



A powerful  
and balanced  
voice for business



## IOE Centenary Manifesto

With a membership of more than 150 national independent organisations representing over 50 million companies worldwide that employ hundreds of millions of workers, the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) has been the global voice of the private sector for one hundred years, advocating for sustainable economic and social policies that promote free enterprise, thriving businesses and a fair society that works for everyone.

IOE's centenary is a historic milestone; calling for a reflection on our past and our achievements. It also calls for a clear vision of IOE's role as a key player in an interconnected world that can evolve rapidly, dramatically and with little warning as we have recently experienced, and for a renewed confirmation of our values, intentions, ambitions and aspirations for tomorrow.

As we address the severe economic effects of the measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, it is all the more urgent to place sustainable enterprises at the heart of recovery planning and to establish the conditions for growth and employment that also promote the benefits of sustainable development for the long-term, beyond the 2030 timeframe.

### **Entrepreneurship and innovation: the foundation for competitive enterprises, sustainable development, shared growth, and employment creation**

Enterprises large and small are incubators of new technologies and innovation that create career pathways for today and tomorrow. They generate nine out of ten jobs worldwide - contributing to greater economic and social equity, inclusiveness, and political stability.

### **Principled action and clear values have underpinned IOE's work for the past 100 years**

Employers were among the founding constituents of the International Labour Organization (ILO) more than 100 years ago. Our commitment to full and productive employment, social dialogue and decent work for all in an environment that sustains competitive enterprises is as firm today as it was in 1920.

IOE played a decisive role in the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the ILO Social Justice Declaration, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and other instruments that influence the doing of business and the world of work. Throughout its 100-year history, IOE has defended the market economy as the best basis for economic progress

and social wellbeing. IOE continues to uphold that the market economy will also provide a solid foundation for economic recovery and job creation in a changed world post COVID-19.

### **A united employer and business community**

IOE's strength lies in our powerful and balanced global network, which stands united as we look to the future.

The priorities driving IOE as we enter our next century, and a new era in many respects, are to protect the autonomy and independence of employer and business organisations in the face of hostile behaviour; strengthen and support social dialogue; work together in response to critical initiatives affecting labour market policies; seek to establish relevant initiatives, such as the Global Apprenticeship Network and the Business Advisory Group on Migration; advocate with one voice that regulatory frameworks allow businesses to start up, grow, compete, develop resilience, and create jobs.

### **The representative and trusted voice of business in global policymaking for 100 years**

IOE has a proud history of bringing the most representative voice of employers and business not only to the ILO but also, more recently, to the United Nations (UN) human rights bodies and across the UN system, to the G20 and G7 processes, and other forums that shape policies in areas that impact the world of work. These include business resilience, the future of work, employment and skills, industrial relations, human rights and responsible business conduct, sustainable development, women's empowerment, inclusion and diversity, occupational safety and health, international labour migration and fair globalisation.

### **Important social and economic progress has been achieved but challenges persist**

Business innovation and creativity and accelerated globalisation and interconnectedness, coupled with exponential technological progress, have led to a wealth of opportunities and ongoing improvement in human development. Life expectancy has increased by almost seven years globally since 1990. Children today can expect to be in school for 3.4 years longer than in 1990. Social welfare and social protection systems have expanded, even if there remains much more to do. Impressive progress has also been recorded in the eradication of poverty, as well as in the growth of the middle classes in many emerging economies due in part to the expansion of global trade.

However, as a global community, we still face huge challenges, especially now as we have to address the disastrous economic impacts of the measures that were taken to contain the global pandemic - from persistent unemployment, particularly among young people, to weak or uncertain growth, and poverty. More than 60% of the working population globally is in the informal sector, and in some regions this figure rises to 80%. Despite progress, child labour and forced labour remain unacceptably high. Women's effective labour market inclusion lags

behind, with more than 100 countries preventing women from working in certain jobs. Low or stagnant productivity and lack of an enabling environment for sustainable business hamper growth and employment creation. Social protection systems face sustainability challenges, which are now exacerbated by the crisis, in both developed and developing economies.

Artificial intelligence and digitalisation are transforming how work is done and organised. A key challenge is to ensure that people are not marginalised, but enabled, by technological progress, and that opportunities are fully harnessed and shared. In recent months, technology has contributed to enabling business continuity and allowed organisations, including IOE and its members, to continue to provide products and services that respond in real time to the heightened expectations of stakeholders.

Climate change poses a serious threat not only to food and water security, but to the very resilience of societies, communities, businesses, and economies.

**The 2030 Agenda: a key framework to address current and emerging opportunities and challenges through multi-stakeholder partnerships**

IOE fully supports the 2030 Agenda as the most effective path to sustainable human development. We are particularly committed to working towards the ambitious targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 for “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, together with SDG 17 for a revitalisation of the global partnership.

Economic, environmental, and social progress cannot be achieved without concerted and cohesive effort. We must act together now to realise the 2030 Agenda by embracing the opportunities that globalisation, new technologies and innovation present. Governments and the UN system need more than ever to work with the private sector to create an enabling environment for sustainable growth, decent work, and more jobs.

We call on them to:

- Create enabling business environments that encourage companies to set up, businesses of all sizes to thrive, build resilience, and grow; and strengthen productivity, innovation and hiring in the formal economy.
- Ensure freedom of association for employers and uphold the principle of free enterprise.
- Collaborate with the private sector and other constituencies in the design and development of curricula and in re-structuring education and training systems.
- Better prioritise skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling, and apprenticeship programmes, to meet the labour market needs of today and tomorrow.

- Adopt more efficient policies to promote employment for women, young people, and marginalised groups.
- Elaborate and implement well-designed labour migration policies that create safe, orderly, and regular channels.
- Improve engagement with social partners and pursue social dialogue for job creation and skills development.
- Expand efforts to promote effective transitions towards formality.
- Support smart, open-market policies for global free trade and economic integration.
- Step up climate change policies and measures that support communities, workers, and companies to progress to a low-carbon economy.
- Ensure fair competition as a key driver of the market economy.
- Engage with the organised voice of business and fully involve IOE and its members in the implementation of programmes and initiatives by multilateral institutions, including the UN, at the national level.

### **Working together for shared progress**

Transparency, integrity, inclusion, and diversity are core values of IOE and cement our leadership and credibility. Business has a track record of identifying and seizing opportunities, and in developing practical and realistic solutions for the challenges of the day.

Employer and business organisations are an important bridge for companies that are ready and willing to partner with the public sector and UN agencies. Together with trade unions, they play an important role in shaping labour markets, contributing to the 2030 Agenda, and providing rapid assistance to their members in confronting crises. The work done by them in relation to the COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives demonstrates the important role they play.

At this historic milestone, IOE pledges to

- Multiply efforts for a constructive dialogue with stakeholders, including trade unions and governments, to continue building a positive environment based on the market economy that delivers business resilience and competitiveness, inclusive growth and prosperity, and more and better jobs.
- Cooperate through innovative partnerships at national and international level to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Raise the profile of the IOE community, and business in general, as credible and responsible partners.
- Expand capacity-building, peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing for employer organisations on trends and developments impacting business, in collaboration with other international partners and organisations.

- Contribute to changing mindsets towards skills development and lifelong learning.
- Promote gender empowerment and equality and strengthen diversity in the workplace.
- Intensify efforts to promote and implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the ILO MNE (multinational and national enterprises) Declaration.
- Increase efforts to reduce barriers to global markets, particularly for companies in the developing world.
- Continue to be an outspoken advocate for the global ecosystem for doing business, multilateralism and the value of international organisations.

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