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UNIDO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

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Report by the Director General

The present report provides an update on the UNIDO response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences. It complements previous reports that also informed about the impact of the pandemic on industrial development.

I. UNIDO support to Member States

1. The UNIDO framework *Responding to the crisis: building a better future*,¹ published in May 2020 in alignment with the United Nations framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19,² outlines the UNIDO approach to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The present report provides an overview of selected interventions categorized by five common types of activities related to the UNIDO COVID-19 response. It demonstrates that the Organization's response was as comprehensive as possible in the face of the acute onset of the pandemic. The response was furthermore mainstreamed across all areas of activity for more flexibility, greater resilience and improved pandemic preparedness of Member States.

Analysis, advice and knowledge sharing

3. UNIDO has carried out applied research on the role of inclusive and sustainable industrial development in responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and disseminated key findings and knowledge products to Member States.

¹ www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2020-05/UNIDO_COVID19_External_Position_Paper.pdf.

² www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_framework_report_on_covid-19.pdf.

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4. The flagship *Industrial Development Report 2022* titled “The future of industrialization in a post-pandemic world” was launched at the nineteenth session of the General Conference. Findings were disseminated in a series of webinars as well.
5. The analytical capabilities of the Industrial Analytics Platform were expanded in 2021, among others through the addition of the Quarterly Production Tracker, which can be used to assess the impact of COVID-19 preventive measures on manufacturing production by quarter.
6. The SDG 9 Accelerator was launched in April 2022. The platform, supported by a regional meeting held in May 2021, aims to support countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in their COVID-19 recovery through knowledge exchange and partnerships.
7. A side event at the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in May 2021 reviewed the impact of COVID-19 on the manufacturing sector.
8. UNIDO’s ninth Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries in November 2021 integrated the aspect of resilience-building and post-COVID-19 recovery into its panel discussions and the Ministerial Declaration.
9. In January 2022, UNIDO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development jointly organized a side event on a new generation of industrial policies for least developed countries.
10. The UNIDO inputs to the Think20 (T20) process in 2021 focused on inclusiveness and sustainability in global value chains. Two policy briefs and a roundtable event helped develop recommendations to feed into the G20 final communiqué.
11. In December 2021, the Forum on Globalization and Industrialization highlighted the need to rewire global production networks for sustainability.
12. An event in November 2021 – in preparation for the African Union Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification to take place in November 2022 in Niger, focused on building resilient regional and continental value chains in Africa.
13. In August 2021, webinars on science, technology and innovation (STI) provided insights on lessons learned about the impact of COVID-19 on STI policy capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean.
14. A joint survey by UNIDO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) resulted in the report *Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on agrifood manufacturing small and medium enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa*, published in early 2022.
15. In Ethiopia, a project under the United Nations COVID-19 response and recovery fund assisted national authorities and development partners in sustaining businesses and protecting jobs in the informal economy.
16. UNIDO supported several countries across the globe in preparing assessments of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, contributing its long-standing expertise with the industrial sector.
17. In the Europe and Central Asia region, UNIDO prepared ten country and industry profiles based on UNIDO methodologies that also consider COVID-19 implications. The profiles fed into common country analyses of United Nations country teams.
18. Promoting women’s economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, UNIDO launched a six-module online training course to provide women and girls with an online tool to upgrade their business management skills during lockdowns. A related webinar series and panel discussion were organized in the framework of the third Eurasian Women’s Forum.

19. The 2020 and 2021 editions of UNIDO's Bridge for Cities event focused on green, social and technological innovations to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis.
20. UNIDO and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), developed the *Territorial-Industrial Investment Atlas* which focuses on opportunities for socio-economic recovery in five key sectors for Mexican industry.
21. Nine countries participate in a project that fosters regional coordination in aquaculture value chains for productive employment generation in Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the COVID-19 recovery.
22. A high-level industrial policy event was co-organized in May 2021 in the context of the Programme for Country Partnership for Peru. A recent opinion piece provided recommendations on reactivating the manufacturing sector in Mexico.

Support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

23. The UNIDO survey on the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in the manufacturing sector conducted in 2020 was expanded through a follow-up survey in 2021. The survey results were well acknowledged by governments and United Nations country teams, and resulted in recovery-related policy recommendations.
24. Over the past two years, a range of projects assisted small enterprises in the COVID-19 response and recovery. Through projects presented in earlier reports, UNIDO supported women-led SMEs in Armenia, the tourism sector in Cabo Verde and businesses in Guinea, and helped protect frontline workers in Morocco.
25. To assist in the COVID-19 recovery, UNIDO launched the "COVID-19 Industrial Recovery Programme (CIRP)" in 2020. A project in Senegal that is based on the CIRP model and started in 2021 supports the resilience of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSMEs) and their employees in transport, fishing and fish farming, the pharmaceutical industry and the food industry.
26. In 2021, UNIDO initiated a business upgrading project in Cameroon, launched the LevelUP Accelerator for start-ups and SMEs in Jordan, started a project to improve livelihoods in rural Pakistan and began a new project to help modernize silk processing in Uzbekistan.
27. Recent related initiatives in Egypt covered a broad range of activities, including the development of the industrial performance index in Egypt, policy and working papers, and a capacity-building programme for MSMEs.
28. Skills and entrepreneurship training was provided to internally displaced people and host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In Lebanon, UNIDO developed manufacturing safety guidelines and supported 11 SMEs with new computer numerical control machinery. Over 550 SMEs were surveyed in Somalia, where UNIDO also raised awareness about the spread of the coronavirus and distributed information material in Somali.
29. The UNIDO Regional Office in India initiated a knowledge platform with 12 modules, aimed at assisting MSMEs to restart, recover and revitalize their businesses. Similar initiatives were rolled out in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Pakistan.
30. The Private Finance Advisory Network (PFAN) hosted by UNIDO initiated a specific three-step COVID-19 response to offer its expertise to climate entrepreneurs to ensure business continuity in an unstable business environment.

Innovation, investment and technology transfer

31. Building on over 40 years of experience in bringing innovative technologies and know-how of Japanese companies to developing countries, the Investment and Technology Promotion Office (ITPO) in Tokyo, through its Sustainable Technology Promotion Platform (STePP) started in 2020, brought 12 modern health and sanitary

technologies to India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Viet Nam for implementation at demonstration sites. The STePP database contains around 130 technologies.

32. ITPO Germany provided facilitation services between technology providers and investors for COVID-19-relevant technologies. In 2021, the ITPO established contact between a German manufacturer of machines that produce face masks and a recipient in Côte d'Ivoire. As the machines can be easily retrofitted, the production of medical gloves is also envisaged.

33. ITPO Republic of Korea exchanged information on economic recovery programmes and local business trends in Colombia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam with Korean companies that promote innovative technologies.

34. ITPO China in Beijing supported the transfer of environmentally-friendly sanitation technology, which was tested and then installed in Senegal. The equipment is in operation since November 2021.

35. By enhancing private sector competitiveness to deliver environmental, economic and social benefits, the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) also contributed to the UNIDO COVID-19 response. GCIP business accelerators produce investment-ready and scalable solutions. Many of the GCIP alumni used the expertise gained to address COVID-19, including a company based in Pakistan which developed a substitute for N95 masks.

36. As traditional investment promotion efforts through road shows, travel and events had to be cancelled or postponed, UNIDO fast-tracked the development of a digital investment promotion portal. It will be launched in 2022.

Quality standards and local production

37. UNIDO supported garment companies in Armenia in producing medical uniforms and bed linen in line with technical requirements. Within a project originally designed to improve competitiveness of export-oriented industries, an Armenian apparel manufacturer diversified production to include medical masks. Similarly, a project in Tajikistan helped reorient light industry SMEs and ensured broader production of personal protective equipment (PPE) in compliance with related quality requirements. The interventions in both countries helped secure jobs for hundreds of workers, of which 95 per cent are women.

38. In Colombia, several UNIDO initiatives supported the fight against COVID-19, including a project in the automotive industry which led to the implementation of new health and safety protocols and business continuity methods. Six webinars were conducted on ISO standards in the COVID-19 context. A quality programme supported the aptitude evaluation of polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, testing laboratories.

39. In collaboration with national COVID-19 response task force units in Gabon, Ghana and the United Republic of Tanzania, UNIDO provided a series of hands-on training programmes for 20 enterprises and key PPE value chain actors to improve the national capacity of local PPE production and quality control. In Gabon, UNIDO drafted a standardized procedure for PPE quality assessment to increase national PPE quality standards and realize a better market surveillance capability.

40. As part of broader efforts to mitigate the COVID-19 fallout in Africa, UNIDO is supporting the supply of quality-assured, locally manufactured PPE in Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa.

41. A project in Nigeria helps MSMEs upgrade production processes and adopt standards and technical regulations for the production of high-quality PPE and healthcare products. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNIDO is helping strengthen the domestic supply chains for PPE, disinfectants and hygiene supplies.

42. In 2022, UNIDO launched a project in Cameroon to help increase the supply of medical oxygen devices, equipment for vaccine storage and other critical supplies. A project in Ghana to strengthen the domestic PPE supply chain uses a circular economy approach, for instance by relying on plant-based chemicals, to reduce the environmental footprint and waste generation. A similar approach was taken in a project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where hydro-alcoholic gel for hospitals was made from sugarcane.

43. In the State of Palestine, quality standards and guidelines for PPE production have been developed and shared with workshops and factories in the footwear and garments industrial sectors that have repurposed part of their production for the local market and neighbouring markets.

44. The UNIDO publication *DIY solutions for medical protective clothing and masks* provides a detailed explanation regarding classification, application and production technologies for PPE, as well as the quality requirements they should meet. This hands-on pocket guide helps select durable, resistant, and safe materials and efficient production techniques that comply with World Health Organization regulations.

Medical waste management

45. Several UNIDO interventions help introduce best practices and technologies for the sound management of medical and healthcare waste and chemicals, and the disposal of PPE. One such project promotes circular economy approaches, covering Lesotho, Madagascar and South Africa. Another project in South Africa, working with local waste pickers and the waste management industry, contributed to the United Nations South Africa “flash appeal” initiative on COVID-19.

46. A medical waste project in India developed guidelines on the sound management of COVID-19 waste, and provided training to several healthcare facilities in the country.

47. A new project will be launched in the Philippines in 2022 to reduce unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutants and mercury through an environmentally sound approach in healthcare waste management.

II. Action required of the Committee

48. The Committee may wish to take note of the information contained in the present document.
