



# **L20 Statement to the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers 2025**

The world of work is still suffering from the after shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent crises and now faces damaging trade wars. Although average employment levels have risen in the past year and global unemployment has been reduced to five percent, the situation varies greatly across regions and workers are still facing many vulnerabilities and precariousness, while hours worked are still below pre-COVID levels. The number of workers in informal employment rose by 23 million in 2024, reaching close to sixty percent of the global work force, and working poverty remains pervasive affecting one in five workers. Social protection coverage gaps persist as more than half of the workforce is not adequately covered, with an increasing number of undeclared workers. Wage growth continues to lag behind inflation and the labour income share of GDP, in sharp decline over the last decades, has stagnated at 52.3 percent, marking growing inequalities.<sup>1</sup> These have been exacerbated by the actions of central banks. The double hit of steeply increased inflation and interest rates has affected all economies, though the impact is disproportionately felt in the Global South, and a global debt crisis has deepened. Renewed austerity will mean immense challenges for workers.

As the South African G20 Presidency rightly points out, we are *living and working in an unequal world* and we need to *ensure decent work and decent lives*. This requires that G20 Labour and Employment Ministers adopt ambitious policies that will respond to the many challenges that workers face and improve their working conditions and living standards. Such inequality is evident across and within regions, while inequality between genders remains persistently dramatic. Changes in the world of work and the world, such as climate change and digitalisation, have the potential to exacerbate these inequalities and hardships – placing an even greater responsibility on the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers to take action and make commitments that improve workers lives in the years to come.

## Supporting Decent Work, Addressing Inequality and a Declining Labour Income Share

In order to ensure the success of decent work oriented policies that will contribute to address inequalities and reverse the decline in the labour income share, **concrete and time-bound commitments are needed on jobs and labour rights, living wages, increasing union density and strengthening collective bargaining, and reinforcing social protection.**

**The L20 insists on its call for the adoption of decent job creation targets in the context of the G20 employment track.** Having a decent job that pays a living wage is the most effective way to lift people out of poverty and ensure sustainable and inclusive economic growth. **Decent job creation should be promoted through strong investments in job-rich climate-friendly sectors** such as infrastructure development, the digital and green economy, and the care economy with governments as key players. But also through targeted public employment and job guarantee programmes. **Jobs plans must be developed with the full involvement of unions** to ensure that policies are comprehensive and address the needs of workers. The resulting jobs plans should be incorporated into the strategies, investments, and policy goals of investors including multilateral development banks, in line with government's fiscal and monetary policy, and development plans. The creation of decent jobs should be coupled with **investments in technical and vocational education and training programmes, including upskilling and reskilling programmes**, that will equip workers with the skills needed to work in emerging sectors or adapt to changes in the world of work.

In order to secure increases in living standards, G20 Labour and Employment Ministers must take urgent action to break the trend of rising informalisation and break the cycle of low and stagnant wages by **supporting unionisation, the achievement of living wages and developing roadmaps for their realisation**, including by improving the adequacy and enforcement of

<sup>1</sup> ILO 2025, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025*:  
<https://www.ilo.org/publications/flagship-reports/world-employment-and-social-outlook-trends-2025>

minimum wages and expanding collective bargaining. Living wages should be based on cost of living estimates and negotiated with the full involvement of the social partners in line with the conclusions of the *ILO meeting of experts on wage policies, including living wages*.

Strengthening collective bargaining, is moreover key to increase the labour income share and promote decent work. Collective bargaining is associated with higher pay, greater job security and lower inequality, and leads to a fairer distribution of wealth. In order to increase collective bargaining coverage, **broad-based collective bargaining (at national and/or sectoral level) should be promoted, and extension mechanisms that ensure that collective agreements do not expire without renewal must be adopted. Strong enforcement mechanisms are required to ensure the respect of collective bargaining agreements.**

Stronger unions improve the effectiveness of collective bargaining mechanisms and are a catalyst for change, but their actions have been limited by attacks on fundamental workers' rights in many G20 countries. **Specific measures need to be put in place by Labour and Employment Ministers to ensure the respect of labour and trade union rights and support the increase in union density while respecting trade unions' autonomy.** This needs to be advanced, first and foremost, through the **ratification and effective implementation of all ILO Fundamental Conventions by G20 countries and by addressing concrete obstacles to unionisation and limitations to the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the right to strike.** International regulations must moreover be strengthened to ensure respect of labour rights in supply chains and **the L20 accordingly calls on G20 governments to support a binding UN treaty on business and human rights.** In addition, as the right to a safe and healthy working environment has been recently recognised as a fundamental principle and right at work, **all G20 governments must now urgently ratify Conventions 155 and 187 on occupational safety and health and make progress towards the ratification of the recently adopted Conventions 191 and 192, and their Recommendations.**

Social protection is a key pillar of our social models and an important complement to wage policies in terms of reducing poverty and inequalities, as well as supporting aggregate demand and overall economic growth and development. Social protection floors are essential to provide a basic guarantee of income security for workers irrespective of their employment status, gender or contribution history. **Governments must strengthen social protection systems to ensure universal coverage and adequate support, in line with ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202. It is time to deliver on a Global Fund for social protection** in line with multilateral commitments to expand social protection coverage and financing. Social protection is also crucial in supporting the formalisation of the informal economy, but needs to be complemented with other measures to improve the registration of workers and formal employment, such as decent wages and decent working conditions, including occupational health and safety and greater support to national labour inspectorates.

The rise of non-standard and precarious work is also compromising workers' wellbeing. Non-standard forms of employment, precariousness and undeclared work are a major cause of in-work poverty and occupational health risks. Workers in non-standard forms of employment lack the representation and bargaining power of union membership, making it harder to secure fair wages and working conditions. **G20 Labour and Employment Ministers must step up labour law to put in place regulatory and enforcement measures that prevent misclassification and enhance workers' job security.** This also requires **the elimination of legal obstacles for non-standard workers to unionise and collectively negotiate fair wages and improvements to their working conditions.**

The L20 strongly recommends that **G20 Labour and Employment Ministers adopt specific deliverables such as net decent job creation targets, roadmaps for the establishment and enforcement of minimum living wages and a timeline for the ratification and effective implementation of fundamental ILO Conventions** to track progress on the labour income share and ensure continuity across presidencies.

The L20 is also concerned that efforts to reduce inequalities and reverse the decline in the labour income share could be jeopardised by rising debt and austerity measures, which are a threat to decent work. In many countries, debt servicing costs often exceed spending on health, education, and social protection, shrinking the fiscal space needed for investments in decent work, social protection, and public services. **G20 Labour and Employment Ministers must recognise that debt and employment are inextricably linked: austerity-driven fiscal consolidation undermines job creation, erodes labour rights, and deteriorates working conditions.**

The L20 supports the African Union's call for debt sustainability frameworks to exempt high-priority spending on climate resilience, universal social protection, education, and decent work, from debt sustainability assessments. It also joins the call for a UN-anchored Sovereign Debt Workout Mechanism that prioritises people over creditors, ensures automatic standstills during systemic crises, and binds all creditors, public and private, to fair burden-sharing. These reforms are critical to avoid a new era of austerity and to safeguard the conditions for labour rights, collective bargaining, and decent jobs.

## Digitalisation and an Inclusive Future of Work

Increased digitalisation and the growing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the world of work are changing workplaces and leading to risks in terms jobs, rights, security and privacy. The L20 is especially concerned about the risks brought about by algorithmic management, which entails highly elaborated monitoring and surveillance systems, that work on the basis of data collected from workers, in many cases without their consent and in violation of existing regulations.

**G20 Labour and Employment Ministers must work to ensure that algorithms do not infringe on the full set of fundamental principles and rights at work and put in place adequate safeguards and preventive and corrective measures**, including the discontinuation of algorithms, and high-risk AI systems, that violate these rights. In order to prevent the negative impacts of algorithmic management, **robust human oversight mechanisms are needed**, respecting the “human-in-control” principle and

ensuring that human intervention in algorithmic decision-making is meaningful and has the authority to override automated decisions. **Unions must be informed and consulted in a regular, transparent and comprehensible manner, and collective bargaining must be part of the introduction and use of algorithms in workplaces. Clear rules, with prior informed and uncoerced consent are needed on surveillance of work performance and monitoring practices to ensure the protection of the rights, privacy and dignity of workers.** Labour inspection systems must be strengthened, and unions must be included in all discussions around the design and deployment of AI in the workplace.

**The G20 must also respond to the need to protect workers throughout the 'AI supply chain', including AI designers and engineers, data labellers and content moderators in all countries, and work constructively within the ILO to secure a Convention and Recommendation on Decent Work in the Platform Economy, that will improve the working conditions of platform workers.**

While the use of digital tools for social security could contribute to expanding and making these systems more inclusive and effective, algorithmic based allocations of benefits can also reproduce societal biases and prejudices, increasing discrimination and exacerbating inequalities. These therefore need to include human oversight and be introduced in coordination with the social partners. They should also ensure appeals and redress mechanisms that can act quickly in cases of bias.

In the Global South, digital transformation is unfolding alongside vast digital divides. **G20 governments must support investments in digital infrastructure, affordable access, and digital skills development, particularly for women and youth.** Digitalisation must be inclusive and rooted in labour rights. Algorithms should not reinforce existing power asymmetries or replicate colonial patterns of resource extraction via digital platforms.

## A Just Transition

The urgency of the fight against climate change requires strong actions that will respond to the social impacts of climate policies through a Just Transition, and ensure quality jobs for current

and future generations as industries evolve. **G20 Labour and Employment Ministers should build on the discussions in the Just Transition Forum of the Brazilian G20 LEMM and put forward joint actions with the social partners to advance the fight against climate change and ensure that the Transition is indeed Just.**

A Just Transition must be negotiated with the social partners to ensure decent green jobs with labour rights, implement active industrial strategies to future-proof at-risk industries in line with climate targets, and labour market policies. It should ensure the skilling and reskilling of workers to guarantee their insertion into new climate friendly jobs, and be supported by strong and universal social protection systems. Social partners need to negotiate appropriate industrial and development policy that supports a Just Transition. Promoting and guaranteeing social justice is the key to effective climate protection. Combating climate change, creating good union jobs, and advancing social equality will all only succeed if taken forward together. These are all issues that the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers should address together with their counterparts in the Ministries of climate, trade and industry, and finance in order to ensure coordinated responses.

A Just Transition must be a central pillar of national climate strategies and international development cooperation. All Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to be presented to the UNFCCC by September, should contain a Just Transition chapter that is negotiated with unions through social dialogue. **G20 Labour Ministers must also push for climate financing mechanisms that support the employment dimension of climate policies and a Just Transition, and call for new financing windows to address job losses, reskilling, and the informal economy's integration into climate adaptation plans.**

### **Gender equality and youth inclusion for an inclusive world of work**

The L20 welcomes the initiative of the South African G20 Presidency to revive the Brisbane target through the renewed Brisbane-eThekweni Roadmap, and emphasises the importance of broadening its scope to include the promotion of equal pay for work of equal value. It hopes for an ambitious goal with a robust methodology that can respond to the

great challenges that women continue to face in accessing, remaining and progressing in the labour market.

To adequately respond to these challenges, **G20 Labour and Employment Ministers need to address the root causes of women's lower labour force participation.** Labour market reforms must promote decent work for women and address the intersectional barriers facing women and girls, including vertical and horizontal occupational segregation in the labour market, gender-based violence, discriminatory social norms and legal inequalities. Women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work must be addressed and the formalisation of the informal economy, where millions of women are concentrated, must be accelerated.

To tackle gendered occupational segregation across sectors and occupations, **governments must take a comprehensive set of measures, including setting quotas and advancing initiatives to train, recruit and retain women in underrepresented sectors and jobs, encouraging men to move into female-dominated occupations, accelerating public investments in care, and challenging stubborn gendered norms and stereotypes, including by removing gender bias in school curricula and vocational training. Governments should support the development of green and digital skills for women to ensure that they are not left out of the digital and green transitions.**

**Public investments in care and support services must be scaled-up to create millions of new decent jobs for women and enhance decent work for women with family/caring responsibilities.** Care jobs need to be formal and decent, with safe working conditions, free from gender-based violence and harassment, adequately remunerated, including equal pay for work of equal value, and covered by social protection.

**Strong gender-transformative public policies and active labour market policies, as well as family-friendly workplace policies must be advanced** to incentivise a more equitable sharing of family responsibilities and other care responsibilities. **Periods of care must be credited in social security contributions and the redistribution of unpaid care work must be facilitated through a gender-balanced use of**



paid family leave, and gender-responsive public services must be guaranteed.

**To close the gender pay gap, G20 Labour and Employment Ministers must adopt and effectively implement strong equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation, based on equal pay for work of equal value,** with strong enforcement mechanisms, grievance procedures and access to remedy, in line with ILO Conventions 100 and 111. **Pay transparency policies must be put in place,** requiring that employers make transparent their criteria and decisions concerning pay, and collect and regularly publish data on wage levels for all categories of employment disaggregated by gender. **Minimum living wages and collective bargaining will also be key in bridging the gender pay gap and ultimately the gender pension gap. The L20 strongly supports the adoption of a specific G20 target aimed at reducing the gender pay gap.**

**G20 countries also need to make progress in the elimination of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work, leading by example through a swift ratification and effective implementation of ILO Convention 190 and ILO Recommendation 206, with the involvement of social partners.**

In a context of high youth unemployment levels and high NEET rates in many G20 countries, **the L20 strongly welcomes the initiative of the South African Presidency to revive the Antalya goal, through the Nelson Mandela Bay Youth Target.** Unions call for an ambitious target that will not only focus on reducing the number of NEETs, but will also **ensure smooth school-to-work transitions whereby young people can transition from quality education and skills training to quality well paid and secure jobs, with adequate social protection, and advance measures to promote decent work for youth.** Youth employment strategies must go beyond entrepreneurship to include public employment schemes, national youth guarantee programmes, well paid apprenticeships, and living wages. The elimination of lower rates of statutory minimum wages for youth is a necessary step to ensure that young workers earn a decent living.

The L20 calls on G20 Ministers to put intergenerational solidarity at the heart of their actions to respond to the challenges posed by

demographic changes, particularly in relation to employment and social protection.

All these actions must go hand in hand with greater attention to other vulnerable groups who continue to face significant barriers in the labour market. It is crucial that asylum seekers are granted the right to work so they can contribute to society and not face exploitation in the labour market. Migrant workers must also have their rights protected at work. The global union movement stands against the scapegoating of asylum seekers and migrants for problems caused by deregulated labour markets and austerity policies. Workers' rights can only be protected when all workers' rights are respected, regardless of immigration status or nationality.

As 2025 marks the year of the second UN World Summit for Social Development, G20 Labour and Employment Ministers should accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and prioritise national policies that will help advance SDG 8 on decent work. Decent work, the inclusion of trade unions, the dignity of workers, and climate-resilient employment must no longer be marginal. They are central to any meaningful recovery and future of work. The South African G20 Presidency is an important opportunity for G20 Labour and Employment Ministers to advance a more equal and just world of work. The L20 stands ready to support these initiatives and drive progress in social justice.