



UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development Peer Learning Round Table on SDG 8: Decent Work

2 April 2025, Geneva

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies,

My name is Dr. Ramazan Tunc, from New Life Association based in the Kurdish Region of Türkiye and I have the honour to address you today on behalf of the Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism for the UNECE region (ECE-RCEM).

With only 2 targets of SDG 8 on track, 2 with no data and the rest needing acceleration - including that of labour rights - 8.8 - what will digital transformation offer?

While digital transformation is reshaping our economies, societies, and labour markets at an unprecedented pace, this transformation is neither neutral nor inclusive.

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies is marked by a lack of transparency, accountability, and equity. The source codes of AI algorithms remain largely inaccessible, creating opacity and trust deficits. The cross-border nature of digital platforms amplifies regulatory gaps and enables tax avoidance by major technology companies, benefiting from public resources without contributing fairly.

This unregulated growth of the digital sphere is widening inequalities, undermining existing labour standards, and threatening social protections. Workers in digitally mediated labour markets, particularly those in platform economies, face insecure conditions, unfair wages, and limited rights. Moreover, marginalized groups – including women, migrants, LGBTI+

individuals, older persons, and persons with disabilities – remain significantly underrepresented in the digital sector from STEM education to employment opportunities and largely underserved by digital technologies.

Privacy concerns, lack of data transparency, and algorithmic biases further erode public trust. There are serious risks related to identity exposure, especially for vulnerable communities, with no clear safeguards in place. Additionally, there is insufficient attention to the environmental costs of the digital economy, including unsustainable energy consumption and unethical sourcing of raw materials.

Governments and multilateral bodies must act urgently and take action for collaboration. The pace of digital development is outstripping the capacity of existing regulatory frameworks. We need a paradigm shift from profit-driven digital expansion to a model that prioritizes public good, inclusiveness, and human rights.

My name is Sylvia Beales, of the Gray Panthers, speaking on behalf of the Regional Civil Society Coordination Mechanism.

Our recommendations for change are

1. Ensure human oversight and accountability in algorithmic management, upholding the principle of “human-in-control,” particularly regarding labour conditions, privacy, and data disclosure.
2. Foster multilateral cooperation and create interoperable, coherent regulatory frameworks at the global and UN levels.
3. Promote and preserve social dialogue as a key element in shaping the digital economy, ensuring that all workers, including platform workers, can exercise their fundamental rights, including freedom of association according to ILO Convention 87.
4. Finance and deliver to the implementation of universal social protection systems in line with ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202, ensuring that digitally mediated forms of labour are included.
5. Develop and adopt strong international labour standards on platform work, including an ILO Convention and Recommendation with broad coverage.

6. As the region ages, invest in upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning and promote employability for all workers of all ages, persons with disabilities programs, particularly targeting and those in marginalized communities, and to create intergenerational workplaces.

7. Support the formalization of informal work in accordance with ILO Recommendation 204.

8. Recognize and invest in the care economy as a critical component of the digital transition, ensuring decent work protections and accessibility of care services.

9. Integrate the principles of a circular economy and green transition into digital development, including due diligence requirements for tech companies on energy efficiency, ethical sourcing of raw materials, and corporate social responsibility.

10. Strengthen the credibility and capacity of international organizations to govern and oversee the digital transition, reaffirming the founding philosophy of the United Nations to serve the global public interest.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to building our common future which is anchored in human rights compliance, social protection, environmental responsibility, and multilateral governance. a productive dialogue.