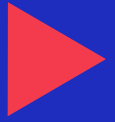




International
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▶ The ILO strategy on skills and lifelong learning 2030



▶ **The ILO strategy on skills
and lifelong learning 2030**

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▶ The ILO strategy on skills and lifelong learning 2030

- ▶ Skills development is a crucial component for achieving social justice.

Effective and inclusive skills and lifelong learning systems are a key enabler of human development and decent work for all.

▶ **Gilbert F. Hounbo** (ILO Director-General)¹

¹ During a speech to the GAN Global Management Board meeting (March, 2023).

► 1. Background and context

1. Skills development and lifelong learning is an investment in the future. Global drivers, including technological changes, environmental and climate change, changes in globalization patterns and demographic shifts, as well as crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, are transforming societies, economies and the world of work. These transformations can benefit workers and enterprises, but could also be disruptive, leading to unemployment, underemployment, difficult transitions of youth into the labour market, skills mismatches, including skills gaps and shortages, inequalities and inefficiencies. Effective and inclusive skills and lifelong learning systems promote better responsiveness of skills supply to current and future labour market needs and thus serve as key enablers of human development, full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals in particular SDGs 4, 5 and 8.
2. The International Labour Conference, at its 109th Session (2021), adopted a resolution and conclusions concerning skills and lifelong learning (hereafter the 2021 conclusions). They reflect principles of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019 and the ILO Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, 2021. Furthermore, a resolution and conclusions of the International Labour Conference, at its 110th Session (2022), highlighted the importance of quality apprenticeships.
3. The 2021 conclusions set out a framework for action to guide the Organization and the Office in the area of skills and lifelong learning, and requested the Director-General to develop ILO's strategy and plan of action on skills and lifelong learning. In the period since adoption of the 2021 conclusions the Office has already been engaged in implementation of their various recommendations, while simultaneously drawing up the longer-term strategy and plan of action comprised in this GB document.
4. The Strategy presented below covers the period 2022-2030, while a plan of action covers the first period of implementation in 2022-25. They describe how the ILO, in collaboration with relevant development partners, academia and other key actors, will strengthen its global leadership in skills development and lifelong learning systems. These proposals are fully consistent with the P&B 2022-23 and with those presented in GB.346/PFA/1, the preview of the P&B proposals for 2024-25.



▶ 2. Strategy

5. **The Strategy has the overall goal** of enabling the development of resilient systems based on social dialogue that provide inclusive access to high quality skills development and lifelong learning opportunities to all to promote human development, full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.
6. **The Strategy seeks to improve the Office's capacity**, including through the allocation of resources within the existing and forthcoming programmes and budgets and mobilization of extrabudgetary resources, to assist constituents in developing comprehensive and coordinated lifelong learning policy frameworks across complementary policy fields. Recalling the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195), and recognizing that education is a right for all, it seeks to encourage Members to take action on the following five complementary and mutually reinforcing pillars, giving effect to the 2021 conclusions:

▶ Pillar 1: Improved policies, governance and financing for effective skills development and lifelong learning;

▶ Pillar 2: Strengthened skills needs intelligence;

▶ Pillar 3: Innovative and flexible learning programmes and pathways;

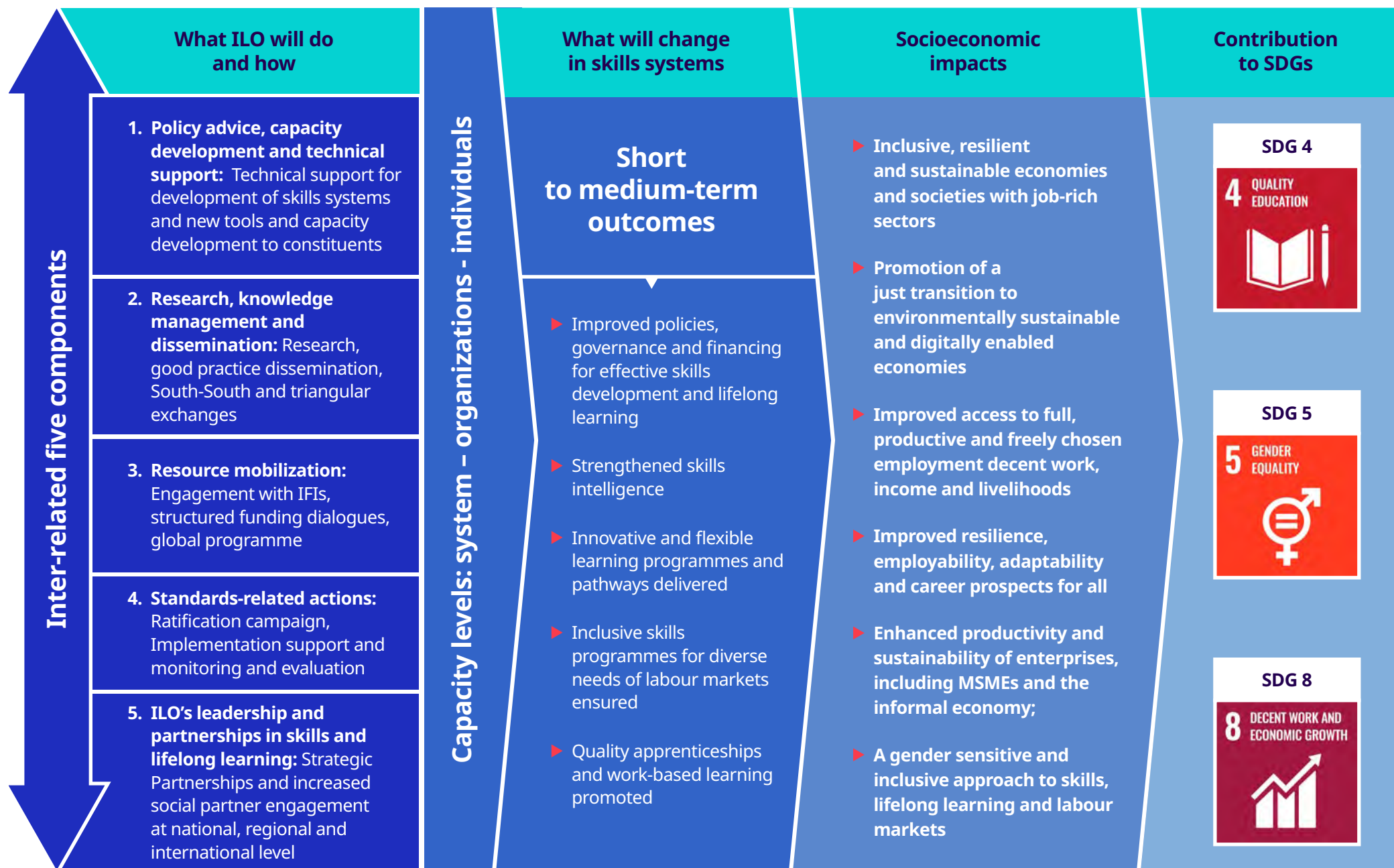
▶ Pillar 4: Inclusive skills programmes for diverse needs of labour markets;

▶ Pillar 5: Quality apprenticeships and work-based learning promoted for employability, productivity and sustainable enterprises.

7. The five pillars identify short to medium-term outcomes, corresponding to key aspects of an effective skills and lifelong learning system, that are mutually reinforcing and constitute an interdependent whole, rather than isolated silos.
8. **The theory of change** below illustrates a process, leading to long-term impacts on society and economy, through the achievement of short to medium-term outcomes of systemic and institutional changes, and improvements in skills needs intelligence, delivery, access and inclusiveness. To achieve these outcomes, the ILO will undertake research, technical support, capacity development and resource mobilization.



► Figure 1. Theory of Change



Pillar 1: Improved policies, governance and financing for effective skills development and lifelong learning

► Key messages

- Develop coherence of skills and lifelong learning policies with other public policies
- Ensure universal access to skills and lifelong learning
- Engage impactfully all stakeholders and strengthen social dialogue
- Have strong, autonomous and accountable institutions
- Develop innovative, transparent, equitable and sustainable financing mechanisms
- Establish robust systems for quality assurance, assessment and certification, recognition of prior learning and lifelong career development support systems
- Develop the capacity of social partners and institutions

9. The impactful engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including employers' and workers' organizations and governments is necessary for developing coherent policies that place education, training and lifelong learning as an integral part of comprehensive economic, fiscal, social and labour market policies and programmes. Improved governance based on social dialogue, with clear roles and responsibilities, and innovative, transparent, equitable and sustainable financing mechanisms are central to operationalizing skills development and lifelong learning systems that can respond to the interests and aspirations of people and the current and future labour market needs.

10. This pillar relates to:

- a) Developing and supporting the implementation and evaluation of comprehensive policies, strategies and systems for lifelong learning, built upon a whole-of-government approach, through social dialogue, underpinned by strong, autonomous and accountable institutions and coordination among all relevant stakeholders;
- b) Reinforcing the coherence of skills and lifelong learning policies with other public policies and recovery strategies from the COVID-19 and other crises to promote full,

productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, by ensuring universal access to skills and lifelong learning and equitable and inclusive labour markets, and promoting the linkages among skills, employment and productivity;

- c) Strengthening the capacity of national institutions and institutional mechanisms to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate skills and lifelong learning policies, strategies and programmes and coordinate with all relevant stakeholders;
- d) Strengthening the capacity of social partners for the development, implementation and evaluation of skills policies, strategies and programmes;
- e) Developing innovative, transparent, equitable and sustainable financing mechanisms, including incentive schemes for learners and enterprises, with effective and efficient allocation and management of funds, in cooperation with social partners;
- f) Establishing robust systems for quality assurance, dynamic assessment and certification of skills and competencies, recognition of prior learning and lifelong career development support systems to empower youth and adult transitions, with the involvement of social partners.

Pillar 2: Strengthened skills needs intelligence

▶ Key messages

- ▶ develop systems of identification of current and future skills needs based on social dialogue and informed by labour market information;
- ▶ develop coordinated systems for identifying mismatches between skills, jobs and aspirations;
- ▶ anticipate sector-specific skills needs that promote structural transformation and decent work in line with broader investment, trade, digital, climate and industrial policies;
- ▶ undertake research on the employment impact of skills and lifelong learning policies and programmes.

11. Skills identification and anticipation based on social dialogue and informed by labour market information are essential to adapting skills provision and promoting employability and productivity. Information on existing and future skills needs supports the training providers' capacity to effectively adjust curricula, and the learners' awareness of the skills required in the labour market. Skills intelligence is necessary to reduce the risk of skills mismatches (over- and underqualification, skills gaps, skills shortages and skills obsolescence).

12. This pillar relates to:

- a) Developing coordinated systems for identifying mismatches between skills, jobs and

aspirations, with participation of relevant institutions and social partners, utilizing the full range of labour market information and the latest technologies and tools;

- b) Identifying and anticipating skills needs for economic activities that promote structural transformation and decent work in line with broader investment, trade, digital, climate and industrial policies. This includes responding to sector-specific skills needs, such as those related to care, digital, creative and environmentally sustainable economies;
- c) Undertaking research on employment impact of skills and lifelong learning policies and programmes to review their effectiveness, efficiency and inclusiveness.



Pillar 3: Innovative and flexible learning programmes and pathways delivered

► Key messages

- Ensure high-quality, flexible, inclusive and relevant training programmes
- Promote the development of core skills to facilitate successful transitions to and within the labour market
- Digitalise training programmes for greater outreach, and reduce the digital divide.
- Ensure capacity development and decent work opportunities for teachers, trainers and other relevant personnel

13. The quality, relevance, flexibility and inclusiveness of training programmes, and their organization along permeable pathways contribute to their employment impact, the aspirations of people being fulfilled, and improved productivity and sustainability of enterprises.

14. This pillar relates to:

- a) Supporting public and private training providers to develop, implement and evaluate equitable, gender-responsive, flexible and innovative training and certification programmes, including digital, mobile and blended learning based on interest and aptitudes of people and on labour market needs;
- b) Promoting the development of core skills, including social and emotional skills, cognitive skills, basic digital skills and skills relevant to environmentally sustainable economies;
- c) Developing robust systems for validation of skills and competencies (including micro-credentials and recognition of prior learning) and career guidance, with the involvement

of social partners, to create lifelong learning pathways, enable the portability of skills, and facilitate labour, social and geographical mobility;

- d) Ensuring effective workforce development and decent work opportunities for teachers and trainers, assessors and other relevant personnel to safeguard high-quality training delivery through new approaches;
- e) Providing comprehensive digitalization strategies that support skills and lifelong learning systems through innovative technologies, affordable internet connectivity and access to equipment, devices, content and tools, including through public–private partnerships, as well as other measures to reduce the digital divide and digital gender gap;
- f) Promoting an enabling environment and openness to learning and identify and address discriminatory time, cost and motivational barriers through awareness raising campaigns or guidance services.



Pillar 4: Inclusive skills programmes for diverse needs of labour markets ensured

▶ Key messages

- ▶ Ensure inclusive access and participation in skills development and lifelong learning to tackle inequalities and facilitate transitions to formality;
- ▶ Promote innovative solutions for inclusive training that consider the needs of all learners;
- ▶ Implement gender-responsive training environments free from discriminatory practices;
- ▶ Promote integrated approaches for the needs of vulnerable learners and different economic units, in particular MSMEs.

15. Ensuring inclusive access to skills development and lifelong learning is key to diverse economies and societies, because it tackles gender segregation and discriminatory practices in the labour market, reduces the intergenerational transmission of inequalities and facilitates the transition of workers and businesses to formality. Integrated and comprehensive actions are therefore needed towards equal participation in lifelong learning, with special attention to women, young people, migrants and refugees, and other persons and groups in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. Support should also target micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

16. This pillar relates to:

- a) Promoting innovative solutions for inclusive training that consider the needs of all learn-

ers with respect to the training environment, recruitment methods, assessment methodology, and their labour market transitions;

- b) Implementing gender-responsive training environments that encourage equal participation of women and men, promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects among women, and devise gender-responsive action plans;

- c) Promoting integrated approaches for the needs of vulnerable learners and different economic units, including self-employed and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, through awareness raising, outreach, community-based training, career guidance, pre-vocational training, post-training support, financial and non-financial support, coordinating with social protection and complementary services, including employment services.



Pillar 5: Quality apprenticeships and work-based learning promoted for employability, productivity and sustainable enterprises

► Key messages

- Promote quality apprenticeship to improve the employability of learners and the productivity of enterprises;
- Establish regulatory frameworks for apprenticeships through social dialogue;
- Widen access to quality work-based learning for workers in the informal economy.

17. The promotion and development of quality apprenticeships and work-based learning systems improves the employability of learners, as well as the productivity and sustainability of enterprises. Quality apprenticeships increase the market relevance of skills development programmes as they develop sustainable partnerships between public and private sectors. Apprenticeships should be promoted and regulated, through social dialogue, to ensure their quality and enhance their attractiveness to apprentices and enterprises.

18. This pillar relates to:

- a) Developing, implementing and evaluating systems for quality apprenticeships and work-based learning for adults and young people, with involvement of social partners, both as designers and providers;

- b) Strengthening partnerships among governments, employers, workers and training providers to design and deliver quality apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes that provide for social protection, and decent working conditions, including occupational safety and health;

- c) Improving the capacity of and support services for training providers and enterprises to develop and implement quality apprenticeships;

- d) Widening access to quality work-based learning for workers in the informal economy by upgrading informal apprenticeship systems, and helping them transition to the formal economy;

- e) Improving skills planning, development, and utilization in workplaces, including adequate recognition and valuing of skills, through better human resource management practices.



▶ 3. Plan of action

- 19.** To contribute to the long-term objective of promoting human development, full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all, productivity improvement and sustainable development, the Office will implement a plan of action to achieve short and medium-term outcomes under the five pillars. The plan of action describes the means employed to create a conducive environment for constituents to work towards more inclusive and effective skills and lifelong learning systems.
- 20.** The plan of action is guided by the 2021 conclusions, while aligning itself with relevant international labour standards and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and is coherent with the ILO Programme and Budget.
- 21.** The plan of action is organised in five inter-related and mutually reinforcing operational components:
- ▶ Component 1: Policy advice, capacity development and technical support;
 - ▶ Component 2: Research, knowledge management and dissemination;
 - ▶ Component 3: Resource mobilization;
 - ▶ Component 4: Standards-related actions;
 - ▶ Component 5: ILO's leadership and partnerships in skills and lifelong learning.



Component 1: Policy advice, capacity development and technical support

22. To support governments and social partners in developing and implementing skills development and lifelong learning systems, in line with the above-described pillars, the Office will:
- a) Provide evidence-based advice on national, subnational and sectoral policies, strategies and programmes and their integration with employment and other public policies and strategies, and on the importance of tripartite cooperation to build skills development and lifelong learning systems;
 - b) Develop tools and methodologies that are driven by the needs of constituents and labour markets on skills and lifelong learning and support their use at national and sector levels, fully harnessing the new technologies to improve the scale and reach of services.
 - c) Support capacity development of governments, institutions and training providers, including through the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILO), the Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (ILO-CINTERFOR) and other relevant partners;
 - d) Support capacity development of social partners through programmes of actions on contemporary skills topics, tripartite governance and their role as skills providers;
 - e) Support skills institutions at regional level particularly in Africa and Asia to develop them as centres of excellence along the lines of the existing regional skills centres in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, such as the ILO-CINTERFOR and support them to emerge as regional hubs of services on lifelong learning;
 - f) Implement development cooperation programmes and projects to assist Members in developing and strengthening skills and lifelong learning systems, linked to the Decent Work Country Programmes, in collaboration with the UN Country Teams;

Component 2: Research, knowledge management and dissemination

23. To develop new knowledge and promote mutual exchange of knowledge among constituents, the Office will:
- a) Carry out high quality research on contemporary skills challenges and opportunities;
 - b) Develop cutting-edge knowledge products, keeping pace with the changing aspirations of people and the current and future labour market needs in close collaboration with development partners, academia and other key actors;
 - c) Prioritise the application of knowledge in close collaboration with development partners in target countries;
 - d) Support knowledge exchange and dissemination of good practices and lessons including through South–South and Triangular Cooperation;
 - e) Use innovative methods to measure employment outcomes of training programmes by using new technologies such as the ILO Service Tracker and other survey tools.

Component 3: Resource mobilization

24. To mobilize resources for constituents as well as for the support functions of the Office, the Office will:
- a) Regularly organise structured funding dialogues at national and global levels, and strengthen partnerships, especially at country level;
 - b) Advocate with international financial institutions for greater investment in skills and lifelong learning systems and supporting implementation of national policies and strategies.
 - c) Work with Members to improve the transparency of their operations and diversify their financing options;
 - d) Explore pooled funding opportunities to deploy consolidated resources based on the priorities set by the Programme and Budget, complementing ILO regular budget and making allocations based on country level needs.

Component 4: Standards-related actions

25. To promote the ratification and application of international labour standards relevant to skills development and lifelong learning, the Office will:
- a) Undertake a ratification campaign for the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142);
 - b) Identify possible obstacles to the ratification and implementation of the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140) and provide technical assistance to overcome them;
 - c) Monitor the implementation of other existing standards.

Component 5: ILO's leadership and partnerships in skills and lifelong learning

26. The ILO's tripartite structure and its ability to address demand and supply sides of labour markets in a wholistic manner based on its technical capacity and networks make the ILO a truly unique key actor on skills and lifelong learning. Given the unique role that the ILO plays in the area of skills and lifelong learning, particularly as it relates to the role of governments and employers' and workers' organizations, ILO is invited by the UN secretariat to play a key role on skills and lifelong learning, including in the organization of the Transforming Education Summit in 2022.
27. To reaffirm ILO's social justice mandate and to strengthen its leadership on skills and lifelong learning, while ensuring partnerships with a wide range of organizations, the Office will:
- a) Promote tripartite approaches to skills development and lifelong learning, including tripartite governance, to support policy coherence at global, regional and national levels;
 - b) Pursue strategic partnerships at global, regional and national levels in developing joint programmes and campaigns in collaboration with multilateral fora, such as G20, G7 and BRICS, international organizations such as OECD, UNESCO and UNICEF, and other education and skills initiatives such as Global Partnership for Education (GPE), including in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Secretary General's Our Common agenda, various summits and their follow-up actions towards 2030, and ILO Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong learning;
 - c) Strengthen partnerships and cooperation within and beyond the UN System, through bilateral agreements and within the framework of the Inter-Agency Group on TVET (IAG-TVET) and other arrangements.

▶ 4. Coordination, monitoring and evaluation of implementation

28. The Strategy covers the period 2022-30, guided by a first plan of action that describes short to medium-term milestones for the period 2022-25, matching the Programme and Budget cycle. A set of indicators will be put in place to track progress.

29. The implementation is led by the Skills and Employability Branch, and involves other units, branches, and departments in close coordination with field offices, as well as partnerships

with the UN Country Teams, international organizations, international financial institutions and other development partners.

30. A mid-term review will take place in 2026, providing input for the second phase until the end of 2030. In 2031, an evaluation will take place on the outcomes and impact of the Strategy. A monitoring and evaluation plan will be designed, including with strategic clustering of evaluation.



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