



Governing Body

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GB.317/INS/13/7

Institutional Section

INS

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THIRTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Reports of the Officers of the Governing Body

Seventh report: Developments in relation to the International Organization for Standardization, including in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH)

1. Very recent developments with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) have direct implications for past Governing Body decisions¹ and future directions that the ILO may take with the ISO, including in the field of occupational safety and health management systems (OSH-MS).² At this session, the Governing Body discussed an Office strategy emphasizing, among other priorities in the Office reform, work on enterprises and OSH in the context of the prevention of occupational diseases.³
2. On 12 March 2013, the ISO formally requested its members to vote on a proposal to commence standardization in the field of OSH-MS despite the Governing Body's request in 2007, communicated through the ILO Director-General, to refrain from developing an international standard on OSH-MS. With the proposal, the ISO transmitted information about the ILO's position in 2007, and, however, affirmed that only ISO members could decide whether the ISO should pursue a new field of activity. The voting period is in effect until 11 June 2013.

¹ GB.316/INS/15/7(Rev.), para. 3; GB.310/PV, para. 262; GB.309/PV, para. 363; GB.298/15/5, para. 23.

² The ILO has published *Guidelines on occupational safety and health management systems (ILO-OSH 2001)*, which offers non-binding guidance on how to implement relevant international labour standards on OSH at national and organizational levels. Work in progress in the Office builds on these guidelines for enterprise-specific applications.

³ GB.317/POL/3.

3. At its 316th Session, the Governing Body reiterated the need for a clear and shared understanding of respective competencies for cooperation as expressed at its 310th Session. In relation to concerns at the ISO's new action on human resource management despite the ILO's previous objections, the Governing Body requested the Director-General to respond to any ISO request for cooperation in the matter by underlining such a need.⁴ As a follow-up, a high-level discussion took place between the International Labour Office and the ISO secretariat on 18 March 2013 to advance a common understanding between the two organizations.
4. The timely achievement of a common understanding for cooperation based on respective competencies could offer a framework for piloting cooperation between the ILO and the ISO in specific fields, including OSH-MS, if approved by the Governing Body. As in the past, in specific fields of collaboration, it is envisioned that the ILO and the ISO would necessarily agree to the harmonization of ISO standards with existing ILO standards or guidelines where the two deal with the same substantive issues, and to a means for effective ILO presence to work within the relevant ISO committee/body. That work would be carried out by the Office in consultation with constituents on the proposed ISO standard and in particular concerning ILO standards and related action.
5. In light of the above if during the ISO voting period, the ILO and the ISO reach an understanding for cooperation on the basis of these essential elements, it could be possible that the ISO voting members, or the ISO Technical Management Board reviewing the voting outcome, would make the use of the ILO-ISO understanding as a precondition for the ISO to proceed with action on OSH-MS.
6. ***Accordingly, the Officers of the Governing Body recommend that the Governing Body:***
 - (a) ***decide that, if the ILO and the ISO reach an understanding that contains the necessary elements indicated in paragraph 4 above before its 318th Session (June 2013), such an understanding may be concluded on a pilot basis, subject to communication of the agreement to the Governing Body for information at its next session and to review its implementation at the 320th Session (March 2014); and***
 - (b) ***authorize the Office, if the understanding is concluded, to use it for specific collaboration between the ILO and the ISO in the field of OSH-MS, subject to submission of any development on the matter for information to its 319th Session (October 2013).***

⁴ GB.316/INS/15/7(Rev.), para. 3; GB.310/PV, para. 262.