



Concept Note for the High-Level Panel on

Child labour in a changing world: high-level panel on emerging challenges and opportunities

at the 6th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, Marrakech, Morocco

Wednesday 11 February 2026 – 14.30 to 15.30

I. Context

Despite renewed progress since 2020, child labour remains a major global concern. An estimated 138 million children worldwide continue to be engaged in child labour, and the international community did not meet the 2025 deadline set under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7. As the global community looks toward 2030 and beyond, renewed and adapted strategies will be required to increase momentum and address the evolving drivers of child labour.

Efforts to eliminate child labour are increasingly shaped by a rapidly changing global environment. Climate change, environmental degradation, protracted conflicts and disasters, large-scale population displacement, tightening fiscal space and rising public debt, demographic transitions, increasingly complex and fragmented supply chains, and changing patterns of labour migration are altering household livelihoods, labour markets and social protection systems. These interlinked dynamics can exacerbate poverty and inequality, strain public institutions, and disrupt access to education and social services, thereby increasing children's vulnerability to child labour in new and often less visible ways.

Technological change is further transforming the world of work. Digitalisation and the expansion of platform-based business models are reshaping production and employment relations, while also facilitating new and hidden forms of child exploitation, including online child labour and technology-enabled trafficking. These developments pose significant challenges for existing legal and regulatory frameworks, labour inspection systems and enforcement mechanisms, and call for updated policy responses and strengthened cross-border cooperation.



At the same time, these global transformations also create important opportunities for accelerated progress. Climate action and green transitions can generate new decent work opportunities for adults and youth, thereby reducing household reliance on child labour, when accompanied by strong safeguards, inclusive skills development and employment policies. Demographic trends in many countries offer the potential for a “demographic dividend,” which, if harnessed through sustained investment in quality education, social protection and decent work, could ease structural pressures that drive child labour over time.

Digital technologies also present new tools to strengthen prevention and enforcement. Artificial intelligence and advanced data systems can enhance risk identification, improve supply-chain due diligence and support early-warning mechanisms to prevent children from entering child labour. In parallel, child labour and other fundamental principles and rights at work are increasingly addressed in trade agreements, public procurement frameworks and supply-chain regulations, creating new incentives for compliance and accountability. Moreover, advances in data and evidence on effective interventions are enabling more targeted and efficient policy responses, even in contexts of constrained fiscal space.

II. Issues Addressed

This high-level panel will bring together senior representatives of governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations and international organizations to reflect on how these evolving global dynamics are reshaping the challenge of child labour and the policy responses required to address it. The discussion will focus on strategic implications for progress toward the elimination of child labour up to and beyond 2030.

Panellists will consider how climate change, conflict and displacement, demographic change, technological transformation and evolving supply chains are interacting to influence child labour risks across regions and sectors. The discussion will examine the extent to which existing policy frameworks and institutional arrangements remain fit for purpose, and where adaptation or innovation is required.

The panel will also explore opportunities to leverage ongoing economic, technological and demographic transitions to accelerate progress. This includes strengthening coherence between child labour policies and broader agendas on climate action, employment, skills development, education and social



protection; enhancing the use of technology and data for prevention, detection and enforcement; and reinforcing due diligence, accountability and international cooperation along supply chains and across borders.

The discussion will aim to identify key strategic priorities and policy directions for adapting child labour responses to a changing global context, with a view to reinvigorating collective action and ensuring sustained, inclusive and resilient progress toward the elimination of child labour in the years ahead.