> <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2017/04/03/unlocking-the-potential-of-smes-for-the-sdgs/>

short background notes for each of the sessions. The meeting agenda will capture all issues outlined in the SDG8 targets, as well as address big picture trends and issues, interlinkages with other SDGs, means of implementation, future challenges and policy recommendations for the HLPF.

### **Outcome - contribution to HLPF 2019**

The meeting is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of SDG8 progress together with concrete policy recommendations. A short outcome document with key messages and recommendations emerging from the EGM will contribute to the thematic review of SDG 8 at the upcoming 2019 HLPF.

The knowledge and insights of experts—both practitioners and academics—from across the world will be crucial to addressing these questions. The EGM will serve to bring together a cross-section of such expertise from a diversity of countries and regions to help:

- Provide substantive inputs into the thematic reviews at the HLPF and help inform its outcomes;
- Identify cases from regions and specific countries (including those that are conducting or have conducted Voluntary National Reviews) that illustrate challenges or highlight innovative practices;
- Suggest effective presenters for the specific sessions at the HLPF, as well as contributors to blog posts, e-discussions and other activities leading up to the HLPF, and;
- Build on and influence collaborations and programmes of work going forward from 2018.

### **Participation and organization**

The EGM is being organized by the UN Division for Sustainable Development Goals, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in partnership with ILO and UN partners.

Participation is by invitation. There will be a total of about 30 to 50 participants comprising government officials, experts with national planning experience, workers, employers, academics, policy analysts, officials of the UN system and other international organizations, and representatives of major groups and other stakeholders. Unsolicited requests for attendance will be considered on their merits, space permitting.

The Meeting will be organized to facilitate frank discussion and interactive engagement to define actions and policies to achieve SDG 8. Power point presentations and written statements are discouraged. Solution-oriented inputs in the form of short background notes or hand-outs of presentations are welcomed and will be published on the meeting's webpage, when available. All available materials will be shared with participants in advance of the meeting.

Each session will be guided by a moderator and a limited number of kick-off interventions focused on a set of guiding questions. All participants are encouraged to actively engage in the discussions.

Individual EGM sessions will run sequentially and will address specific themes. The sessions will be highly interactive and focused on the session questions. It will be a working-level meeting, with all participants encouraged to speak. Participants will be encouraged to submit answers to the session questions and relevant background documents well before the meeting, which will be compiled by the Secretariat. In addition, inputs from wider scientific and technical communities will be explored.

The EGM will be conducted in English. All presentations/papers/remarks will be made available online. Arrangements will be made to brief member States on the outcomes prior to the HLPF, based on a document to be prepared following the EGM.

**Programme schedule**

The meeting will begin on 3 April at 13:30 pm, to allow time for security screening, access and registration on the premises. It will finish on 5 April at 16:30pm. Details regarding logistics will be sent separately to confirmed participants.