

COUNTRY BASELINE UNDER THE ILO DECLARATION ANNUAL REVIEW

Singapore - 2021

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

REPORTING

Fulfilment of Government's reporting obligations

87-98 Fulfilment of Government's reporting obligations

Yes

Involvement of Employers' and Workers' organizations in the reporting process

91. When preparing its report, did the Government consult? [10.1]

a) The most representative employers organizations, b) The most representative workers organizations, c) The competent authorities?

94. Please describe the consultation process(es). [10.2]

The organisations were consulted during the drafting of this response.

OBSERVATIONS BY THE SOCIAL PARTNERS

Employers' organizations

95. Did employers organizations comment on the report? [11a]

Yes

Workers' organizations

96. Did workers organizations comment on the report? [11b]

Yes

EFFORTS AND PROGRESS MADE IN REALIZING THE PRINCIPLE AND RIGHT

Ratification

87-98 Ratification status

C 87: not ratified
C 98: ratified

Ratification intention

6. What are the prospects for ratification of Convention No. 87?

Unlikely

8. What, if any, are the impediments to the ratification of Convention No. 87?

C87 provides for both workers and employers to “join organisations of their own choosing without previous authorisation”. Singapore has not ratified C87 as our current regulatory framework requires formal registration of trade unions, with rules on union administration and leadership. These regulations are put in place in the interest of workers, and prevent the system from being misused to work against workers. For example, they provide for the prohibition of “yellow unions” (i.e. worker unions dominated or influenced by employers), and the prohibition of unions formed by someone who had been previously convicted of criminal breach of trust related to union funds.

Exercise of the principle and right

Efforts to promote freedom of association

Workers have freedom to join and establish unions. Singapore also ensures that workers and employers have the right to establish and join organisations of their own choosing. All workers in Singapore, including migrant workers, have the right to join and be represented

by a union regardless of nationality. The law does not prohibit formation of trade unions by non-citizens. These are enshrined in various pieces of our legislation, such as the Industrial Relations Act and Trade Unions Act. Deregistration of trade unions has only been used unilaterally twice in the past 50 years – once when a union acted against the interest of its members (took industrial action without members’ consent), and once when a union became defunct (sunset industry).

Involvement of the social partners

12.1. Please specify and indicate the involvement of social partners.

Tripartism, which refers to the collaboration among unions, employers and government, has been the cornerstone of Singapore’s economic success and key towards labour protection. The Ministry of Manpower (i.e. government) works closely with the National Trades Union Congress (i.e. unions) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (i.e. employers) on a range of labour issues, including industrial relations. The freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining is advocated for by NTUC, and recognised by all tripartite partners. The Industrial Relations Act (IRA) was also reviewed to allow rank-and-file unions to represent managers and executives collectively.