



A powerful
and balanced
voice for business



Draft IOE Centenary Manifesto

With a membership of more than 150 independent organisations representing upwards of 50 million companies worldwide, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) has been the global voice of the private sector for one hundred years, advocating in the international arena for sustainable economic and social policies that promote free enterprise, thriving businesses and a fair society that works for everyone.

IOE's centenary is a historic milestone; it calls for a reflection on our past and our achievements, for a clear vision of IOE's role as a key player in an evolving world, and for a renewed confirmation of our values, intentions, ambitions and aspirations for tomorrow.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are the foundation for employment creation, shared growth and sustainable development.

The private sector generates nine out of ten jobs worldwide; businesses deliver jobs, incomes, purchasing power and livelihoods, allowing community and individual integration and facilitating greater economic and social equity, inclusiveness and political stability. Enterprises large and small are incubators of new technologies and innovation, creating employment and career pathways for today and tomorrow. Public authorities need to deliver conducive conditions for entrepreneurship and innovation that will allow businesses to set up, grow and flourish.

Principled action and clear values have underpinned IOE's work for the past 100 years

Employers were among the founding constituents of the International Labour Organization (ILO) more than 100 years ago, committing to the values of social justice and decent work. Our commitment to full and productive employment, social dialogue and decent work for all in an environment that sustains successful enterprises is as firm today as it was then. IOE played a decisive role in the adoption of the fundamental principles and rights at work, the ILO Social Justice Declaration, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and other instruments that influence the doing of business and the world of work. IOE, inter alia, defended the market economy during the Cold War, and continues to subscribe to our founding values and principles and to advocate in their favour today.

An employer and business community united in IOE

Our strength lies in our powerful and balanced global network, which stands united as it looks to the future. Protecting and supporting the autonomy and independence of employer and business organisations in the face of hostile behaviour; strengthening and supporting social dialogue; working together in response to critical initiatives affecting labour market policies; establishing relevant and timely initiatives, such as the Global Apprenticeship Network and the GFMD Business Mechanism; speaking up with one voice against red tape and for regulatory frameworks that allow businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, drive our agenda for our community as we enter our next century.

The representative and trusted voice of business in global policymaking circles for one hundred years

IOE has a proud history of bringing the most representative voice of employers and business not only to the ILO but also, more recently, to the UN human rights bodies and across the UN system, to the G20 and G7 processes, and other forums that play a decisive role in shaping policies around the Future of Work, employment and skills, industrial relations, human rights and responsible business conduct, sustainable development, women's empowerment, inclusion and diversity, occupational safety and health, and international labour migration. IOE actively supports and shapes a fair globalization for all. IOE's advocacy efforts will grow across these and other emerging forums that influence the global ecosystem for doing business, and we will continue to endorse multilateralism and the value of international organisations.

Important social and economic progress has been achieved, but challenges persist

Business innovation and creativity, accelerated globalisation and interconnectedness, coupled with exponential technological progress, have afforded a wealth of opportunities in our time. The overall trend globally is towards ongoing improvement in human development. Life expectancy at birth has increased by almost seven years globally since 1990. And children entering school today can expect to be in education for 3.4 years longer than in 1990. Economic and employment growth worldwide has been a constant in recent decades. Social welfare and social protection systems have expanded, even if there remains much more to do. Impressive progress has also been recorded in the eradication of poverty, as well as in the growth of the middle classes in many emerging economies thanks, inter alia, to the expansion of global trade.

However, as a society, we still face huge challenges, including persistent unemployment, particularly among young people, weak or uncertain growth, and poverty. More than 60% of the occupied population globally is in the informal sector and in some regions this figure is above 80%. Despite progress, child labour and forced labour remain unacceptably high. Women's effective labour market inclusion lags behind, with more than 100 countries preventing women from working in certain jobs. Social protection systems face sustainability challenges in both developed and developing economies. AI and digitalisation are transforming how work is done and organised. A key challenge ahead is to ensure that people

are not marginalised, but enabled, by technological progress, and that opportunities are fully harnessed and shared. Climate change poses a serious threat not only to food and water security, but to the very resilience of societies, communities, businesses and economies. We need to continue to promote globalization and free trade against current trends that want to undermine them through protectionism measures, thus jeopardizing their proven positive impact.

The 2030 Agenda – a key framework to address the opportunities and challenges through multi-stakeholder partnerships

Against this backdrop, IOE fully supports the 2030 Agenda as a means to tackle the issues and seize the opportunities, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 for “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” with its ambitious targets of higher levels of economic productivity, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, as well as SDG 17 for a revitalisation of the global partnership.

Economic, environmental and social progress cannot be achieved without concerted and cohesive effort. We must act together now to make the 2030 Agenda a reality by fully realising the opportunities that globalisation, new technologies and innovation present. Governments and the UN system need more than ever before to work hand-in-hand with the private sector to deliver on more jobs, decent work and sustainable growth. We call on them specifically to:

- Create an enabling business environment that encourages companies to set up, thrive, grow, innovate and hire in the formal economy;
- Collaborate with the private sector and other constituencies in the design and development of curricula and in re-structuring education systems to match business requirements to ensure the creation of employment;
- Focus in a more targeted way on generating opportunities for young people, women, and other marginalised groups in the labour market;
- Elaborate and implement well-designed labour migration policies that create safe, orderly and regular channels;
- Pay due attention to both social integration and the need for skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling programmes to be in line with labour market needs;
- Support smart open-market policies that promote global free trade and economic integration;
- Step up climate change policies and measures that support communities, workers and companies to progressively adjust to a low-carbon economy.

Working together for shared progress

Transparency, integrity, inclusiveness and diversity are core values of IOE and cement our leadership and credibility. Business has a track record in identifying and seizing opportunities, and in developing practical and realistic solutions for the challenges of the day. Having been involved in the negotiations at UN and national level, and in the implementation and follow-up mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda, IOE and its members are well placed to raising awareness

of the SDGs across the business community. Employer and business organisations are an important bridge for companies that are ready and willing to partner with the public sector and UN agencies. Together with trade unions, they play an important role as social partners in shaping labour markets and contributing to the 2030 Agenda. This importance will grow in light of the changes the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires. Governments and the UN need to engage with the organised voice of business and fully include IOE and its members in the implementation of UN reform at national level.

At this historic milestone, IOE pledges to

- Engage further with all relevant stakeholders, including trade unions and governments, in constructive and focused dialogues that contribute to a positive environment for business, more and better jobs, and economic growth and prosperity;
- Support the SDGs and cooperate through innovative partnerships at national and international level to reach the targets;
- Strengthen the role of our community as credible and responsible partners that respect the fundamentals of representativeness, integrity, diversity and inclusion, and help regional and national employers and business organisations to develop and grow;
- Support changing mindsets towards skills development and lifelong learning;
- Promote gender empowerment and equality, and strengthen diversity in the world of work;
- Effectively endorse and make progress on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the ILO MNE Declaration, and contribute to their ongoing promotion and implementation;
- Elevate and better communicate the positive contribution of business to society.

* * *