

Concept note for a thematic session on

Child Labour In supply chains

at the V Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, Durban, South Africa

Thursday 19 May 2022, 14.45 – 16.30

The Background

At the beginning of many supply chains, there are small entrepreneurs and holders, women and men working at home or in hard to access workplaces of the informal and rural economy. Their work is essential to produce raw materials, manufacture products or circulate or recycle finished goods of larger supply chains. At these lowest tiers of supply chains, the risks of child labour and forced labour are particularly acute. The main root causes of the problem are found in the lack of decent work for parents and youth of legal working age, the limited access to quality and free education and social protection systems as well as the persistent barriers for workers to fully enjoy other fundamental principles and rights at work.

Due to the complexity of these challenges and the myriad of interdependent actors in supply chains, addressing child labour in supply chains call for a greater integration of efforts from a wide range of stakeholders. Governments need to consider whether national laws and policies effectively prevent unscrupulous businesses from benefiting from child labour and forced and, if not, how their scope and enforcement could be enhanced. They also require investments on education and social protection floors that can help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households. Dialogue and collective bargaining need to be strengthened at the local level by workers' and employers' representatives to create more decent jobs in supply chains, including for women and young workers, and enhance due diligence and compliance. Business concrete progress against child labour in global supply chains will require continued support to the efforts of enterprises and others to ensure compliance as well as a more comprehensive approach to responsible business conduct and due diligence and to adapt businesses practices, particularly in high-risks context, in order to better prevent and mitigate child labour risks.

As supply chains continued to be disrupted, including due to the COVID-19 crisis, and the long-lasting effects of amplified inequalities and climate change increase child labour risks around the world, our time could be the turning point for leaders to build supply chains free of child labour.

Issues to be addressed

To respond to some of these challenges, a number of mandatory and voluntary measures have emerged in recent years. The session will bring together leaders shaping the future of supply chains to discuss how do we get from where we are now in the fight against child labour in supply chains to



where we want to be by the SDG target date of 2025. It will look at how governments, businesses, trade unions, cooperatives and civil society committed to end child labour in supply chains can set more ambitious goals and scale up approaches on the persisting and emerging root causes of child labour. In doing so, the session will look at the specific role and shared responsibilities of both public and private actors. Panellists will also explore new public and businesses efforts to improve the impact on the ground of child labour due diligence and accelerate collective action from private sector.

