

UNI Apro Sector Conferences 2021 Joint Statement

“Building Forward: Towards an Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Future”

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of our trade unions in the time of a global health and economic crisis.

Despite the amplified difficulties, we continue to reinvigorate our unions and members through our various initiatives that address the immediate impact of the pandemic on workers and their families. Through our robust and continuous organising, we have seized the opportunity to highlight our role in society as defenders and protectors of workers’ rights and as agents of social transformation.

To ensure the medium and long-term recovery efforts contribute to the **building of a post-pandemic future** that is **inclusive, equitable, and sustainable**, the **UNI Apro calls upon** the governments in the Asia-Pacific region to:

1. Promote social dialogue and collaborative labour management relations as key to the development and implementation of recovery strategies at the national and enterprise levels;
2. Enhance the entire social protection system to cover all categories of workers irrespective of their employment status;
3. Increase and make long-term investments in:
 - Social and welfare services; and
 - Public employment services, including the development of digital services;
4. Safeguard labour rights, including for migrant workers, when undertaking legislative reviews on areas of labour laws and regulations to promote employment creation while safeguarding workers’ rights;
5. Reorient the post-COVID economic recovery plans towards a human-centred, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable growth model;
6. Recognise COVID-19 as an employment injury or occupational disease under the scope of ILO Convention 121 on Employment Injury Benefits;
7. Accelerate and ensure the smooth transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy in the context of decent work promotion across the expanding realm of non-regular and non-standard forms of employment across all sectors; and
8. Strengthen the focus on green jobs and sustainability, which contribute to sustaining the momentum towards improved environmental outcomes.

For sectors severely affected by the pandemic and the containment and adaptation measures adopted by governments and employers, the **UNI Apro pledges** to work with and support affiliates to push for:

1. Smart, collaborative, people-centred partnership labour management relations between unions and enterprises to develop agreements that benefit workers and employers;
2. Reskilling of workers and investing in life-long learning ecosystems to address issues of future skills needs and prepare workers to be adaptable in the face of shocks and rapid automation and digitalisation of work;
3. Strengthening wage policies and other labour market policies, especially for the low-wage segments in sectors;
4. Strengthening social protection policies and measures, particularly in sectors where non-standard forms of employment and other new forms of work arrangements are widespread;
5. Upgrading and adopting proactive and preventive occupational safety and health (OSH) measures and renewing commitment for protecting workers from future pandemics and emerging OSH hazards and risks;
6. Regulating remote work and work-from-home arrangements to address issues on work-life balance, right to disconnect, and clear assignments on who bears the costs; and
7. Addressing regulatory gaps on the use of non-standard forms of employment by having labour regulations mandating equality of treatment, correcting employment misclassification, restricting the use of non-standard work, and assigning obligations and liabilities in contractual arrangements involving multiple parties.

Inclusive Recovery Agenda for Women and Youth

Women and young workers have been affected disproportionately by the pandemic and the consequent containment measures. Job losses and reductions in working hours are greater among women and young workers. The **UNI Apro commits** to ensuring that the recovery agenda set out above are gender-responsive and youth inclusive by:

1. Adopting and supporting a comprehensive approach toward promoting youth employment, including the development of youth inclusive, active labour market programmes and helping young entrepreneurs;
2. Including youth voices on issues such as mental health concerns and strengthening the UNI Apro Youth's continued engagement in all UNI Apro sector activities aimed at facilitating youths' participation in the trade union movement, especially during the pandemic;
3. Tackling challenges that women face in the form of gender pay gaps, unequal distribution of unpaid care work, discrimination in access to decent jobs, violence and harassment—through the implementation of a package of integrated, inclusive and transformative national policies and measures, informed by the relevant international labour standards; and
4. Putting into action the priorities set by the UNI Apro Women's Committee Meeting on 9 September 2020 aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and ensure that the long-term recovery benefits women and girls.