

# ► 17th Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting

6–9 December 2022 | Singapore

## Special Session | Information Note

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### Strengthening multilateral cooperation to achieve social justice and decent work for all

#### ► Background

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The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on macroeconomic stability, jobs and human development will have far-reaching consequences in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The crisis has reversed years of progress towards development, especially in the realm of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, as well as other interlinked SDGs on poverty eradication (SDG1), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5) and reduced inequality (SDG10).

In 2020, the Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States regions recorded economic contractions of 1.3 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively, with an uneven rebound in 2021. The slowdown in demand pushed many people into unemployment, while many millions more continued to work on shorter hours or moved into inactivity. Gender-based impacts were stark. The share of youth neither in employment, education or training (NEET) increased in 2020, with the outcomes more severe for young women than men in the majority of countries in the region. Owing to rising unemployment, decreased working hours and associated labour-income losses, working poverty has increased after decades of decline. The number of working women and men living in extreme poverty

expanded by 2.1 million in Asia-Pacific and by 640,000 in the Arab States in 2020. The uneven and fragile labour market recovery is now further complicated by global macroeconomic volatility, inflation and emerging social, environmental and political crises in many countries.

The pandemic has underscored the distinct challenges of low- and middle-income economies in the regions that continue to face structural barriers and weaknesses in labour market institutions. Millions of jobs are still linked to informality and poor working conditions, do not generate stable incomes and are unable to lift workers and their families out of poverty. Despite the laudable objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national investments made in developing SDG frameworks and implementation strategies, sizeable gaps remain and still too many people in the regions are indeed being left behind.

In this context, stronger regional cooperation and multilateral commitment is critical in support of developing economies to foster a human-centred recovery and promote social justice in response to peoples' aspirations and needs..

## ► Session objectives

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The session will bring together leaders of international and regional organizations, multilateral development banks, government and employers' and workers' organizations to discuss concrete actions around multilateral cooperation to support the achievement of SDG8, labour market resilience against crises, and the promotion of decent work in the Asia-Pacific and Arab States regions. The objective of the session is to share experiences in building partnerships and strengthening multilateralism that is better networked, more inclusive, and more effective around a set of shared values and goals to promote social justice for universal and lasting peace.

## ► Possible points for discussion

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1. Can you share concrete examples of how your organizations strengthen multilateral cooperation to support country strategies to achieve a just transition – a transition that maximizes economic and social gains from climate action, while minimizing risks of social disruption despite the COVID 19 pandemic setback?
2. The COVID19 crisis taught us a lot about having strong institutions that can respond quickly to supporting enterprises and household through crisis situations. For socially sustainable crisis response, how do international and regional financial institutions envisage strengthening policy coherence among stakeholders to support labour market policies? Can you give some examples of such engagement in pursuit of enhanced social justice?
3. In line with the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection, how can international and regional financial institutions and the ILO collaborate to upscale support to jobs and social protection policies and country programming, involving all actors of the world of work?
4. From the perspective of regional organizations, what are the most urgent areas of action required to get closer to their achievement of SDG 8 on full and productive employment and decent work for all ?