



International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva



## ILO WORKERS' GROUP PRIORITIES (2014-2017)

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# ILO WORKERS' GROUP PRIORITIES 2014 -2017





# INTRODUCTION

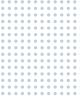
The Governing Body is the executive body of the International Labour Organization. It meets three times a year, in March, June and November. It takes decisions on ILO policy, decides the agenda of the International Labour Conference, adopts the draft Programme and Budget of the Organization for submission to the Conference, and elects the Director-General. It is composed of 56 titular members (28 Governments, 14 Employers and 14 Workers) and 66 deputy members (28 Governments, 19 Employers and 19 Workers).

The 33 Worker members are elected every three years by all Worker delegates at the International Labour Conference through a secret ballot: their composition reflects regional and gender balance as well as a mix of developed and developing countries.

They are supported in the discharge of their responsibilities by a Secretariat external to the ILO (the International Trade Union Confederation -ITUC Geneva Office) and, within the Office, by the ILO's Bureau for Workers' activities (ACTRAV).



# CONTEXT



1. This document has been elaborated further to consultations between the Chair of the Workers' group, members of the group, its Secretariat and the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV).
2. These priorities are set in a critical context for working people, one that remains marked by the consequences of the 2008 financial and economic crisis that resulted in more than 61 million people losing their jobs. Currently 201 million people are without a job with unemployment expected to continue to rise by 2019, the year when the ILO will celebrate its centenary of existence<sup>1</sup>. Youth unemployment remains a huge challenge with devastating social consequences. Precarious and informal work are rising, the number of working poor has grown, the right to strike, freedom of association and labour rights are under severe attack, collective bargaining is being destroyed, income inequality and inequalities in general are growing including through wage cuts and other austerity measures. Millions of people remain uncovered by social protection or have become less protected.

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1 ILO World Employment and Social Outlook - Trends 2015

3. The role of social dialogue in addressing answers to recovery from the crisis and more broadly economic and social issues has been undermined. For developing countries the consequences of the crisis have come on top of other crisis such as speculations on food, fuel and other raw materials, the impact of HIV and AIDS and more recently the Ebola pandemic.
4. To the social and economic challenges, one has to add the urgency of tackling climate change and its related social and employment effects through a just transition for the world of work to a low-carbon economy.
5. The Workers' group re-affirms the relevance of the ILO mandate to promote social justice through decent work. It expresses its support to the ILO supervisory system, a unique feature in the UN system, and its firm resolve to defend it against the attacks launched by Employers since 2012. The Workers' group stresses the importance of the Social Justice Declaration whose evaluation in 2016 should provide a new impetus to its full implementation in the lead up to the ILO centenary.
6. The Workers' group expects the Office internal reform to bear fruits in a number of critical areas: a real cross-departmental work; the strengthening of the Office research, analytical and statistical capacity; a portfolio of technical cooperation projects and Decent Work Country Programmes that address all the dimensions of the Decent Work Agenda and better promote standards; and better services provided to Workers' organisations at country level.



# RELEVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS

7. The Workers' group re-affirms that the right to strike is a foundation of democracy. It is without question protected by ILO Convention 87. The group is committed to follow up on the decision taken at the March 2015 session of the Governing Body on the Standards Initiative which contains a package of measures to address the deadlock of the supervisory system including: recognition of the right to strike on a case by case basis; respect for the mandate of the experts as endorsed by the March 2014 Governing Body; a functioning CAS in 2015 with the elaboration of consensual conclusions on cases; a review of the use of articles 24 and 26 of the ILO Constitution; a review of the working methods of the Committee on Freedom of Association; an agreement to proceed with the Standard Review Mechanism. Should the agreement fail to hold, the Workers' group will avail itself of the option to re-open the debate on having recourse to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion.

8. The Workers' group re-asserts the value of the ILO jurisprudence including on the right to strike. ACTRAV - in coordination with the Secretariat of the Workers' group - will disseminate key findings and jurisprudence to trade union organisations. ACTRAV will also continue to provide capacity-building on the ILO supervisory mechanism and in coordination with the Workers' group Secretariat assist in the follow-up to the cases of the Committee on the Application of Standards.
9. In the lead up to the second recurrent discussion on Fundamental Principles and Rights and Work in 2017, the Workers' group will continue to push for greater Office promotion of the ratification and implementation of Conventions 87 and 98. With the assistance of ACTRAV the group will seek to ensure that these instruments together with the comments of the supervisory mechanism are placed at the core of the Office work, including in Decent Work Country Programmes and technical cooperation projects where well they are often disregarded.
10. The ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention will also be a priority as a key strategy to eradicate the scourge of slavery and forced labour. The group will also continue to give priority to the fight against child labour and discrimination as well as on addressing the gender pay gap including through the promotion of the ratification and implementation of the relevant core conventions.
11. As part of the work on unacceptable forms of work, the Workers' group will seek to enhance ILO work on occupational safety and health, working time and wages including through the ratification and implementation of relevant international labour standards.

12. As part of the 2016 evaluation of the Social Justice Declaration, the Workers' group will push for Member States - with the assistance of the ILO - to review their situation as regards the ratification or implementation of ILO instruments with a view to achieve a progressively increasing coverage of each strategic objective with a focus on core and governance labour standards<sup>2</sup>. Use will also be made of the mechanisms set forth in Convention 144 for those countries having ratified it<sup>3</sup>.
13. When it comes to standard-setting, the group will use the cyclical reviews under the Social Justice Declaration, article 19 General Surveys as well as the Standard Review Mechanism to identify new topics for standard-setting.
14. Members of the Workers' group, with the assistance of ACTRAV and in coordination with the Secretariat of the Workers' group also commit to engage in their respective countries, regional and international organisations, in promoting the ratification and implementation of relevant ILO conventions. A limited number of instruments have been identified in order to ensure effectiveness. This should not however preclude work on any other standard:

- Core conventions with a focus on **C.87** and **C.98**

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2 See Social Justice Declaration, Section II, B, (iii)

3 Article 5 c of the Convention calls on member States in consultation with Workers' and Employer's organisations to examine at appropriate intervals un-ratified Conventions and Recommendations to which effect has not yet been given and to consider what measures might be taken to promote their ratification and implementation as appropriate

- Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, **P029**
- Governance standards (**C.122, C.144, C.81, C.129** – employment policy, tripartite consultations, labour inspection)
- **C.189/R.201** (decent work for domestic workers)
- **C.102** (Social Security) and R.202 (Social Protection Floors)
- **R.198** (Employment relationship)
- **C.158/R.166** (termination of employment)
- **C.131** (minimum wages)
- **C.155/187** (Occupational Safety and Health) and **R.200** (HIV and Aids and the world of work)
- **C.183** (maternity protection) and C.156 (workers with family responsibilities)
- **C.151** (labour relations in public services)/C.154 (collective bargaining)
- **C.97 and 143** (migrant workers)
- **C.94** (labour clauses in public contracts)
- **C.169** (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples)

# WORK PRIORITIES



## POLICY COHERENCE FOR EMPLOYMENT

15. Austerity measures pushed for by the Troika in several European countries have resulted in sluggish demand, increased inequality and violations of labour rights. Developing countries remain marked by high-levels of informality and a development model that has failed to bring inclusive growth and decent jobs. In this context, the ILO will have to enhance its advocacy in providing alternative views to mainstream economics on how to promote an income-led and inclusive growth with decent jobs at its core.
16. As part of the evaluation of the Social Justice Declaration the Workers' group will push for a better implementation of the provisions related to policy coherence, notably how international and regional organisations can contribute to implement the Decent Work Agenda and how the ILO could better

evaluate the employment effects of trade and financial market policy<sup>4</sup>.

17. A priority will be the implementation of the 2014 Conference conclusions on the recurrent discussion on employment. The group will expect the Office to promote the implementation at national level and international fora of the comprehensive policy framework for full, decent, productive and freely chosen employment. Priorities will include:

- the design of macro-economic policies that stimulate aggregate demand and reduce inequality;
- work on industrial policies, industrial development and structural transformation;
- the strengthening of constituents' capacities to evaluate the impact of industrial and sectoral policies on employment and structural transformation;
- undertaking employment impact assessments of trade and investment policies and agreements; analysing the impacts of such agreements on public policies (including the impacts of investor to state dispute settlement provisions) and building capacities of trade unions on these issues;
- the setting up of a voluntary peer review mechanism on employment policy;
- the establishment of inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms on employment policy;
- research on inequality, job insecurity and contractual arrangements.

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4 See Social Justice Declaration, Section II (methods of implementation), point C

18. The Workers' group will also seek to enhance ILO work on cooperatives and the social economy. Cooperatives have a proved record in the realization of decent work as they are concerned with the democratic participation and social values in addition to economic efficiency. Cooperatives also play a key role in formalizing the informal economy. Efforts will therefore be made to have the ILO allocating more resources to this area as part of its work to promote sustainable enterprises.

## **YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

19. For many years the ILO main focus of work regarding youth has been on skills and entrepreneurship. The 2012 Conference discussion showed that these policies have had a limited impact in addressing youth unemployment and in improving the working conditions of young people. The Workers' group will therefore seek to ensure that strategies aimed at reducing youth unemployment are integrated in those aimed at reducing overall levels of unemployment building on the 5-pillar strategy agreed in 2012 with a focus on macro-economic policies that create decent jobs, labour market policies and promotion of young people rights.

## **FORMALIZATION OF THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

20. In 2015 the Workers' group will seek to achieve a Recommendation on transitioning from the informal to the formal economy that is rights-based and provides a comprehensive and practical agenda to

formalization covering the economic, social and legal issues that affect the informal economy.

## **JUST TRANSITION AND GREEN JOBS**

21. To address the challenge of climate change, the Workers' group will push for greater ILO advocacy on the promotion of green jobs including the need for green jobs to be decent jobs, industrial development and transformation. It will further lobby for a new instrument on just transition and decent work in order to ensure a socially-fair shift towards environmental sustainability for workers.

## **SOCIAL DIALOGUE, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND TRIPARTISM**

22. The Workers' group will continue to advocate for the strengthening of social dialogue mechanisms as a key strategy to enhance the social and economic situation of workers. The group, with the assistance of ACTRAV, will also seek to enhance the value of tripartism in ILO work, being at Headquarters or in the field with a view to trade unions being seen as key partners by the Office and other constituents. Collective bargaining is a powerful tool to re-distribute wealth and the ILO should be actively promoting it in line with the relevant international labour standards. The Workers' group will therefore seek to have the ILO enhancing its advocacy at country level on the value of centralized, coordinated and sectoral bargaining to address income inequality and extend coverage. Evidence-based research on trends and impacts of the application and extension of collective agreements to workers in precarious forms of employment should be publicized and

used at national level for policy advice. Collective bargaining should also be seen as an important tool to address challenges related to new forms of work and migration flows. Priorities of the group will also include the continued improvement of the ILO knowledge base on trends and innovation in relation to this core right. The group will also push for ILO advocacy and interaction with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to promote the value of centralized and coordinated system of collective agreements to fight against income inequality.

## **POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

23. The Workers' group will continue to lobby for the inclusion of full and productive employment, decent work and universal social protection in the UN Sustainability Goals. Goal 8 on full and productive employment and Goal 10 on reduction of inequality will have to be measured against targets and indicators that address the four pillars of Decent Work, including Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining. The Office statistical capacity will have to be enhanced in that regard. The group with the assistance of ACTRAV will promote a key role for the ILO in the implementation of the sustainable development goals together with the full involvement of the social partners including through the development of national action plans.

## **GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS**

24. The tragedy of Rana Plaza has shown the limitations of corporate social responsibility and the

urgent need to regulate global supply chains through more stringent rules in order to ensure that workers benefit from decent working conditions and wages throughout the chain. Priorities for the group in light of the 2016 Conference discussion on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains include:

- the recognition of decent work deficits in supply chains including export processing zones and an acceptance of the need for MNEs to recognize freedom of association and collective bargaining rights;
- the purging of supply chains of forced and informal work;
- policies for the promotion of a minimum living wage and wage fixing mechanism;
- the provision of secure employment relationships across supply chains;
- the expansion of collective and global sectoral agreements within and across borders;
- transparency of MNE's supply chains;
- a commitment from Governments to develop legislation to hold MNE's responsible for rights and safety in their supply chains;
- an exposure of the failure of the dominant model of trade and investment;
- a revision/update of the ILO tripartite MNE Declaration to reflect its application throughout the supply chain, the notion of due diligence and a revised follow up mechanism;
- a possible new instrument regulating global supply chains and secure employment relationships.

## INCOME SECURITY

25. The extension of social security to all in its vertical and horizontal dimensions remains a priority. The Workers' group will support efforts to promote the implementation of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation together with the ratification of Convention 102 as tools to promote economic and social development, lift people out of poverty and formalize the informal economy. With the assistance of ACTRAV and in coordination with the Secretariat of the Workers' group assistance will be provided to selected unions to help them engage in national debates on the implementation of social protection floors as defined by Recommendation 202.
26. The declining wage share remains a concern for the Workers' group. ILO work on wages including through the promotion of wage policies, minimum wages, extended collective bargaining coverage and strategies to address the gender pay gap will therefore be a priority.

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION

27. The vast majority of people migrate in search of better work and income opportunities. Migration has moved up the international agenda and the ILO has reaffirmed its role in its international governance. The Workers' group will press the ILO to play a strong role in national, regional and international migration debates. The group will continue to push for the promotion of a gender

sensitive and rights' based approach to migration with four major priorities:

- ratification of the migration Conventions (C97 and C143);
- development of guidelines on recruitment;
- promotion of bilateral and regional agreements on migration protecting migrant workers;
- development of strategies to address the abuses suffered by migrant workers – especially temporary ones.

In addition, efforts will also be made to mainstream migration in relevant debates including global supply chains and country situations.

## PRECARIOUS WORK

28. A key concern for the labour movement is the increase of precarious forms of employment notably involuntary temporary and part-time employment, temporary agency work and other contractual arrangements involving multiple parties, and ambiguous employment relationships. A priority of the Workers' group will be to give effect to the conclusions of the Meeting of Experts on non-standard forms of employment (February 2015) including:

- Ratification and implementation of standards of relevance for workers in non-standard forms of employment and production of a guide

- Holding of expert meetings with the purpose of identifying gaps in coverage in relation to temporary and fixed-term contracts, and discrimination based on employment status;
- Addressing barriers in law and in practice to allow workers in non-standard forms of employment to exercise their freedom of association and collective bargaining rights including negotiation with the relevant employer;
- Research and information on innovative approaches to collective bargaining and labour inspection to protect workers in non-standard forms of employment;
- Extension of social security to workers in non-standard forms of employment;
- Documentation by the Office of trends and effects of non-standard forms of employment on workers and regulatory practices.

## GENDER EQUALITY

29. Decent work remains a distant dream for millions of women who continue to be segregated in low-quality and undervalued jobs and are over-represented in informal and precarious forms of work, and in unpaid care. The promotion of gender equality is therefore an important priority for the Workers' group. The group will continue to advocate for the development of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation on violence against women and men in the world of work. The group will also engage pro-actively in the women's at work initiative and the envisaged tripartite forum on gender equality in order to identify obstacles to equality and innovative strategies to address them as well as

tackling the structural barriers to women's effective labour participation. Gender issues will also have to be at the core of the future of work initiative. The Workers' group will also seek to enhance ILO research work on the care economy which through adequate investment and the right set of policies can enable women's effective access to the labour market and decent work.

## OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

30. Building on the 2010-2016 plan of action adopted by the Governing Body and with the assistance of ACTRAV, efforts will be made to promote the ratification and implementation of Convention 155, its 2002 Protocol and Convention 187 in selected countries. The promotion of safe and healthy working conditions in global supply chains will also be a priority together with the recognition of the key role trade unions play in prevention and organising around safe and healthy working conditions.

## ILO AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

31. With the adoption of the enterprise initiative, which sets out the conditions for ILO engagement with enterprises, as well as the growing interest of enterprises in the ILO and the development of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), the group will need to ensure that the conditions for engagement with private entities are respected in terms of respect for labour standards and that programmes that are developed are aimed at promoting decent work in these enterprises and their supply chains. The screening of enterprises will be of crucial importance. With more and more ILO projects and initiatives

focusing on the promotion of decent work in enterprises, the group needs to ensure that improving working conditions and wages, safety and health, the promotion of freedom of association and collective bargaining and the building of mature industrial relations become central elements of these projects instead of the current and limited focus on productivity improvements and workplace cooperation.

## CENTENARY INITIATIVES

32. The group states its commitment to fully contribute to the seven centenary initiatives put in place in 2013.
33. The world of work is undergoing profound changes due to new models of production, new technologies (e-commerce, 3D printing, artificial intelligence), demographic changes, migration flows, climate change and financialization to mention but a few factors. The group therefore supports the future of work initiative and is fully committed to engage in a reflection on the trends that impact the world of work and the challenges and opportunities they represent for the ILO mandate to promote social justice. Examples of possible issues to consider include: how to revert the expansion of precarious employment, policy coherence for social justice, how to address gender equality and other forms of discrimination, financialization and corporate grip of the economy, taxation and how to realize decent work.

# ACTRAV

34. The Workers' group reiterates the importance of ACTRAV in the ILO structure in promoting throughout the house the priorities identified by the Workers' group. ACTRAV, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Workers' group, should ensure that Governing Body and Conference decisions are followed-up and that labour concerns are properly included in all ILO work. This calls for engagement of ACTRAV with ILO technical departments. ACTRAV - in consultation with the Workers' group Secretariat - should also produce analysis, research and guidance on relevant technical issues to assist the Workers' group in determining its position.
35. The Workers' group will also ensure that the role of ACTRAV in supporting trade unions at national and regional levels is strengthened.
36. The Workers' group stresses the importance of the Turin Centre in realizing the objectives of the ILO. The group reasserts the value of ACTRAV Turin in providing workers with capacity building related to the Decent Work Agenda and in the challenges confronting the labour movement.

# EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP



37. This set of priorities and progress made in their achievement will be reviewed and followed-up as needed.

**31 March 2015**

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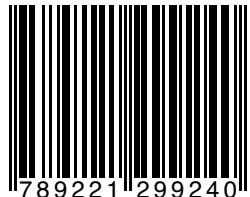
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