Inclusive Partnerships to Achieve the 2030 Agenda
Employers strengthening link with UN Resident Coordinators in Asia Pacific Region

On 29 June 2021, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), together with its member organisations from Asia and Pacific countries and other private sector representatives, engaged in a strategic dialogue with UN Resident Coordinators from the region. How to expand public–private sector collaboration to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strengthen social protection systems following the Covid-19 pandemic, and create an enabling environment for business, decent job creation, and skills development were the lead items on the agenda.

"The three key objectives of today's dialogue are to 1) connect our members with UN regional coordinators; 2) understand better each other's needs and concerns; and 3) identify joint actions." – Roberto Suárez Santos

This high-level dialogue took place against the background of the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on lives and livelihoods in the region. Lack of access to finance mechanisms and weak national social protection systems have exacerbated the effects of the crisis. With high levels of informality and a poor environment for business to grow sustainably before the pandemic, the necessary lockdowns and quarantine measures have since forced millions of people working in the informal sector back into poverty. Companies have been hard hit; one regional inter-governmental organisation predicts that one-third of small and medium-sized businesses in the Pacific area will not survive. Overall, the United Nations estimates that the pandemic could reverse half a decade of poverty reductions in the region.

"There is a particular responsibility that the UN has in its role as a convener, in its role as at the centre of many partnerships ...to translate some of the darkness of the past year into a light of opportunities for new types of growth." – Neil Buhne

Participants agreed on the urgent need for close engagement of employers in the design of policies to address the economic, employment and health impacts of the crisis. In addition, all stressed that policies to build more resilient economies, including through support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and climate-friendly jobs, skills development and sustainable social protection systems, were critical. We need to bring the world back to work, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, and the private sector has a key role in this regard.

"The best value we bring as IOE is our network of independent representative employers organisations and business associations, who are key players in policy making and implementation." – Roberto Suárez Santos

Together, we encourage all participants to this strategic forum to initiate, develop and strengthen national dialogues between employer organisations and UN Resident Coordinators. Together, they should identify priorities, plans, and develop inclusive Cooperation Frameworks. We will hold a follow up dialogue to take a deep dive into the topic of Partnerships, which was identified as a high priority by dialogue participants, with Skills/Education as possibly another area of focus. We will also assess what has been achieved by these dialogues and identify next steps to stimulate and strengthen relations between the private sector and UN Resident Coordinators.

"We can bring dialogues together on the SDGs and we can also be a broker to put together some programmes that are catalysts for new ideas." – Neil Buhne

We also take this opportunity to share the Playbook on *Building Momentum in the Decade of Action through Collaboration between Employers and UN Resident Coordinators,* which guides and illustrates through previous dialogues and best practices on how the UN and private sector can collaborate to ensure no one is left behind.

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