



## **Groundbreaking Iraqi national strategy set to reduce inequalities in the world of work**

*Launch of the Iraq National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Inequalities in the World of Work marks a significant milestone in the country's journey towards a more inclusive and equitable labour market.*

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BAGHDAD (ILO News) - Iraq's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have unveiled a new landmark national strategy that lays the groundwork for building a more prosperous and equitable future for all in Iraq through inclusivity, equal opportunity, and social protection.

The "Iraq National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Inequalities in the World of Work for the Years 2024-2028" was launched at an event in Baghdad attended by representatives from government agencies, social partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Participants discussed the implementation framework and ways to garner support for the strategy's objectives.

Enhancing equality and non-discrimination is among the fundamental principles and pillars endorsed internationally and regionally, as well as being a fundamental right to achieve justice and encourage economic prosperity. Minister of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Al-Asadi, pointed out that Iraq provides the appropriate legislative protection to ensure rights and protection for all Iraqis.

ILO Deputy Regional Director for Arab States Peter Rademaker said the strategy marks a significant step towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable labour market in the country, "Across the globe, growing inequalities – inequalities in access to decent work, in earnings and benefits for workers and their families, and among and between countries and populations - are hindering efforts to create inclusive, sustainable, and resilient labour markets," Rademaker said at the launch event. "In response to this challenging global situation, Iraq's new national strategy marks an important step towards creating a work environment in the country where every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, has equal access to opportunities and fair treatment," he added.

With about a quarter of Iraqis living in poverty, the country suffers from stark inequalities which stretch beyond poor wealth distribution into unequal access to employment, social protection, public services and other resources.

Inequality between women and men in Iraq remains particularly pronounced. In 2021, female labour force participation in Iraq was among the lowest in the world, standing at 10.6 per cent. Young people, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons are also among those left behind.

Participants in the launch event stressed that the new strategy is therefore a timely initiative to accelerate progress in closing the inequality gap. The initiative is the result of extensive research and a participatory approach involving stakeholders across Iraq.



The strategy was developed through a rigorous process of extensive research and national consultation and collaboration, with the support of the ILO. It outlines five key pillars to address various challenges and promote inclusive economic growth through fostering a more inclusive and equitable labor market in Iraq.

Firstly, it focuses on creating employment opportunities by directing resources towards public works programs, transitioning to a green economy, expanding small and medium-sized projects, adopting poverty-alleviating measures, and supporting policy-making processes.

Secondly, it aims to promote equal access to quality education and lifelong learning by enhancing inclusivity in the education system, improving skills development opportunities, and aligning education with labor market needs.

Thirdly, the strategy emphasizes ensuring adequate protection for all workers through strengthening legal coverage, ensuring compliance with labor laws, and enhancing social dialogue.

Furthermore, it seeks to accelerate the transition to the formal economy by supporting workers in the informal sector, facilitating the transition to formal employment, and implementing supportive regulations.

Lastly, the strategy prioritizes achieving comprehensive social protection by expanding social protection coverage and ensuring access to social protection floors. Through these concerted efforts, the strategy endeavors to address inequalities and promote sustainable economic growth in Iraq.

The strategy also places a strong emphasis on achieving equality of women and men in the workplace, with initiatives aimed at promoting women's participation and protection.