

Thematic Window on Decent Jobs and Universal Social Protection

Terms of Reference

Rationale

To operationalize its Strategy for 2023-2026, Financing Catalytic Action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Joint SDG Fund establishes a Thematic Window on Decent Jobs and Universal Social Protection (the Window).

The Window is a dedicated funding mechanism to support the implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions (Global Accelerator) in pathfinder countries.

The Window will address country priorities and foster greater collaboration among UN agencies, and with IFIs for dedicated funding rounds.

It builds on the lessons learned from previous portfolios of investments of the Joint SDG Fund, notably “integrated policy solutions for social protection to leave no one behind (LNOB)” and “SDG financing”.

Strategic Framework

The Window will contribute to accelerating the achievements of the SDGs by supporting (simultaneously) the three pillars of action of the Global Accelerator: 1) Integrated and evidence-based national strategies and policies for social protection, employment and just transitions¹; 2) Integrated financing, combining domestic resources and international financial support; and 3) Enhanced multilateral cooperation. More specifically, the Window will support the following development objectives and related activities:

Objective 1: Integrated and well-coordinated national public policies and strategies and related implementation structures that promote and lead to the effective creation of decent work in tandem with building and maintaining universal and sustainable social protection systems, and that enable just transitions for all;

Objective 2: National frameworks for adequate and sustainable financing of social protection and inclusive, environment- and gender-responsive employment interventions that enable just transitions, through national investments that can be complemented with external sources where needed;

Objective 3: Strengthened national social protection and employment outcomes through building robust, sustainable, inclusive, adaptive, and gender-responsive national social protection systems and the development

¹ “Just transitions” refers to transitions of the economy, including green and digital transitions, to individuals and their life and work transitions across the life cycle related to sickness, family events, education or employment status and finally society transitions for example to a gender equal society, transitions from war to peace, from disaster to recovery and increased resilience etc.

of jobs and employment policies and programmes to facilitate access to decent work and support national partners to overcome structural constraints.

Objective 4: Strengthened national ownership and consensus building among all relevant national actors and their partners (ministries, social partners, public institutions, civil society, UN partners, development partners, IFIs and private investors) and enhanced multilateral cooperation on decent jobs and social protection for just transitions; and

Objective 5: Innovation, new knowledge, evidence and tools on employment and social protection for human-centered and gender-equal recovery, for achieving the SDGs and for better management of ecological, technological and other transitions of national economies.

Management arrangements and linkages with the Governance structure of the Global Accelerator

The Joint SDG Fund's **Operational Steering Committee (OSC)** is responsible for the management and oversight of the Window, including decision-making on launching and operationalizing the Window, approving funding allocations and Joint Programmes under the Window, ensuring coordination of partnerships and resource mobilization activities, and other related functions in line with the Fund's Terms of Reference and the Operational Guidance. The OSC receives technical recommendations from the Technical Support Facility (TSF) and programmatic support from the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat.

The **Joint SDG Fund Secretariat** ensures overall programmatic support to the Window, including launch of the Window, organization of funding rounds, submission of proposals, and submission of narrative progress reports. It will perform other functions in support of the OSC, as per Fund's Terms of Reference and the Operational Guidance.

The **Global Accelerator Steering Group (SG)** is composed of government representatives from pathfinder countries (with rotational seats), donor countries, ILO, other UN organizations, World Bank, other IFIs, social partners, and civil society organizations, as appropriate. The SG provides the strategic direction for all engagements on the Global Accelerator. It provides advice on the selection of pathfinder countries and gives guidance on calls for proposals and global activities, based on the results of peer reviews and available funding through different funding streams including the SDG Fund. Proposals for different funding streams are shared with the SG for their information and strategic guidance and to ensure adherence to national priorities and the GA implementation strategy. The SG also oversees the development of knowledge products and tools, and the production and dissemination of results and evidence.

The **Technical Support Facility (TSF)** is coordinated by the ILO and is composed of other UN agencies (currently FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP); for specific funding rounds (such as the ones organized as part of the *Multi-Stakeholder Engagement to Support the Implementation of the Global Accelerator*), the TSF may also include the World Bank. The TSF is the technical lead of the Window. It also serves as the secretariat of the Global Accelerator Steering Group. TSF will have the following roles and responsibilities within the Window:

- It develops with the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat the Descriptions of calls and funding rounds that include, amongst other process for applications, guidance and template for proposals, selection criteria, quality and other technical requirements);

- It provides technical guidance on the methodology for technical review of proposals, coordinates technical review, consolidates the results of the technical review, and submits recommendations for proposal selection and funding allocations;
- It facilitates alignment and builds synergies between this Window and other thematic priorities/windows of the Fund and supports the achievement of Fund’s cross-cutting results (localization, gender, youth, SDG data, LNOB) related to this Window;
- It coordinates technical support at the global and regional levels to provide support to the delivery of transformative results at the country level, to include learning and knowledge management (tools, research, studies), and/or the deployment of expertise to provide more specific technical assistance to National Programme Implementation Teams in pathfinder countries; and
- It conducts technical reviews of Joint Programmes’ annual and final reports, and other progress updates to provide consolidated technical analyses, including identification of best practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement or additional investment; it implements the Results Framework of the Global Accelerator, and consolidates results and impact.

In addition, the TSF is responsible for the overall coordination and management of the Global Accelerator; it mobilizes resources, develops global partnerships, organizes strategic events and promotes the GA in global and regional fora.

Funding from the Joint SDG Fund Window may be allocated to the TSF to support its coordination and technical support functions, based on the Fund’s OSC approval. The TSF will submit regular updates to the OSC on the use of that funding and the progress made on the technical support to the Window.

Eligibility and resource allocation

Resource allocation will proceed through consecutive funding rounds and/or calls for seed funding / preparatory phase. Countries wishing to participate in the Global Accelerator must secure political support at the highest level along with the specification of the cross-ministerial coordination mechanism that involves key ministries (e.g. Ministries of finance, economy/planning, labour, etc.), which needs to take the form of an explicit commitment by the head of State or Government communicated to the UNRC, together with the development of a national roadmap. This high-level political commitment and the process leading to it have important implications for the approach to the funding rounds and country eligibility.

The Window will allocate resources to:

1. **Joint Programmes** in pathfinder countries to support the development of national roadmaps on the Global Accelerator and their subsequent implementation. The Window will in particular allocate resources to implementing UN agencies and to the World Bank² as appropriate.
2. The **Technical Support Facility (TSF)** coordinated by the ILO, to provide support for the Window and the provision of specialized expertise to National Programme Implementation Teams (PITs)- through a hub of experts- as well as, the development of global knowledge products, innovation, and tools, results monitoring, evaluation, and narrative reporting.

In each pathfinder country, two broad sets of activities will be funded and undertaken sequentially:

² As part of the funding rounds of the Multi-Stakeholder Engagement to Support the Implementation of the Global Accelerator, the World Bank can be a recipient of the Joint SDG Fund Window.

1. **An initial phase** for data collection, diagnosis, consultations, preparation of the national roadmap, M&E development, and programme design; this is expected to last up to 12 months. Countries with secured high-level commitment and a clear cross-ministerial coordination mechanism for the design and implementation of the Global Accelerator will be eligible to apply to funding rounds to support the design of national roadmaps. This will take the form of an explicit commitment by the Head of State or Government communicated to the UNRC.
2. **An implementation phase:** Following the preparation of the roadmap and agreement on priorities for investment, National Programme Implementation Teams (PITs) are then eligible to prepare and submit – through the UNRC - one joint proposal per country and per round to the Window. Countries which may have developed their roadmap without the support of the Joint SDG Fund would also be eligible to apply. Winning proposals will then receive the financing to implement the planned activities during four years (renewable, depending on funding availability and assessed progress).

Funding approach

The Window will be operational until the end of 2026, in line with the Joint SDG Fund Strategy. Depending on the implementation status, the Operational Steering Committee (OSC) can extend the window period to account for programmatic closures and evaluations.

The Window will support countries in the two phases (initial and implementation) mentioned above. The first funding round of the Window will support the development of country roadmaps in countries that have already secured high-level commitment and clear cross-ministerial coordination mechanism for the design and implementation of the Global Accelerator.

Subsequent funding rounds will support simultaneously two types of countries: 1) countries that have already developed roadmaps; the support will focus on the implementation of the Global Accelerator; 2) countries that have secured the political will and coordination mechanism and wish to start the development of the GA roadmap.

For each funding round, a joint UN global project workplan will be developed to reflect the support to be provided by the Technical Support Facility.

Contributors

Earmarked contributions to the Window may be accepted from governments, inter-governmental or non-governmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and individuals. To contribute to the Window, a contributor needs to sign a Standard Administrative Arrangement (SAA) with MPTFO. The Joint SDG Fund under the decision of the OSC may also allocate non-earmarked resources to the Joint SDG Fund Window on Decent Jobs and Universal Social Protection.

Amendments

The Terms of Reference on the Fund's Decent Jobs and USP Window may be modified at any time by the Fund's OSC.