



G20

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Solidarity

Equality

Sustainability

Sherpa Track
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1. INTRODUCTION

This theme effectively positions South Africa as a leader in advocating for a future of work that not only benefits from technological advancements but is also fair, inclusive, and resilient in the long term. Bolstered by carefully selected priorities, this overarching theme underscores our unwavering commitment to inclusive growth, addressing inequality, and preparing for the future of work in the face of digitalisation and other global labour market transformations.

2. PRIORITIES

2.1 PRIORITY 1: INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Building on the Antalya Goals, our presidency will focus on urgently addressing the critical issue of youth employment. We will champion efforts to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) through education, skills development, and comprehensive job creation programmes. Since the Antalya Goal expires in 2025, our presidency comes at a perfect time to assess progress and push for renewed commitments.

The global youth employment challenge is marked by unequal progress in job access, persistently high NEET rates, significant gender inequalities and patterns of exclusion, and the prevalence of low-quality, low-wage jobs, especially in countries like South Africa. This issue demands our unwavering attention and action-orientated discussions on the complex intersection of youth employment, rapid digitalisation, widening inequalities, and diverse labour market challenges, including those linked to climate change and demographic transitions.

We must explore a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to tackle the youth employment challenge, first by prioritising job-rich, inclusive growth through gender-responsive, pro-employment macroeconomic and sectoral policies, particularly within the digital and green economies. This includes understanding existing inequalities, their drivers, and how education, employment, asset ownerships, and access to basic services interact with them to design effective measures. Second, by scaling up investments in education and skills development and ensuring these align with labour market demands. Emphasis must be placed on skills for the future, including digital literacy, skills for emerging technologies, and skills for green jobs. Third, by fostering an enabling environment

for sustainable enterprise creation and youth entrepreneurship, providing access to finance, mentorship, and comprehensive support networks to fuel the creation and growth of youth-owned businesses. Finally, by establishing strong, modern labour market institutions that can deliver effective employment services and integrate public and private efforts, ensuring maximum impact in addressing youth employment.

We must also advocate for inclusive labour market policies that combat discrimination, ensure equal opportunities, and protect young workers as they navigate economies reshaped by digitalisation and other drivers of change. Particular attention must be given to unemployed or inactive youth, especially young women, as well as those unable to benefit from the structural transformation of their respective countries. Strong universal social protection systems are vital to ensure access to social security for young workers and support inclusion for unemployed or inactive youth. Lastly, partnerships that bring together governments, businesses, and trade unions and include young people and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are essential to fostering innovation and sustainable solutions for decent jobs for youth. This holistic approach will ensure inter-generational solidarity¹ and empower young people to shape a brighter, more inclusive future.

2.2 Possible Outcomes: Building on the Antalya Goals, outcomes would focus on:

- Reducing youth NEET with separate indicators for the youth unemployment rate and the proportion of youth inactive and out of school.
- Boosting the operationalisation of youth employment strategies. Progress in these outcomes will support the transition of skilled and empowered youth into decent work in the digital age while tracing decisive action through effective policies and programmes. In line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 8 (specifically indicators 8.6.1 and 8.b.1) and 10. The proposed outcomes will place an emphasis on job creation strategies, education and skills development reform, and youth entrepreneurship promotion. Thus, G20 countries have an opportunity to empower youth, promote inclusive economic growth and decent work, and position

¹ The concept of intergenerational solidarity was strongly pushed for in the [Outcome Documents \(Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations\)](#) that came out of the Summit of the Future and is a concept that is valid for all societies that face transitions caused by multiple drivers of change, including climate, demographic and technological change.

themselves as leaders in leveraging digital transformation for sustainable development.

2.3 PRIORITY 2: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKFORCE

Continuing the efforts of the Brisbane Goal, which also expires in 2025, we will prioritise reducing the gap in labour force participation between men and women. This means not only promoting equal pay for work of equal value but also dismantling deeply entrenched barriers that hold women back. Therefore, it is envisaged that this discussion will examine both longstanding inequalities and the evolving gendered impact of technology and automation on opportunities and access to work. We need proactive, gender-responsive employment policies to address gender-based pay inequalities head-on, including measures for pay transparency, targeted support for women, and redress mechanisms when discrepancies exist.

Targeted initiatives to tackle vertical and horizontal gender-based occupational segregation and boost women's representation in leadership and in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are crucial, as this untapped talent pool holds the potential to transform economies. We must go beyond standard talking points and delve into how issues like caregiving responsibilities, workplace discrimination, including gender-based violence and harassment, and the digital gender divide disproportionately hinder women from becoming leaders, entering STEM occupations, including in the green sector, and finding decent work opportunities across all sectors. Among others, we need to track the precise impact of automation on women's work and develop support accordingly while continuing efforts towards professionalising care work and valuing unpaid and paid care work. We should also analyse how social protection can support overcoming barriers to gender equality across the life course. It is crucial to underscore that this is an issue affecting both men and women and vital for economic stability and inclusive growth. Our presidency will, therefore, drive a collaborative, solutions-focused agenda for gender equality in the workforce.

2.4 Possible Outcome

Resuscitating the Brisbane Goal with a renewed focus on gender pay gaps within G20 countries aims to achieve equal pay for work of equal value, aligning with SDGs 5 and 8, advocating for gender equality and decent work. Drawing on international labour standards, such as the International Labour Organisation

(ILO) conventions C100, C111, C122, C156, C183, C189 and C190, can foster fair work environments and support workers with family responsibilities. Setting clear targets and monitoring progress will promote economic fairness, social justice, and sustainable growth. Reviving the Brisbane Goal would demonstrate G20 leadership in gender equality, inspiring global efforts towards fair wages and fostering a more inclusive economy.

2.5 PRIORITY 3: ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND A DECLINING LABOUR INCOME SHARE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LIVING STANDARDS

A core focus of our presidency will be reducing inequalities through a deliberate increase in labour income share. This approach is vital for enhancing living standards, as it directly addresses the root causes of economic disparity and promotes more inclusive growth. A decline in the labour income share, the proportion of national income going to workers, significantly contributes to rising inequality. This means a smaller slice of the economic pie goes to workers—those who create the wealth. Wage-setting mechanisms, particularly collective bargaining, are key to achieving the objective of increasing labour income share.

Collective bargaining empowers workers to negotiate fairer wages and working conditions with employers. Stronger unions and employers' organisations improve the effectiveness of collective bargaining mechanisms and are a catalyst for change. By securing higher wages, improved benefits packages, and better working conditions for employees, collective bargaining agreements can directly address the issue of declining labour income share while also reducing the gender gap in labour income. Furthermore, it can promote job security through agreement to layoff limitations and severance pay provisions. Additionally, collective bargaining helps reduce income inequality by raising wages, particularly for those on the lower end of the income scale, leading to a fairer distribution of wealth.

While collective bargaining is crucial, it should be part of a broader strategy to increase the labour income share in the G20 countries, both developed and developing. This strategy could include adequate minimum wages, achievement of living wages in line with ILO principles, progressive tax structures to redistribute wealth, and strengthening social and labour protection systems to provide security for struggling workers, many of whom are women in the informal economy and in low-paid jobs. However, a significant challenge in attaining this ambitious goal is the prevalence of non-standard forms of employment and informal

employment. Therefore, there is an urgent need to tackle the challenges of non-standard and informal employment.

Non-standard forms of employment, such as temporary, part-time, and platform work, especially in the informal sector, complicate efforts to increase labour income share and reduce inequality. Workers in these types of employment often lack the representation and bargaining power of union membership, making it harder to secure fair wages and working conditions. These workers frequently face job insecurity, inadequate wages, and poor working conditions, and they lack access to social protection like health care, unemployment insurance, or pensions.

2.6 Possible Outcome

How G20 countries can strengthen legal protections for worker protection and rights, including unionisation, access to social security, and fair wages, extending these to non-standard and informal workers. Enhancing collective bargaining and enforcing minimum wage laws can significantly reduce income inequality and improve living standards. This approach will lead to more inclusive and sustainable economic growth, benefitting both the workforce and the broader economy.

2.7 PRIORITY 4: DIGITALISATION AND AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE OF WORK

The rapid acceleration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies demands a proactive, human-centred approach to shaping the future of work. Our presidency aims to spearhead critical discussions on digitalisation, platform work, and inclusivity, refusing to accept a future where anyone is left behind by technological change. South Africa's active role in these conversations involves ensuring that technological advancements benefit all workers and mitigate potential job displacement and negative impacts on working conditions and workers' rights.

Discussions will consider addressing issues like ensuring decent work in the digital economy, including platform work; reskilling and upskilling for a rapidly changing workforce; potential for more inclusive and effective social protection and labour market service delivery; gender equality and non-discrimination; and implications of AI for the workplace, including ethical considerations and regulation. This priority aligns with worldwide developments on the regulation of

AI, along with the two forthcoming International Labour Conferences (ILC) discussions on a standard setting on decent work in the platform economy. It also offers a unique opportunity to focus on the intricate interplay between digital technologies and labour market governance, ensuring that innovation works for workers and countries, not against them.

2.8 Possible Outcome

Open discussion and information sharing to contextualise the effects of new technologies in G20 countries. This discussion will explore various aspects such as digital labour platforms, remote work arrangements, AI-driven automation, including algorithmic management in the workplace, the gig economy, and digitalisation of public service delivery, considering their global implications for decent work, access to social protection and gender equality.