

Message from Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, to TUAC and L7

“The world has been left reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic and invasion of Ukraine, both of which have contributed to the first rise in global poverty in decades and a cost-of-living crisis that has hammered households already struggling to get by.

“The International Labour Organisation has forecast close to zero employment growth in 2023 for high-income countries, including G7 members. And even those lucky enough to have a job are not always protected from poverty. In the EU, 21 million workers are at risk of poverty. In the US, 6.3 million workers live below the poverty line.

“These are unacceptable figures. The world is seriously off-track and in need of a change of direction. Now is not the time for G7 members to bring out the same tired solutions that got us into this mess in the first place. Now is the time to be bold, and to commit to whatever it takes to support people out chronic economic insecurity and into decent, meaningful work.

“What’s standing in our way is not the lack of good ideas. Job guarantee programmes – through which the government guarantees a job to anyone willing and able to work – offer a promising response to unemployment, providing the income security and social inclusion millions urgently need to escape from poverty.

“Increasing wages with inflation would go a long way towards guarding against in-work poverty – with IMF researchers concluding that fears of a wage-price spiral feeding inflation are largely ill-founded.

“Perhaps most importantly of all, a Global Fund for Social Protection – an international financing mechanism supporting the funding of minimum levels of social protection – could fill the dangerous gaps in social protection facing many of the world’s workers. This is particularly urgent for the two billion informal workers, more than 60% of the world’s workforce, who are rarely covered by social protection schemes. In 2021, the International Labour Conference called for the establishment of this fund – now is the time to deliver.

“Without decent and fairly-paid work there will be no end to poverty. Without social protection there will be no social justice. I urge G7 Leaders to remember this as they navigate the enormous challenges of our time.”

7 April 2023