



# Europe and Central Asia regional event

01 July 2020

## ► Background note

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### Context

In June 2019, the International Labour Organization's 187 member States adopted the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, calling on the Organization to pursue "with unrelenting vigour its constitutional mandate for social justice by further developing its human-centred approach to the future of work, which puts workers' rights and the needs, aspirations and rights of all people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies".

Less than a year later, the economic, financial and labour consequences of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have plunged the world into a crisis of unprecedented scope and scale that has made the imperatives set out in the Centenary Declaration even more urgent as the international community engages in a collective endeavour to tackle the devastating human, economic and social impact of the pandemic. ILO estimates indicate that across the region, 3 per cent of working time (equivalent to 12 million fulltime jobs) has been lost in the first quarter of 2020, and up to 12.9 per cent of working time (equal to 50 million fulltime jobs) could be lost by the end of the second quarter.<sup>1</sup>

While restoring global health should remain the uppermost priority, it cannot be denied that the strict confinement measures applied in most countries have caused massive economic and social shocks. With the prolongation of lockdown, quarantine, physical distancing, and other isolation measures to suppress transmission of the virus, the global economy is rapidly sliding into a recession, however, in some cases with distinctive differences among countries or within sub-regions. As global supply chains become more fragmented, whole sectors are severely affected and enterprises stop production, more and more workers face the prospect of unemployment and loss of their incomes and livelihoods, while many micro- and small enterprises are on the verge of insolvency.

Countries across the region have introduced a first round of stimulus packages to rescue their economies and support their citizens.<sup>2</sup> The specific policies chosen by member States and regional bodies will determine in

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<sup>1</sup> Figures are based on full-time equivalents assuming a 40-hour workweek. These figures cannot be equated to actual increases in unemployment figures, but should rather be interpreted as the cumulative loss of employment due to the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. See Annex I ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work, 4th edition, 27 May 2020 available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed overview of country policy responses please consult the ILO dedicated database available [here](#).

what shape their economies and societies will ultimately emerge from the crisis. Efforts are wide-ranging and unprecedented in scale, with stimulus packages running to multiple trillion in the region.

This half-day event sets out to highlight emerging practices around the region to tackle this unprecedented crisis and its social and economic impact, share views on initial results and mitigation strategies and showcases policy options that puts humans at the centre of the recovery effort.

## Aim

- To maintain the ILO's connectivity with its regional tripartite constituency during the period of interruption of meetings of its statutory bodies and other activities.
- To provide a high-profile regional platform for the tripartite constituents to address the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To focus particularly on the application and relevance of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work to the post-pandemic recovery.

## Participants

Participation in the event will be open to all ILO tripartite constituents of the region's 51 countries, as well as to other relevant stakeholders. Invitations will be sent to Ministers, high-level representatives of the social partners and select counterparts from regional and multilateral entities.

Participants will connect via a dedicated online platform that allows for video/audio participation. Interaction will be mainly facilitated through a chat function, which will allow a discussion facilitated by sessions' moderators. Moreover, the event will be broadcast and is open to all audiences. Interpretation of the event will be available in English, French, Spanish, Russian and German.

Speakers and panellists will be identified to broadly reflect the geographical and economic diversity of the region, with the aim of gender parity across panels. ILO Country Offices across the region will liaise actively with their respective governmental counterparts at the national level to ensure active participation and engagement. Participation and inputs by social partners will be coordinated via the Bureau for Workers' activities (ACTRAV) and the Bureau for Employers' activities (ACT/EMP) with ITUC and IOE.

## Approach

The Regional event for Europe and Central Asia will consist of four sessions, with panels focusing in depth on Pillars II (supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes) and III (protecting workers in the workplace) of the ILO Policy Framework for Tackling the Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis,<sup>3</sup> while integrating pillar IV (solutions through social dialogue) throughout the sessions by way of tripartite participation of constituents. Issues related to Pillar I (Stimulating the economy and employment) will be touched upon during the opening session.

The opening session will bring together governments, regional entities and high level representatives from the social partners to highlight the differences and similarities of this crisis across the region and set the stage for the discussions to follow. Two thematic tripartite panel sessions will follow, focusing respectively on pillars

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<sup>3</sup> Document available [online](#).

II and III of the ILO COVID-19 Policy Framework. The Regional event will close with a summary session, highlighting key emerging trends, first lessons learnt and some pointers for future policy options.

The opening session will set the stage with interventions by each speaker, while the panel sessions and the summary session aim to be more interactive, to provide a space to develop a regional perspective on COVID-response and recovery measures. The summary will then feed into Day 1 of the Global event (7 July). A short video of the highlights of the regional session will also be produced.

## Opening Session (45 minutes)

The opening session will give a broad introduction on the various aspects of the world of work that are, and will be, impacted by COVID-19 and the policy responses found thereto, including active fiscal policy, accommodative monetary policy and lending and financial support to specific sectors. The ILO Regional Director will moderate it and speakers will have seven minutes for their respective intervention.

- The ILO will outline the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 to the world of work, introducing the four pillars of the ILO Response Strategy, setting the stage for the subsequent panel discussions by briefly outlining the short-, medium-, and long-term response of labour markets to COVID-19. The intervention will highlight the relevance of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the development of an inclusive, sustainable and human-centred response to COVID-19, and the importance of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
- The Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Germany) is expected to speak of the macroeconomic and labour market priorities within the EU in the second half of 2020, and outline some successful country examples where appropriate.
- The Minister from the Russian Federation is expected to introduce responses from that part of the region, referring to short- and medium-term measures to tackle the disease and its impact on the labour market in the country and the broader sub-region.
- The European Commission is expected to outline the COVID labour market responses across member States, highlighting the coordination function the EU plays at the regional level and the EU measures directly supporting responses at the national level, including fiscal and monetary policies supporting employment and social protection.
- One regional representative each from the workers group and the employers group will speak of their constituents' experiences during the immediate outbreak of the crisis, as well as the role they play in shaping a faster, better and more sustainable recovery. They will highlight the value of social dialogue in tackling this unprecedented crisis.

## Thematic sessions

### Panel 1 – Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes (70 minutes)

This tripartite session, consisting of two government representatives, one workers' and one employers' representative, will discuss some of the responses found in the region to date, and provide an outlook on the challenges they see ahead. Specifically, the interventions will focus on:

- approaches to extending emergency protection and sustainable social protection to those in need;
- employment retention and job creation measures; and

- emergency assistance to assure business continuity and an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises to recover better.

Speakers have five minutes each to introduce their viewpoints (25 minutes), before an interactive discussion will take place (45 minutes). The discussion will focus on the questions outlined in a session's note and integrate viewpoints that arise from event participants. A journalist, who will frame and summarize the discussion, will moderate the panel session.

## Panel 2 – Protecting workers in the workplace (70 minutes)

This tripartite session, consisting of two government representatives, one workers' and one employers' representative, will discuss the responses found in the region to date, and provide an outlook on the challenges they see ahead. Specifically, the interventions will focus on:

- occupational safety and health, including for a safe and successful return to work;
- prevention of discrimination and exclusion; and
- new working arrangements, including telework and access to paid leave.

Speakers have five minutes each to introduce their viewpoints (25 minutes), before an interactive discussion will take place (45 minutes). The discussion will focus on the questions outlined in a session's note and integrate viewpoints that arise from event participants. A journalist, who will frame and summarize the discussion, will moderate the panel session.

## Summary session (25 minutes)

The final session will bring together three discussants (1G+1W+1E) to sum up the views that emerged during the event and provide policy options based upon the Centenary Declaration and to inform ILO's future action across the region. Based on this discussion, the Office will prepare a summary note and a short video that will feed into the regional day (7 July) of the ILO Global Summit. The ILO Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia will moderate the session. There will be no formal conclusion statement, but the discussions are intended to inform regional inputs on future ILO activity, including preparations for the next strategic plan and programme of work.

### Contact details

Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia  
International Labour Organization  
Route des Morillons 4  
CH-1211 Geneva 22  
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7366  
E: [bussi@ilo.org](mailto:bussi@ilo.org)