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The Financial Crisis, the Jobs Pact and the Office

The Union followed with great interest the ILC debates related to the global economic crisis and the way forward. The impressive sequence of seven Heads of State and two Heads of Government, as well as the high-level representatives of workers, employers and governments lent credibility to the key role that the ILO will play in placing Decent Work at the centre of the recovery. The Jobs Pact placed all actors – the ILO’s constituents and the Office itself – in “crisis mode”, outlining the different areas in which each party will be called upon to act.

It was encouraging to note that the Jobs Pact recognized that: “[e]specially in times of social tension, strengthened respect for, and use of, mechanisms of social dialogue, including collective bargaining, where appropriate at all levels is vital.” This represents an important recognition by the Conference that dialogue – including collective bargaining – can help the parties to adapt to change and ensure the commitment of all to the actions required to overcome the crisis. Of course, these principles apply within the Office as well as outside. While the Office is placed into crisis mode, to effectively respond to the demands of our constituents as outlined in the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, and now in the Jobs Pact, the Staff Union Committee stands by the words of its Chairperson who said in his address to the Governing Body,

“[...] in times of change and crisis, information, consultation and negotiation become even more essential. Both in response to the financial crisis, and to improve the effectiveness of the services we provide to our constituents. As such, we fully accept and are open to change.

[...]

But in times of increasingly rapid change, in times of crisis, the involvement of representatives of staff from the earliest possible point when addressing issues related to terms and conditions of work should add value to the process. It is for this reason that the Staff Union’s role in representing and defending the interests of the staff is enshrined in the Staff Regulations themselves.”

It is clear that both the Declaration and the Jobs Pact call on the Office, and thus the staff, to consider its internal working methods, structures and governance. The Staff Union stands ready to act as a partner in negotiating policies, and in implementing change in the interests of the Organization and the staff.

We will continue to defend the rights and interests of the staff, and to work toward improvements in the policies, procedures and practices that will serve the overall interests of the Organization, including:

- Improving employment security, and reducing the use of precarious contracts;
- Advancing fair, objective and transparent recruitment and selection procedures where the most qualified candidate is selected, and with due consideration for the career development of staff, including those on technical cooperation and precarious contracts;
- Containing the impact of the expansion of extra budgetary resources, particularly in relation to the two issues outlined above;
- Recognizing the valuable inputs which ILO staff have made, and continue to make, to the organization, and ensuring that their rights and entitlements are protected, and
- Fully considering the human implications of any proposed actions related to the field restructuring, while meeting the overall needs of the Organization.

Change is a natural part of any organization's evolution. With the constituents calling on the Office to evolve, it is incumbent upon all of us to be open to this change. It is essential that management ensure high levels of communication and transparency, so that the staff can feel a part of this change. And the Staff Union will continue to play an active role in the change management process.

The next few months will be crucial in this respect; the Staff Union will be communicating with you through broadcasts and meetings where we both seek your views as well as report on any developments related to the above policies. As always, your inputs, your vigilance and your eventual involvement will be crucial to ensuring the best possible outcomes. We invite all new colleagues recently hired by the Organisation - including on technical cooperation and short term contracts - to support our action in defence of their rights by joining us and getting involved. In addition, external collaborators and interns are also welcome to get involved in Union activities.
