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Collective bargaining: a mistake or a right?

Following the statement of the Chairperson of the Staff Union Committee ([Staff Union Bulletin No.1402](#)), and the adoption of the Human Resources Strategy by the PFAC, the Director-General took the floor to address the “culture of conflict” in the Office.

The Director-General affirmed that it was he who brought collective bargaining to the ILO, after he took office.

An important fact: The first Collective Agreement was indeed adopted in 2000 after the Director-General took office. However, negotiations over staff’s terms and conditions of work have been taken place for decades under the Administrative Committee.

He noted that collective bargaining “did not exist before I arrived as Director-General” and that “for 80 years there was a workers’ group, and no collective bargaining existed in the ILO.” Later in his statement, he reiterated that “if I was not here, there would be no collective bargaining”.

A matter of principle: With or without collective bargaining agreements, the principle of collective bargaining has always existed, always exists and will always exist in the ILO.

Responding to the Spokesperson of the Workers’ Group, on the possibility of facing a picket line, he stated that if he realizes that he “made a mistake” in signing collective agreements in 2000, and if he finds that the Office is “immobilized”, he would come back to the Governing Body and say so.

The matter of principle: Collective bargaining is not a privilege that can be given or taken away, but it is the labour movement’s fundamental right.

Given the gravity of the situation, the Staff Union Committee has written to the Director-General expressing surprise at these statements. We have asked for clarification from the Office, and hope to receive a response soon.

The Staff Union recalls that our terms and conditions – from contracts policy to recruitment and selection, from working time arrangements to certain leave arrangements – are governed, and protected by, collective bargaining.

The conflict that has arisen over the past years has, at its origin, the desire of the Staff Union to bargain in good faith, but at the same time to defend against any efforts to unilaterally change our terms and conditions without bargaining.

**We will continue to keep you informed on developments.
Be ready for action!**