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**Global Press Release – Human Development Report 2015:**

## **“Address challenges and seize opportunities of the new world of work”, UNDP urges**

2 billion people lifted out of low human development, in last 25 years, now focus on work is needed to galvanize progress, alerts the 2015 Human Development Report.

**Addis Ababa, 14 December 2015** —Fast technological progress, deepening globalization, aging societies and environmental challenges are rapidly transforming what work means today and how it is performed. This new world of work presents great opportunities for some, but also profound challenges for others. The [2015 Human Development Report](#), released today at a ceremony in Ethiopia, urges governments to act now to ensure no one is left behind in the fast-changing world of work.

The report, titled [‘Work for Human Development’](#), calls for equitable and decent work for all. In doing so, it encourages governments to look beyond jobs to consider the many kinds of work, such as unpaid care, voluntary, or creative work that are important for human development. The report suggests that only by taking such a broad view can the benefits of work be truly harnessed for sustainable development.

Speaking at the launch, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, said *“Employment can be a great driver of progress, but more people need to be able to benefit from sustainable work that helps them and their families to thrive.”*

The need for more inclusive and sustainable work opportunities was also emphasized by United Nations Development Programme Administrator Helen Clark who said: *“Decent work contributes to both the richness of economies and the richness of human lives. All countries need to respond to the challenges in the new world of work and seize opportunities to improve lives and livelihoods.”*

With better health and education outcomes and reductions in extreme poverty, 2 billion people have moved out of low human development levels in the last 25 years, the report says. Yet in order to secure these gains and galvanize progress, a stronger focus on decent work is needed.

830 million people are classified as working poor who live on under \$2.00 a day. Over 200 million people, including 74 million youth, are unemployed, while 21 million people are currently in forced labour.

*“Human progress will accelerate when everyone who wants to work has the opportunity to do so under decent circumstances. Yet in many countries, people are often excluded from paid work, or are paid less than others for doing work of the same value”*, said report lead author Selim Jahan.

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## **Women do three out of every four hours of unpaid work**

The report presents a detailed new estimate of the share of all work, not just paid work, between men and women. While women carry out 52 percent of all global work, glaring inequalities in the distribution of work remain.

Women are less likely to be paid for their work than men, with three out of every four hours of unpaid work carried out by women. In contrast, men account for two of every three hours of paid work. Since women often carry the burden of providing care services for family members, the report warns that this disparity is likely to increase as populations age.

When women are paid, they earn globally, on average, 24 percent less than men, and occupy less than a quarter of senior business positions worldwide.

*“To reduce this inequality, societies need new policies, including better access to paid care services. Ensuring equal pay, providing paid parental leave, and tackling the harassment and the social norms that exclude so many women from paid work are among the changes needed. That would enable the burden of unpaid care work to be shared more widely, and give women a genuine choice on whether to enter the labour force”*, Helen Clark said.

## **Globalization and the digital revolution are double-edged swords**

Globalization and technological changes are producing an increasingly polarized world of work. *“There has never been a better time to be a highly skilled worker. Conversely, it is not a good time to be unskilled. This is deepening inequalities”*, said report author Selim Jahan.

Highly skilled workers and those with access to technology, including to the internet, have new opportunities in the types of work available and the way that work is done. Today, there are seven billion mobile phone subscriptions, 2.3 billion people with smart phones, and 3.2 billion with internet access. This has brought about many changes in the world of work - for example, the rise of e-commerce and the mass outsourcing of banking, ICT-support, and other services.

Despite new opportunities, however, more jobs are now becoming vulnerable and a wide digital divide remains, the report notes.

In 2015, 81 percent of households in developed countries have internet access, but only 34 percent in developing regions and 7 percent in the least developed countries have that access.

Many types of routine work, such as clerical jobs, are predicted to disappear or be replaced by computers, or have already disappeared, the report warns, while many more workers face other insecurities. According to the International Labour Organization, 61 percent of employed people in the world work without a contract, and only 27 percent of the world's population is covered by comprehensive social protection.

The report calls on governments to formulate national employment strategies that take into account the many challenges emerging in the rapidly changing world of work.

## **Sustainable work, opportunities both for present and future generations**

The report stresses the key roles that work can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

*“The types of work many of us do will need to change if our economies and societies are to make genuine progress towards a low emission and climate-resilient future. These changes will influence what the labour market of tomorrow looks like”*, the report states.

With green growth, new jobs will be created, the nature of others will be transformed, and others will end altogether. These changes ideally should be supported by systems of social protection and safety nets.

The report argues that work opportunities can be fostered by the global goals. It estimates, for example, that around 45 million additional health workers will be needed to meet the health objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. That would see the global health workforce increase in size from 34 million in 2012 to 79 million by 2030.

### **Setting the new agenda for work**

While policy responses to the new world of work will differ across countries, three main clusters of policies will be critical if governments and societies are to maximize the benefits and minimize the hardships in the evolving new world of work. Strategies are needed for creating work opportunities and ensuring workers' well-being. The report therefore proposes a three-pronged action agenda:

- A New Social Contract between governments, society, and the private sector, to ensure that all members of society, especially those working outside the formal sector, have their needs taken into account in policy formulation.
- A Global Deal among governments to guarantee workers' rights and benefits around the world.
- A Decent Work Agenda, encompassing all workers, that will help promote freedom of association, equity, security, and human dignity in work life.

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

*ABOUT THIS REPORT: The Human Development Report is an editorially independent publication of the United Nations Development Programme. For free downloads of the 2015 Human Development Report, plus additional reference materials on its indices and specific regional implications, please visit:*  
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