

EKIN SNY MUN BACKGROUND GUIDE

Committee: International Labour Organization

Topic: Post-Pandemic Labor Market Shifts and Precarious Employment



2026

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Letter from the Chairboard

New York

Fellow Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to this year's EKIN SNY MUN Conference. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve as your chair board and to accompany you throughout the debates and negotiations of this committee.

EKIN SNY MUN aims to immerse delegates in a dynamic environment that allows them to explore global issues through diplomacy and cooperation. Our MUN conferences place particular emphasis on building foundational skills, including research, public speaking, negotiation, teamwork, and analytical thinking that extend far beyond the conference itself and into academic and professional realms.

Within this committee, delegates will represent Member States of the International Labour Organization and engage with the topic of Post-Pandemic Labor Market Shifts and Precarious Employment. As countries continue to navigate economic recovery, this issue remains central to global stability, social protection, and equitable growth. Addressing it requires not only a strong understanding of labor dynamics, but also sensitivity toward vulnerable populations and a commitment to practical and forward-looking solutions.

This background guide has been developed to assist you in your preparations by outlining the necessary context, identifying key challenges, and offering guiding questions and research direction. It is further intended to support you in forming well-informed positions and participating confidently in committee discussions.

We firmly believe that your contributions will make this conference both meaningful and rewarding. Through respectful debate and collaborative problem-solving, we hope to collectively advance the principles of decent work, social justice, and inclusive labor recovery.

Should you require any clarification or need support at any stage, the dais remains at your disposal. We look forward to welcoming you in committee and to having an engaging and successful conference.

Sincerely,

The Chairboard of the International Labour Organization in New York

Mr. Abdullah Efe Kapcı - Chair

Ms. Crystal Rustami - Co-Chair



Letter from the Chairboard

Izmir

Fellow Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 EKIN SNY Junior MUN Conference! We are excited to serve as your chairboard throughout this year's International Labour Organization committee!

Junior MUN conferences, especially ours, emphasize fostering a dynamic environment to explore global issues diplomatically and cooperatively. They additionally focus on building participating delegates' foundational skills, including research, public speaking, negotiation, teamwork, and analytical thinking that extend far beyond the conference itself and into delegates' daily lives.

Within this committee, you will represent Member States of the International Labour Organization and engage with the topic of Post-Pandemic Labor Market Shifts and Precarious Employment. As countries continue to navigate economic recovery, this issue remains central to global stability, social protection, and equitable growth. Addressing it requires not only a strong understanding of labor dynamics, but also sensitivity toward vulnerable populations and a commitment to practical and forward-looking solutions.

This background guide is intended to assist you in your preparations, to support you in forming well-informed positions, and to enable you to confidently participate in committee discussions.

We firmly believe that your contributions will make this conference meaningful and rewarding and that you will help advance the principles of decent work, social justice, and inclusive labour recovery.

We look forward to welcoming you and to having an engaging and successful conference!

Sincerely,

The Chairboard of the International Labour Organization

Mr. Ali Topuzkanamis - Chair

Mr. Jacob Kamen - Co-Chair



1. Committee and Topic Introduction



The International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized UN agency dedicated to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights. Founded in 1919 in the aftermath of World War I, the ILO was established on the principle that lasting peace can only be achieved if it is rooted in social justice. As such, the ILO's mandate is to advance economic and social justice by setting international labor standards.

Since its creation, the ILO has addressed a wide range of labor-related challenges, including apartheid, decolonization, globalization, workplace discrimination, and forced labor. It has also adopted numerous International Labor Conventions and Recommendations addressing issues such as hours of work, maternity protection, unemployment, minimum age, and night work for women and young persons.

In 1969, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for promoting global labor rights and contributing to peacebuilding. Today, it remains a vital part of the United Nations system, continuing to champion workers' rights and improve labor conditions worldwide. The ILO's headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland, where it coordinates its global operations and works closely with other UN agencies and international organizations. Today, the ILO has 187 Member States and operates through regional and country offices around the world. Its main decision-making bodies include the International Labor Conference, the Governing Body, and the International Labor Office. Together, they guide the organization's priorities and oversee its programs.

Alongside the institutional development of the ILO, youth unemployment and decent work have progressively emerged as major global concerns. Economic transitions, population growth, and technological change have reshaped labor markets, often affecting young people through higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and informal work. As a result, promoting decent work for youth has become increasingly recognized as essential for inclusive economic growth, social stability, and sustainable development. The tripartite structure of the ILO, which consists of the International Labor Conference, the Governing Body, and the International Labor Office, allows for the equal participation and representation of workers, employers, and governments. The agency's functions include setting standards through conventions and recommendations, guaranteeing social protection and upholding fundamental rights at work, providing assistance to help countries improve working conditions, and fostering social dialogue to address labor-related challenges. The ILO supports Member States by offering policy guidance, technical cooperation, and platforms for dialogue rather than through direct enforcement.



1. Committee and Topic Introduction (Continued)

In addition to its normative role, the ILO plays a key part in shaping global labor policy by responding to emerging economic and social challenges. Issues such as globalisation, technological innovation, informal employment, migration, and demographic change have significantly transformed labor markets worldwide. The ILO addresses these challenges by promoting the concept of “decent work,” which encompasses productive employment, fair income, workplace security, social protection for families, and equal opportunities for all workers. This concept serves as a guiding principle for national employment strategies and international development agendas, including the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The organization also actively engages with governments and social partners to ensure that labor standards remain relevant in a rapidly changing global economy. Through research, data collection, and policy analysis, the ILO provides evidence-based recommendations on employment trends, wage inequality, occupational safety, and social protection systems. Its flagship reports, such as the Global Wage Report and the World Employment and Social Outlook, contribute to informed policymaking by highlighting disparities between regions and identifying best practices that can be adapted at the national level.

Furthermore, the ILO emphasizes social dialogue as a means to prevent conflicts and build consensus. It stresses fostering negotiation among workers, employers, and governments. This approach reduces labor disputes and promotes stable industrial relations, strengthening democratic governance and highlighting that sustainable economic growth must be inclusive and socially responsible. Consequently, the ILO plays a crucial role in advancing labor rights and promoting equitable development across various contexts.

According to the ILO, COVID-19 has had a heavy impact on the world of work, as economic and social disruptions have threatened the well-being of millions worldwide. Livelihoods were particularly affected among groups more vulnerable to adverse labor market outcomes, such as the elderly, children, and women. Female workers were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, posing a risk of reversing progress made toward gender equality.

The pandemic affected not only the number of jobs available but also the quality of working conditions. In the formal sector, there was a notable shift toward hybrid and remote work, altering employer strategies and worker expectations. In the informal economy, however, the pandemic had a devastating impact on workers across the globe. Without access to alternative sources of income or social protection, many informal workers were left highly vulnerable and at risk of losing their livelihoods. Within this context, several core debates and tensions have emerged. These include balancing between strengthening labor protections and promoting youth hiring incentives, as well as the challenge of formalizing employment while maintaining access to work for those dependent on informal livelihoods. Understanding these tensions is essential for developing recommendations that protect workers while supporting inclusive and sustainable employment recovery.



2. The Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda

After years of advocacy, the global Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda was officially adopted in 2015 through UN Security Council Resolution 2250. This agenda recognizes young people not only as victims of conflict, but also as essential actors in conflict prevention, post-conflict recovery, and peacebuilding. The YPS framework is built around five pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships, and Disengagement and Reintegration.

Access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods is a critical factor linking youth development and peace. High youth unemployment, precarious working conditions, and informality can contribute to social exclusion, frustration, and marginalization, increasing young people's vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and recruitment by armed or criminal groups. Conversely, decent employment opportunities promote economic stability, social inclusion, and trust in institutions, which are essential foundations for long-term peace. The work of the ILO strongly supports the YPS agenda, particularly through its focus on youth employment, decent work, and economic inclusion. By promoting skills development, entrepreneurship, and access to fair labor markets, the ILO helps address structural inequalities that often fuel instability and conflict. The organization also supports national policies that integrate youth perspectives into labor, economic, and peacebuilding strategies.

The pandemic has been proven to have had a disproportionate effect on young people's lives: it has disrupted access to education and services, led to a massive growth in youth unemployment, and triggered an increasingly urgent mental health crisis. These pressing issues highlight the need to protect youth, as stated in one of the five pillars of the YPS agenda. By investing in youth and protecting them from these disruptive impacts that the pandemic has had on the labor market, the YPS agenda aspires to build a more peaceful and secure future for all.

While the ILO's mandate aligns broadly with all five YPS pillars, its work is most directly connected to the Prevention and Participation pillars. By reducing economic exclusion and unemployment, the ILO contributes to preventing conflict and violence. At the same time, by empowering young people to participate meaningfully in the economy and in policy processes, the ILO strengthens their role as active contributors to peaceful and inclusive societies.



3. Topic Background

Expansion of Precarious and Informal Employment

One of the most significant post-pandemic labor market trends is the rapid expansion of precarious and informal employment. Precarious employment refers to non-standard work that is limited or has no social protection and demonstrates no job continuity.

Prior to the pandemic, 60% of the global workforce was employed in the informal economy, with young people being significantly overrepresented in these forms of work (ILO, 2018). As businesses began facing larger economic uncertainty and fluctuating demand during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers increasingly started relying on temporary contracts, freelance arrangements, part-time work, and platform-based jobs to maintain flexibility and reduce labor costs.

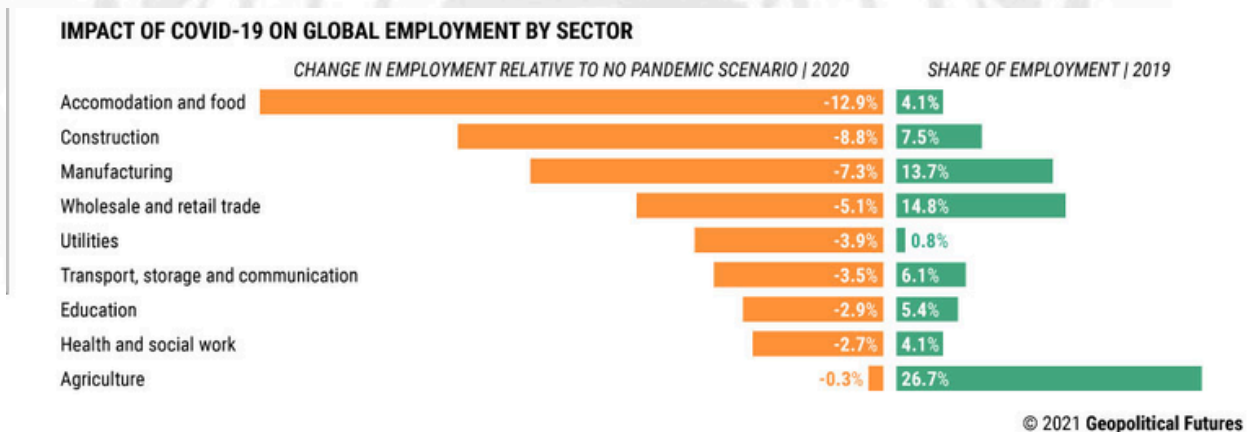


Figure 1: Change in employment sectors following the pandemic.

Precarious employment is often characterized by limited job security, unstable income, lack of collective bargaining power, and insufficient access to social protection, including health insurance, paid leave, unemployment benefits, and pensions. Informal employment, which operates outside of formal labor regulations, remains dominant in many low- and middle-income countries and continues to serve as the primary source of livelihood for millions of workers, particularly youth entering the labor market for the first time.

3. Topic Background (Continued)

Expansion of Precarious and Informal Employment (Continued)

These challenges are especially pronounced in post-conflict states, developing regions, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In post-conflict contexts, weakened institutions, destroyed infrastructure, and limited private-sector investment restrict the creation of formal employment opportunities. Moreover, in both developing regions and SIDS, economic dependence on tourism, agriculture, or informal services, combined with limited fiscal capacity and vulnerability to external shocks, increases reliance on informal and short-term work arrangements.

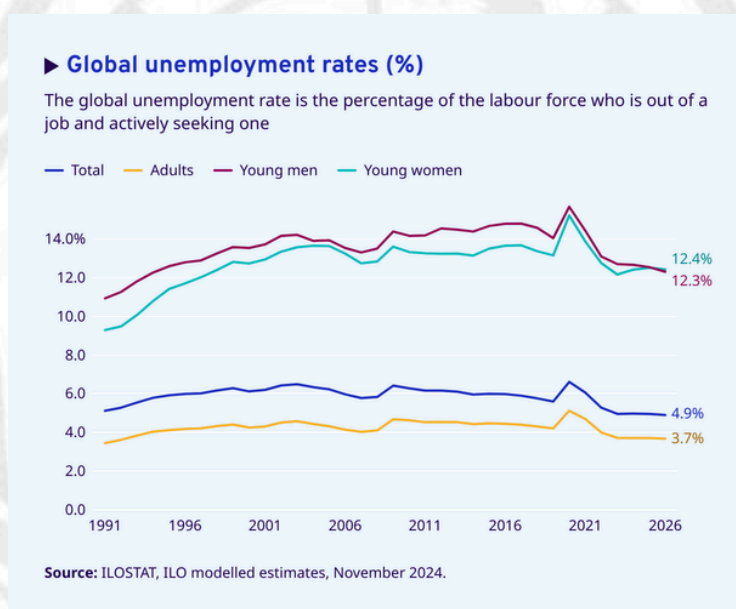


Figure 2: Change in unemployment rates (including post-pandemic).

Women, youth, migrant workers, and low-skilled laborers are disproportionately affected by precarious and informal employment. Discrimination in labor markets often manifests itself through barriers to formal hiring, such as employers preferring experienced adult workers over young job seekers, gender-based wage gaps for equal work, and restricted access to legal employment for migrants due to residency or documentation requirements. These groups are also more likely to be excluded from social protection systems, including health insurance and unemployment benefits. Economic uncertainty, weak enforcement of labor regulations, limited access to quality education and vocational training, and structural inequalities within labor markets all contribute to the persistence and growth of precarious work. Without targeted policy interventions, precarious and informal employment risks becoming a long-term feature of the global labor market, with significant implications for social stability and youth. During and after the pandemic, this phenomenon increasingly turned into a worldwide issue.

3. Topic Background (Continued)

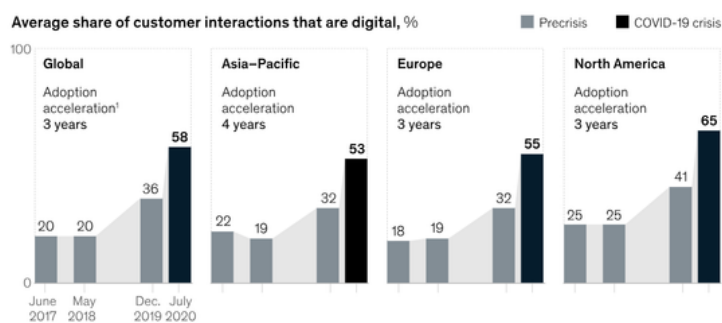
Digitalization, Automation, and the Future of Work

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated digital transformation across industries. Remote work, digital platforms, e-commerce, and automation reshaped how work was organised and delivered, particularly in sectors such as services, education, finance, and logistics. Emerging forms of non-standard work, including platform-based work, short-term contracts, and freelance arrangements, became increasingly common as employers sought flexibility and efficiency.

As lockdowns and social distancing measures disrupted traditional workplaces, organizations rapidly adopted digital tools such as video conferencing, cloud platforms, and online collaboration systems to maintain operations. This sudden reliance on technology reshaped the organization of work, expanded opportunities for flexible and remote employment, and increased demand for digital skills across sectors. At the same time, it exposed digital divides between countries, industries, and workers, highlighting the need for inclusive digital infrastructure and policies to ensure that the benefits of digitalization are shared more broadly and more equitably. Digitalization offers potential benefits, including increased flexibility, productivity gains, and new employment opportunities. However, it also presents serious challenges: automation threatens to displace workers in routine and low-skilled occupations, while platform-based work often lacks adequate labor protections. Furthermore, increased digital surveillance and algorithmic management raise concerns about workers' rights and privacy.

The digital divide continues to be a major obstacle. Workers without reliable internet access, digital skills, or technological infrastructure, particularly in developing countries and rural areas, risk being excluded from new labor market opportunities. Additionally, extending social protection to youth is particularly challenging due to the high prevalence of informal work, limited administrative capacity, and constraints on financing social programs. Overall, political investment decisions, national education systems, and access to affordable technology play a decisive role in shaping the future of work.

The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the digitization of customer interactions by several years.



*Years ahead of the average rate of adoption from 2017 to 2019.

McKinsey & Company

Figure 3: The Covid-19 impact on digitalization.



3. Topic Background (Continued)

Gender, Youth, and Inequality in Labor Recovery

Post-pandemic labor recovery has been highly unequal, with women and young people experiencing slower and more fragile reintegration into the workforce. Inequality, in this context, refers to hiring discrimination, gender wage gaps, unpaid care, sectoral segregation, and the concentration of youth in informal or temporary work. Women were disproportionately affected by job losses due to their overrepresentation in hard-hit sectors such as hospitality, retail, and care services. School closures and increased unpaid care responsibilities further forced many women to reduce their working hours or to exit the labor force entirely.

FIGURE 2.3 Gender gap in unemployment, 2013-2022

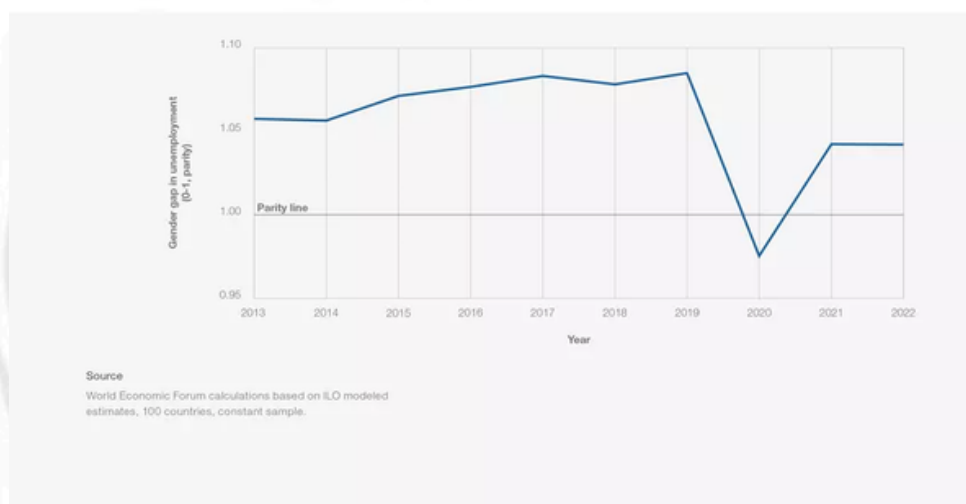


Figure 4: Gender gap in unemployment.

Young people entering the labor market have faced increasing challenges, including reduced employment opportunities, lower wages, limited access to formal contracts, and higher job insecurity, often being confined to temporary or informal jobs with limited prospects for career development and long-term stability. General trends show that the pandemic accelerated the expansion of precarious work and digitalized employment, while deepening pre-existing inequalities along gender and age lines.

These disparities are shaped by a combination of political, social, economic, and environmental factors. Politically, limited investment in youth employment and social protection policies diminishes equitable recovery. Socially, persistent gender norms and unequal distribution of care responsibilities constrain women's participation in the labor force. Economically, slow sectoral recovery, the prevalence of the informal labor market, and limited access to education and vocational training hinder youth employment prospects. Environmentally, climate-related shocks disproportionately affect regions relying on agriculture or tourism, sectors where women and youth are heavily employed, therefore exacerbating their vulnerability to economic disruption. Hence, addressing gendered and youth-specific inequalities is critical to achieving a more inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful post-pandemic labor recovery, which ensures that women and young workers can fully participate in economic and social life.

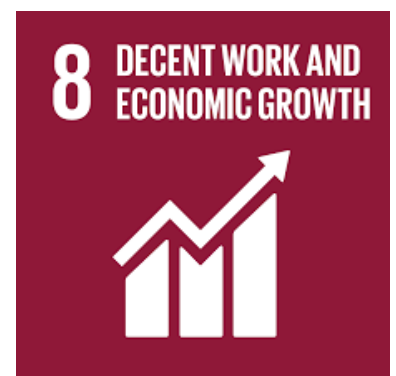


4. Past International Actions

Over the past few years, the international community has undertaken a range of actions to promote labor rights, employment recovery, and decent work, particularly in the post-pandemic context:

- **ILO's Decent Work Agenda (1999–present):** Launched by the ILO, this framework promotes employment creation, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue. It continues to guide national labor policy responses and international efforts to improve working conditions worldwide.
- **ILO's Global Call to Action for a Human-Centered Recovery (2021):** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ILO initiated this Global Call to Action to support member states in fostering inclusive economic recovery. It emphasized gender equality, social protection expansion, skills development, and sustainable economic growth, and offered guidance on practical measures to protect workers and promote decent work during crisis recovery.
- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030):** Adopted by all UN Member States, SDG 8 focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. The pandemic has highlighted challenges in achieving this goal, thus reinforcing the need for coordinated international action to support youth, women, and other vulnerable groups in the labor market.
- **ILO Conventions and Recommendations:** Over the years, the ILO has adopted multiple legal instruments, including conventions on employment protection, occupational safety and health, social security, and non-discrimination. These standards continue to provide legal and technical guidance to Member States to protect workers' rights, address labor inequalities, and promote decent work across sectors.

Despite these international frameworks, implementation continues to vary widely across regions. Differences in economic capacity, governance structures, political priorities, and enforcement mechanisms limit the effectiveness of global labor standards. Strengthening international cooperation and national commitment remains essential to ensure meaningful and equitable labor recovery.



5. Recommendations and Solutions

- **Expand Labor Laws and Social Protection:** Governments should expand their existing labor laws and regulatory frameworks to formally include non-standard, informal, and gig-economy workers, ensuring that all workers are covered by basic labor protections. At the same time, it is essential to implement and strengthen comprehensive social protection systems, including unemployment benefits, health insurance, and pension coverage, to reduce workers' vulnerability and provide them with financial security across diverse employment arrangements.
- **Promote Youth Employment and Skills Development:** Establishing and funding national youth employment initiatives that focus on skills development, vocational training, and digital literacy is critical to preparing young people for a rapidly evolving labor market. Employers can support these efforts by developing and financing internships, apprenticeships, and training programs, which provide practical experience and help new entrants transition smoothly into meaningful employment opportunities.
- **Enhance Gender-Responsive Policies and Workforce Inclusion:** Integrating gender-responsive labor policies into national legislation and investing in care infrastructure can significantly support women's participation in the workforce. Outreach and awareness campaigns are equally important, as they inform women and other vulnerable groups about their rights and available protections, aiding in the promotion of equity, inclusivity, and access to safe and fair employment opportunities.
- **Ensure Fair and Transparent Employment Practices:** Employers should adopt transparent and non-discriminatory hiring practices and guarantee equal pay for equal work. Complementing these measures with flexible work arrangements guarantees that diverse worker needs are accommodated for, while maintaining compliance with national and international labor standards and striking a balance between workforce well-being and operational flexibility.
- **Strengthen Worker Representation and Social Dialogue:** Worker organizations and trade unions should actively participate in tripartite social dialogue mechanisms to negotiate improved labor protections, working conditions, and enforcement standards. Additionally, outreach campaigns aimed at youth, women, and vulnerable groups can raise their awareness regarding workers' rights and available protections, thereby fostering stronger collective bargaining and a more empowered workforce.



GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which legal reforms to 'worker status' can effectively reduce precarity for gig platform contractors?
2. How can governments, employers, and the ILO support those most affected by job insecurity, such as youth, women, migrants, and informal workers?
3. What measures can stabilize income and expand social protection for workers in precarious employment?
4. How can national governments balance labor market flexibility with protections for workers' rights?
5. How can the ILO assist countries in transitioning informal workers into formal social security systems?
6. Which programs or policies can facilitate workers' transition into stable and decent jobs?
7. How can social protection systems be reformed or expanded to effectively respond to future crises?



RESEARCH AIDS

Significance:

Having solid research and becoming confident in your knowledge before walking into the committee is the first step in the process. Research well, become well-versed in the topic and your country. Don't forget that during the conference, you will be playing the part of a knowledgeable and experienced diplomat. Do the research, act the part!

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