



International  
Labour  
Organization

## **2021 World Day of Social Justice “A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy” and New York launch of the 2021 ILO WESO Report**

February 23, 2021  
10:00am – 12:00pm  
New York

The Permanent Mission of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN and the International Labour Organization are pleased to convene the commemorative meeting of the 2021 World Day of Social Justice. This year's theme focuses on, “A Call for Social Justice in the Digital Economy”, connecting to the Secretary-General's Roadmap for digital cooperation, which was launched in 2020. The event will also serve as a pre-launch of the ILO's new flagship report, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transitioning the world of work*.

The digital economy is transforming the world of work. Over the past decade, expansion in broadband connectivity, cloud computing, and data have led to the proliferation of digital platforms, which have penetrated a number of sectors of the economy and societies. Since early 2020, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to remote working arrangements and allowed for the continuation of many business activities, further reinforcing the growth and impact of the digital economy. The crisis has also laid bare and exacerbated the growing digital divide within, between and across developed and developing countries, particularly in terms of the availability, affordability and use of information ICTs and access to the internet.

The 2021 ILO WESO report seeks to enhance the understanding of how digital labour platforms are transforming the world of work and the implications of that transformation on businesses and workers. While digital labour platforms provide workers with income-generating opportunities and benefits from flexible work arrangements, including for women, persons with disabilities, young people and migrant workers, they also present some challenges. For workers, these relate in particular to the regularity of work and income, working conditions, social protection, skills utilization and the right of association. Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing the risks and inequalities of workers engaged in location-based platforms. For traditional businesses, the challenges include unfair competition from platforms, some of which are not subject to conventional taxation and other obligations because of their novel nature, including with respect to their workforce. Another challenge for traditional businesses is the amount of funding required to continuously adapt to digital transformations, especially for small and medium enterprises

(SMEs), and inadequate availability of reliable digital infrastructure, in particular in the global South.

The regulatory responses from many countries have started to address some of the issues related to working conditions on digital labour platforms. However, there is a need for some form of international policy dialogue and coordination since digital labour platforms operate across multiple jurisdictions. The promotion of national, regional and international multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and coordination is also vital to ensure regulatory certainty and the applicability of universal labour standards, given the diversity of responses by countries and platform companies.

The event will continue the tradition of commemorating the World Day of Social Justice since its first proclamation by the General Assembly in 2007 under the leadership of the Kyrgyz Republic. The commemoration supports efforts by the international community to search for solutions to achieve sustainable development, poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equality and access to social well-being and justice for all.

The main objective of the event is to foster dialogue with member States and relevant UN institutions and other stakeholders on actions needed to overcome the digital divide, provide decent work opportunities and protect labour rights in the modern era of digital technologies. The side-event will consist of keynote speakers, followed by a panel discussion and briefing on the 2021 ILO WESO report. An interactive discussion will follow.

### **Key Questions**

- How can the platform economy contribute to the SDGs by providing decent work opportunities particularly for women and youth?
- Which regulatory challenges need to be addressed as part of efforts to build forward better from COVID19?
- What responses are required at the international and national levels to ensure that these platforms support digital cooperation and contribute to an inclusive rights-based and sustainable development?