



The Athens Declaration on Social Dialogue and the Future of Work by Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions

We, representatives from Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (ESC-SIs), participating in the international conference on “Social Dialogue and the Future of Work”, hosted by the AICESIS-ILO-OKE¹ on 23-24 November 2017 in Athens;

Considering that the Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions are established to advise the Executive authority/government and/or parliament on how best to ensure both complementarity and coherence between economic requirements and social needs so that they can advance decent work and social justice for all.

Recalling the Constitution of the ILO, which states that lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice;

Reiterating the fundamental principles on which the ILO was founded as described by the Declaration of Philadelphia² of 1944:

- a) “labour is not a commodity;*
- b) freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress;*
- c) poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere;*
- d) the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.”*

Recalling the ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work of 1998, promoting principles and rights at work in four categories:

- 1) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining*
- 2) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour*

¹ The Economic and Social Council of Greece.

² Declaration concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organisation, adopted at the 26th session of the General Conference of the International Labour Organisation, Philadelphia, 10 May 1944

- 3) *the abolition of the worst forms of child labour*
- 4) *the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation*

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.

In recognizing the above principles and rights, we affirm that:

Strong, sustainable growth and decent jobs for all are fundamental for society as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provides a global framework to achieve all its 17 Goals. Social dialogue and strong social dialogue institutions are key in shaping the future of work and to building a world of work and social protection in which no one is left behind. The involvement of social partners and other stakeholders in decision making and policy design is particularly important to ensure good governance at a time when the world of work is facing challenges stemming from the rapid transformations in technology, demography, climate change, globalization, as well as other factors such as wars and geopolitical issues. Social dialogue not only fosters democracy and peace, but it also contributes to harmonious industrial relations, reducing inequalities, boosting productivity and promoting inclusive growth. It is therefore important for governments, workers' and employers' organizations to renew their commitment to social dialogue and tripartism as well as to strengthen their capacities.

The ESCs and SIs have an important role to play in better preparing for the challenges and opportunities in a changing world of work by deepening their understanding of the transformations taking place and providing advice on effective policy responses that can help shape the future of work in a manner that best serves the interest of employers, workers and society at large.

We are determined to:

Reinforce actions at the national and international level and with regard to different relevant players (Government, Parliament, representative organizations of employers and workers as well as other appropriate representative organizations of persons and groups concerned) in order to promote the recognition of the strategic importance of social dialogue processes in responding effectively to challenges and opportunities resulting from the changes in the world of work;

We the ESC-SIs propose the following action:

As unique platforms for building national consensus on important economic and social policies and legislation, we the ESC-SIs will use our best endeavors to:

- Mobilize all available human and financial resources towards addressing the challenges and multiplying opportunities associated with the future of work, such as the: emergence of new forms of work, changing skills requirements, deficits in the enabling environment for sustainable enterprise, use of technology for safer workplaces, need for enhanced enforcement and adaptation of legal and institutional frameworks, growing level of inequality and income insecurity, and the adequacy of social protection systems;

- Further engage ourselves in the national debates on key challenges and opportunities surrounding the changing world of work and enhance our competencies and role as forums for consensus building;
- Enhance the role and capacity of our members, especially the social partners, on issues relating to the changing world of work;
- Give due consideration to the guidance contained in relevant ILO instruments of social dialogue, especially Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), Consultation (Industrial and National Levels) Recommendation, 1960 (No. 113), Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) that are essential for effective social dialogue;
- Advise policy makers to put in place policy frameworks that maximize the benefits and minimize the risks relating to the future of work, particularly those that promote:
 - Sound macroeconomic, fiscal and sectoral policies for inclusive growth and employment;
 - An enabling environment for enterprise creation, sustainable enterprises and innovative businesses;
 - Labour market, wage and social protection policies to promote decent work and ensure the protection of labour rights;
 - Enhanced participation of women, youth and disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

We as members of the AICESIS propose the following action:

- Support and facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practice amongst individual ESC-SIs with regard to action taken or identified to help shape the future of work;
- Undertake follow-up actions to the Athens Declaration, which will be presented at our General Assembly meeting in 2018 including specific initiatives aiming at reinforcing ESC-SIs' capacities to support the implementation of the Athens Declaration at country level;
- Expand their association to other tripartite/multipartite institutions and develop a partnership with such entities in collaboration with the ILO particularly in the framework of the Future of Work Initiative and the Centenary celebrations;
- Create and strengthen the global alliance between ESC-SIs (with special attention to Small Island Development States (SIDS)) with the aim to further advancing the objectives of decent work, social justice for all as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

We request the ILO, as a strategic partner, to consider the following action:

- Support and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences on the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at addressing the impact of technological and demographic changes, climate change and globalization;
- Analyze global trends on social dialogue and provide policy tools and training to support national processes of social dialogue;

- Offer assistance and expertise to help ESCs-SIs to formulate strategies that aim at strengthening capacities of their members, especially the social partners, on social dialogue;
- Further advocate social dialogue and tripartism as an important means to maintain and rebuild social justice and peace within and between countries.

Athens, 24 November 2017