



## Meeting of Ministers of Labour of the 5+5 Dialogue of the Western Mediterranean Forum

– Alicante, 7 October 2021 –

### MINISTERIAL DECLARATION — ALICANTE 2021

1. We, the Ministers and Delegation Heads participating in the First Meeting of Ministers of Labour of the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Forum, have met, for the first time and in person, in the city of Alicante, Spain, on 7 October 2021, to jointly discuss the recent evolution of the labour markets in our Mediterranean region and to advance in our collective efforts towards building just digital and climate transitions and recovery and a more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and people-centred future of work, with decent work for all.
2. We emphasize the importance of decent work as the backbone of labour markets to ensure just transitions and economic and social recovery, and we state our firm commitment to advance in the four pillars that define it: promoting employment; developing and improving social protection measures; promoting social dialogue; and respecting, fostering, and realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work.
3. We note that Covid-19 has posed an unprecedented global challenge. Our top and absolute priority continues to be combating and overcoming the pandemic and its economic and social impact. We observe with great concern that, in addition to a regrettable loss of human lives, the pandemic has also caused a recession in levels of employment and economic activity; a considerable loss of income; and an increase in inequalities and precarious work as well as informal labour in some countries. Moreover, it has highlighted and worsened structural weaknesses and major gaps within our societies.
4. We are aware of the need to protect and promote decent jobs for all, both in our national job markets and internationally, because we must leave no one behind. In the international sphere, we underscore our commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the framework for designing and implementing people-centred public policies aimed at achieving socio-economic equality, as our countries recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, we highlight the central nature of SDG 8—on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment, and decent work

for all—firmly convinced that that this is essential for combating inequalities and eradicating poverty.

5. We adopt the following recommendations to constitute a framework of reference for designing labour and employment policies that promote socio-economic recovery and job creation, boost resilience, and address the impact of the crisis through decent work, sustainable development, and social justice for all.
  - We undertake to redouble our efforts to promote the recovery of jobs and of companies, combat poverty and inequalities in all their dimensions, and assisting those who have been most affected by the crisis, such as women, young people, people with disabilities, people working in the informal economy, and older adults.
  - We will continue to develop active policies and people-centred strategies aimed at fostering and promoting job creation, the formalization of employment and improvement of its quality, adequate pay and the elimination of precarious working conditions.
  - We will seek to provide access to adequate social protection systems for all and strengthen their financial solvency and sustainability, taking into consideration the principles of solidarity, equity, social inclusion, equality and non-discrimination.
  - We will redouble our efforts to foster the appropriate environments for entrepreneurship and the creation and development of sustainable companies, focusing in particular on supporting micro, medium and small enterprises, and promoting cooperatives and social economy companies.
  - We will deepen the promotion of regional cooperation and coordination among our Ministries of Labour, employers' organizations, trade unions, and civil society organizations to address the challenges of overcoming this crisis and advancing towards recovery. We will develop and implement labour policies which—in coordination with our health, educational, and macroeconomic policies—will contribute to achieving socio-economic recovery and job creation, encouraging social investment for the inclusion of vulnerable populations in the labour market. We will promote investment in strategic sectors, in those most affected by the crisis, and in those that have a strong potential to generate opportunities for decent jobs.
  - We will analyse, with the contribution of a tripartite social dialogue, the development, design, and execution of regulations to address the opportunities and challenges of new and existing forms of work, such as digital employment platforms, teleworking, and the alternation between the workplace and remote working, as well as regarding other areas connected to the future of work enhancing cross-border social dialogue to the promotion of decent work and to tackle informal work.
6. We recognize that Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women. Therefore, we will place special emphasis on promoting policies aimed at attaining gender equality through the participation of women in the workforce, achieving non-discrimination and the elimination of

violence and harassment. We will focus on promoting co-responsibility and advancing a fair and equitable distribution of household duties, on developing and formalising a caring economy, as we work to achieve wage equality and promote equal opportunities in all workplaces. We undertake to continue promoting and furthering the incorporation of the gender mainstreaming approach in our employment programmes and policies, as well as in our ministerial and administrative structures, with a particular focus on target identification and monitoring.

7. We likewise recognize that Covid-19 has disproportionately impacted young people. Therefore, we undertake to promote decent jobs for youth; to reduce youth unemployment and precarious employment; to facilitate the transition from school to work and to offer more and better opportunities for technical and vocational education and training, especially those in situations of greatest vulnerability, such as young women, young people with disabilities, legal migrants, and young people who are neither working nor studying.
8. We affirm that safe and healthy working conditions are also a fundamental aspect of decent work. Therefore, we will promote policies aimed at favouring workplace health and safety using a preventive approach and we will foster and strengthen cooperation and dialogue among our Ministries, employers' organizations and trade unions.
9. We will continue to improve interaction and coordination between the world of work, education, and training for employment. In this regard, we recognize the added value of dialogue and cooperation with Ministries of Education, and we will promote, through active public policies, coordination between our vocational training and formal education systems, placing special emphasis on technical training for employment and apprenticeships; lifelong learning; the development of digital and socio-emotional skills relevant to changes in the labour market; and the development of national and regional frameworks for skills certification, in accordance with the national circumstances of each State.
10. We will promote the adaptation, integration and strengthening of our public employment services to provide a response to the challenges presented by the pandemic and to the requirements imposed on us by transformations in the labour market. In accordance with our national circumstances, we will continue working to broaden the coverage of employment services, in particular among those in the most vulnerable situations, providing them with guidance and intermediation programmes, and pertinent labour advisory services.
11. We deem broad and participative social dialogue to be the preferential instrument for strengthening labour institutions and Administrations, as it constitutes a fundamental mechanism for generating trust between governments and social partners, achieving just, equitable, and long-lasting agreements and preventing and settling disputes.

For all these reasons, we believe that social dialogue is more important and urgent than ever in searching for consensus and solutions that will enable a sustainable economic recovery and will help us to build a better world of work, especially one that is socially just. With this goal in mind,

we will promote, strengthen and broaden inclusive, open and transparent social dialogue in order to build a new and better world of work.

12. We recognize the significant role of the Ministries of Labour in addressing the effects of the crisis, on the one hand, and in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the future of work, on the other hand.

We will continue to strengthen the institutional and human capacities of the Ministries of Labour. With this aim, we will foster cooperation and mutual sharing of know-how and experience, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating and compliance with labour legislation by strengthening the capacities of the national labour inspectorates. We reaffirm our commitment to reinforce the role of our Ministries in the review, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies on employment, as well as ensuring compliance with labour legislation.

13. We would like to congratulate and express our gratitude to the Government of Spain and, in particular, to the Second Vice-Presidency of the Government and to the Ministry of Labour and the Social Economy, for their commitment and leadership in promoting the dialogue between the Ministries of Labour of the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Forum, and for welcoming in the city of Alicante this first Meeting of Labour Ministers of the 5+5 Western Mediterranean Forum. We express our readiness to hold further meetings in the future.

