



PLAYBOOK:  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Creating Synergies between UN Resident Coordinators and Employers for Sustainable Impact

January 2024



A powerful  
and balanced  
voice for business



# Executive Summary

As we deal with polycrisis from political, environmental to socio-economic challenges we are falling behind in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable. Only 12 per cent of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been achieved so far. The Playbook 2.0 has been updated from the previous version **Building Momentum in the Decade of Action** to address possibilities of higher level relations and engagement of employers' organisations and United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinators (RCs) at the national and local level and possibilities for employers to be more engaged at the global UN processes.

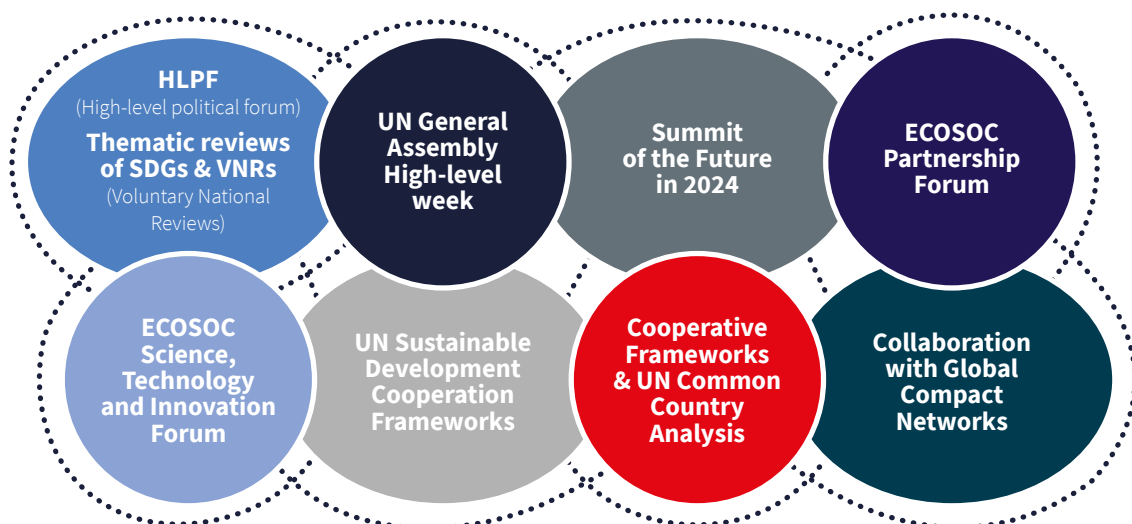
## Targeted information for RCs

- Who to contact at the local level: Federations, Chambers, Global Compact Local networks (all are different structures and country-specific).
- Social employment Issues from an employer's perspective: informality, sustainable social protection policies, the green skills agenda, and the importance of digitalisation.

## Targeted information for Employers' Organisations

- UN processes such as Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.
- New financial architecture, financing mechanisms for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and projects.

## Main United Nations Processes



Traditionally, employers' organisations have been central to national labour market reforms, defining wage levels and working conditions that the labour market needs since they create about 90 per cent of jobs worldwide. Today, their agenda is evolving with emerging global issues such as climate change, sustainable social protection systems, responsible operations and meeting national SDG targets. The latter requires collective effort. Under the UN reform RCs are increasingly working with multiple stakeholders including the private sector in addressing social development issues.

The collaboration between the UN and the private sector should be based on collaboration and long-term relations that lead to systemic changes in policies and regulations. While these changes can take time and are not quick fixes the outcomes benefit countries, the UN system, businesses and employers. Engagement should not be an *ad hoc* engagement or one-off activity or meeting but should be a continuous engagement and should be embedded in relevant processes.

Based on Playbook 1.0, some key guiding principles for collaboration remain valid. But have been updated based on lessons learned over recent dialogues. The RCs play a critical role in bringing all parties together at the national and local levels. Employers' organisations along with Global Compact Networks can partner with RCs to collectively support the government in ensuring that the private sector is engaged in the planning and implementation of the SDGs.

### **Key guiding principles for collaboration between RCs and Employers**

- Establish, identify, and engage with appropriate focal points.
- Identify and engage with relevant SDG-related processes.
- Identify some shared values, interests and goals and communicate the added value of mutual engagement between RCs and employers including utilising effectively expertise, resources, and innovation of both.
- Try to understand each party's priorities and needs and how they can be enhanced through collaboration.
- Identify each stakeholder's added value and strengths and showcase best practices.
- Agree on the form of collaboration, whether it is best accomplished through a simple engagement or a formal public-private partnership.
- Consider establishing collaborative platforms that can facilitate dialogue, information exchange, and joint action towards achieving the SDGs.
- Consider using existing structures for engagement before creating new ones.

- Establish each party's commitments and contributions, and use each other's comparative advantages to provide capacity-building programs, technical assistance, and access to relevant networks and resources.
- Ensure all sides feel safe in the partnership and foster mutual trust.
- Agree on communication procedures and respect confidentiality.
- Try to speak a common language, avoiding overly UN- or business-specific vocabulary.
- Clarify the purpose of the collaboration, ensuring alignment with the SDGs and mapping relevant SDG targets/indicators.
- Create a measurement and evaluation plan with sufficient capacity and independence to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Give the partnership and/or collaboration public visibility to set a good example for other employer organisations and UN stakeholders.

The Playbook tries to facilitate this engagement by explaining to RCs the ways Employers' Organisations and Chambers of Commerce work at the national and local level to be able to better understand and partner with them. Employers' organisations, which are the policy legislative partners and are critical to making a systemic change to reach the SDGs, focusing on social employment policies and advocate governments and social partners on issues such as wages, pensions, whereas in principle chambers of commerce focus more on trade, and investments. The UN Global Compact is key in advocating for the Guiding Principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption. It supports businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies.

Whatever the governance structure, it is important to have a voice of these business groups, that represent all industries, sectors, and companies regardless of their size.

### **Governance structures of employers and businesses at the national and local level**

- Business associations, and organisations, represent MSMEs, and industry sectoral groups, and often have training facilities.
- Local Global Compact Networks work closely with local businesses. They are sometimes led by an International Organisation of Employers (IOE) member federation or Chambers and sometimes are connected with RCs. In Small island developing States (SIDS), there may be a regional Global Compact Network that covers several countries.
- A federation may be also called a Chamber and may have both functions of social employment issues and trade. In some cases, they are separate from employers' organisations which concentrate on social and labour policy, while Chambers of Commerce focuses on trade and investment.

Key issues for employers are how to engage both globally and locally with the United Nations entities in advancing their priorities such as infrastructure, governance, sustainable social protection, and digitalisation as well as how to access various tools and build capacity and skills. In this regard, the Playbook addresses in-depth sustainable social protection systems, informality, digital transformation, future workforce skills and financing for sustainable development.

For employers at the local level, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and those are MSMEs, start-ups, young people and women-run businesses, what is important is access to financing for their businesses and how best to utilise technology including artificial intelligence.

### **Bridging the digital divide**

Four in five people in the LDCs, according to the **Small Goes Digital**, ILO report, written in cooperation with the IOE and Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), do not use the internet at all, with gender gaps and affordability issues related to internet access being most pronounced in the poorest economies, while firm-level disparities in technology adoption are even wider than regional ones suggesting inequalities in multiple dimensions. In low-income countries, 70 percent of households are not yet covered by fixed broadband networks, 33 per cent are out of reach of mobile internet (4G), and 234 million fewer women than men use mobile internet. The private sector can help bridge this digital divide by encouraging open-source innovation to motivate collaboration among businesses and communities.

The search for talent remains a serious issue for employers. The skills mismatch is a reality and with the move to greener, bluer technologies the required skills for these increasingly new jobs are missing. Many workers are unemployed or underemployed and with the onset of generative AI, reskilling has become “the issue” for both workers and employers.

### **Private sector investments in decent jobs and just transition**

The creation of more decent jobs needs specific solutions, investments and quality jobs. Coordination across macroeconomic, sustainable investment, industrial, sectoral, social and enterprise policies, will be essential in enabling businesses to develop and implement greener and resource-efficient production practices. A Just Transition must be inclusive and align with the supply of skills to facilitate the smooth and efficient reallocation of workers to newly created decent jobs. For this to happen, an enabling business environment where the private sector can not only grow but also thrive and innovate is key. This in turn will allow investments in better technology and upskilling to attract talent. **Decent jobs for youth** is one such global initiative launched by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) with engagement from IOE.

Engagement of employers' organisations at the global level with UN processes is another important part of active and meaningful engagement of the private sector and businesses. They must participate in UN processes that influence policy decision-making and create an enabling environment for collaboration both at the global and local level. IOE along with its member affiliate in New York, United States Council on International Business (USCIB), co-chairs the Business and Industry Major Group (B&IMG) in New York. The B&IMG ensures private sector engagement in UN processes linked to SDGs and is working on getting Global Business groups a permanent seat at the UN table. At the local level, there is an increase in number of employers' organisations being engaged with RC offices in Cooperation Frameworks and VNRs, policy issues and partnerships. But there is still work to be done.



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We hope that this Playbook will assist business and employers' organisations, Global Compact Networks, and RCs to work together and bring the engagement in implementing SDGs to a higher level and be long-term true partners to achieve greener/bluer economies and ensure a just transition through the creation of decent jobs and skills supported by digitalisation.

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