



SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Date and agenda of the International Labour Conference**(a) Agenda of the 96th Session (2007) of the International Labour Conference***Contents*

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Introduction

Background

1. At its 292nd Session (March 2005), the Governing Body examined the question of the date, place and agenda of the 96th Session (2007) of the International Labour Conference. It was informed that, given the need to secure cost efficiencies through careful planning, consultations were still needed for the scheduling of that session of the Conference. It would probably take place from 5 to 21 June 2007, but a definite proposal would be submitted to the Governing Body for decision in due time.¹
2. The Governing Body decided that the 96th Session (2007) would be held in Geneva. Concerning the agenda, it considered that consultations should continue, in particular, on finalizing a proposal as regards the missions of the ILO in the current context of economic globalization. Accordingly, it decided to defer its final decision on the agenda of the 2007 session to November 2005.
3. The agenda for the 96th Session (2007) of the Conference will include the following standing items:
 - reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General, including the Global Report on discrimination in employment and occupation under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; and
 - information and reports on the application of Conventions and Recommendations.
4. According to established practice, the Conference examines, as a rule, three technical items during a session. The five proposals submitted in March 2005 are being submitted again. They have been updated where necessary. They are as follows:
 - (a) child labour and protection of young workers (general discussion based on an integrated approach);
 - (b) promotion of sustainable enterprises (general discussion);
 - (c) skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development (general discussion);
 - (d) employment and social protection in the new demographic context (general discussion based on an integrated approach); the proposal was updated inter alia to take account of the discussions at the European Regional Meeting in Budapest;
 - (e) gender equality in the world of work: successful practices in meeting the challenges of promoting equal opportunity in employment (general discussion based on an integrated approach). The previous text had been worded in the light of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). It therefore needed to be updated. A discussion that is more focused on effective approaches in the area concerned, with the aim of setting out orientations for future ILO action, is now being proposed.

¹ GB.292/2 and GB.292/2(Add.).

5. In addition, the additional proposal announced in March has been finalized following consultations and is discussed in an addendum to this document. It concerns “strengthening the ILO’s capacity to assist its Members’ efforts towards its objectives in the context of globalization”.

Work in the fishing sector

6. It will also be recalled that at its 93rd Session (June 2005), the International Labour Conference had a second discussion on the item entitled “Work in the fishing sector”. The Convention concerning work in the fishing sector failed to be adopted for lack of quorum, while the Recommendation supplementing the Convention was adopted. Following the result of the vote, the Conference adopted the following motion “The International Labour Conference requests the Governing Body to place on the agenda of the 96th Session of the Conference in 2007 an item concerning work in the fishing sector based on the report of the Committee on the Fishing Sector of the 93rd Session”. The Legal Adviser in providing an opinion to the Conference noted that the motion referred to the report of the Committee on the Fishing Sector that had proposed both a Convention and a Recommendation.² He concluded that when the matter was being reviewed, it would be necessary to review the Recommendation and probably to adopt a new Recommendation that would replace the Recommendation adopted.

7. In light of the above the Governing Body is:

- (a) *requested to include on the agenda of the 96th Session (2007) of the International Labour Conference with a view to the adoption of a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation, an item concerning work in the fishing sector. The Conference should use as a basis for its discussion the report of the Committee on the Fishing Sector of the 93rd Session as well as the outcome of further tripartite consultations;*
- (b) *invited to complete the agenda of the 96th Session (2007) of the International Labour Conference by selecting two of the following six proposals presented below:*
- (i) *strengthening the ILO’s capacity to assist its Members’ efforts towards its objectives in the context of globalization;*³
- (ii) *child labour and protection of young workers (general discussion based on an integrated approach);*
- (iii) *promotion of sustainable enterprises (general discussion);*
- (iv) *skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development (general discussion);*
- (v) *employment and social protection in the new demographic context (general discussion based on an integrated approach);*

² See *Provisional Record* Nos. 19, 19A and 19B, ILC, 93rd Session, Geneva, 2005.

³ See the proposal in GB.294/2/1(Add.).

- (vi) *gender equality in the world of work: successful practices in meeting the challenges of promoting equal opportunity in employment (general discussion based on an integrated approach).*

Proposals for the agenda of the 96th Session (2007) of the Conference

Fundamental principles and rights at work

1. **Child labour and protection of young workers** (General discussion based on an integrated approach)

Summary

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), together with the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), constitute a firm standards base for action in this area including for the comprehensive and integrated action of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The experience over the past six years indicates that it would be timely for the International Labour Conference to give further consideration to the following issues in the context of a general discussion based on an integrated approach. The promotion of the ratification of the two fundamental Conventions has clearly been successful, and there is now a need to increase focus on how these instruments can be effectively implemented. Such a discussion could boost wider awareness and offer a new impetus to ILO action, including technical assistance, to that effect. For instance, a sustained assistance for the national determination of hazardous work anchored on proper tripartite consultation is urgently needed. As regards the follow-up to the conclusions of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, this discussion could offer an opportunity to accelerate the process of streamlining standards on night work for children and medical examination and to consider the need for further international guidance in this area. Finally, the present discussion could be a useful complement to the 2005 ILC discussion on youth employment from the viewpoint of the decent work deficit of youth in the age group 15-18.

The background – Commitment to eliminate child labour

8. The elimination of child labour has been one of the operational objectives for the ILO, and is also one of the four fundamental principles under the 1998 Declaration covered by the two up-to-date fundamental Conventions (the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)), accompanied by their supplementary Recommendations.
9. As widely recognized, child labour is not a subject that can be dealt with only by achieving legislative conformity with international standards and law enforcement. It also demands comprehensive and integrated measures to address its root causes. That is why the ILO, through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), takes an integrated approach combining standards, awareness raising, policy advocacy, knowledge enhancement and direct support to countries in removing children from work and providing alternatives. This approach is well exemplified in the time-bound programme approach with its focus on investigation and analysis of the specific forms of child labour targeted, policy development and integration of child labour into major development policies and programmes in the area of education and poverty alleviation, direct action targeted at the children and their families, disseminating information, and continuous awareness raising at all levels. Eliminating child labour thus requires wide-ranging alliances at the country level but also within the ILO between the units that have the relevant experience for such an integrated approach.

Hazardous work

- 10.** With an estimated 170 million children involved in hazardous work this is one of the crucial areas for intervention, both by national actors and the Office. Convention No. 182 forged a global consensus that hazardous work by all girls and boys under 18 years of age must be tackled urgently as one of the worst forms of child labour. This was not a new requirement but a confirmation of the minimum age of 18 for hazardous work under Convention No. 138. While both Conventions leave to national decisions the determination as to what kind of work is hazardous, both of them unequivocally require tripartite consultation before such national determination of hazardous work. In this respect, because issues are complex, a strong demand comes from constituents for the ILO's technical assistance in applying the two Conventions and there is an opportunity to enhance the prominent role of social partners in national action against child labour.⁴

Follow-up to the conclusions of the Working Party
on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards

- 11.** In its efforts to protect children and young workers, the ILO has also adopted standards with a specific focus on night work and on medical examination of children and young workers. As a result of the work of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, the Governing Body decided that standards on night work of children and young persons (Conventions Nos. 6, 79 and 90, and Recommendations Nos. 14 and 80) should be revised. Concerning the instruments on medical examination (Conventions Nos. 77, 78 and 124 and Recommendations Nos. 79 and 125), the decision included an invitation to contemplate ratifying the Conventions or to give effect to the Recommendations, as well as a request for information on the obstacles preventing ratification or implementation and their possible need for revision, including their consolidation. According to Recommendation No. 190, Paragraph 3, "work during the night" is among the elements to be considered in the determination of hazardous work. In the spirit of streamlining standards, such revision and information should be considered in direct relation to the objective of the effective abolition of child labour. Any need for further international guidance – whether in the form of future standard setting or more informal codes of practice or guidelines – should be identified taking into account all the means of action in the area concerned.
- 12.** Another element of streamlining of standards relates to a number of earlier sectoral Conventions on minimum age that have already been revised by Convention No. 138.⁵ Because of the flexibility built into Convention No. 138 (detailed conditions for the ipso jure denunciation of earlier Conventions), ratification of Convention No. 138 does not always automatically result in denunciations of all the revised Conventions ratified by the same country.⁶ This situation confuses the level of the national commitment, and slows down the streamlining of standards. The required remedy appears to be more tailor-made assistance to member States in order to move remaining obligations towards those under Convention No. 138 and have the older Conventions denounced. This discussion would

⁴ A tripartite subregional technical workshop on this subject took place in Phuket, Thailand, in July 2005.

⁵ See Article 10 of Convention No. 138.

⁶ For example, a State that ratified Convention No. 59 (which sets the minimum age of 15 years in industry) and subsequently ratified Convention No. 138 declaring a general minimum age of 14 years continues to be bound by Convention No. 59 unless it declares the minimum age in industry to be 15 years in Convention No. 138.

increase awareness and would help in identifying the type of assistance needed by different countries in this respect.

Deficit of decent work for youth

13. Furthermore, because of the overlapping concepts of “child” (under 18), and “youth”, which usually covers those whose age ranges from about 15 to 24 years, hazardous work and other worst forms of child labour in the case of adolescents above the general minimum age could be regarded from the viewpoint of the deficit of decent work for youth, for the age group 15-18. The proposed discussion could in a timely way complement the discussion on youth employment that took place at the 2005 Conference.

Conclusion

14. Against this background, the Governing Body might wish to consider an item for a general discussion based on an integrated approach on child labour and the protection of young workers at the 96th Session (2007) of the International Labour Conference. A Conference discussion could help boost awareness, and offer a new impetus to action beyond the ratification of the fundamental Conventions and assistance to the constituents in effectively implementing them. It would also seek to streamline the standards, according to the conclusions of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, and help in identifying any need for further international guidance especially on hazardous work. Finally, such a discussion could complement the 2005 ILC discussion on youth employment.

Employment

2. *Promotion of sustainable enterprises* (General discussion)

Summary

The current international debate shows growing recognition of the central role of the private sector, in all its forms, in addressing key development challenges including employment creation. The proposed discussion item will take stock of these developments and experiences from an ILO decent work perspective, with particular emphasis on how to strengthen the contribution of enterprises to productive and equitable economic and employment growth.

Background

15. Enterprises create and sustain the bulk of employment. With a global trend towards public sector downsizing, this trend is likely to continue and even be strengthened, thus further emphasizing the role of the private sector in employment creation.
16. Decent work can only be created and perpetuated for entrepreneurs and workers alike, if enterprises operate on a sustainable economic, environmental and social basis. Thus, to meet the challenges of unemployment and underemployment, particularly in countries with a high incidence of poverty, the sustainability and growth of enterprises and the employment they create is of central concern.
17. The sustainability of enterprises and hence sustainable employment is happening in the context of increasingly globalized production-distribution systems. Even domestic enterprises, including small enterprises, are becoming part of value-chains that often cross

national borders. They are increasingly subject to international competition and are very much affected by the restructuring of global production systems.

18. The international debate on development strategies reflects the increasing recognition of the crucial role of the private sector in all its various forms:

- The UNDP Commission on the Private Sector and Development (2004) produced a report called: “Unleashing entrepreneurship: Making business work for the poor”. Follow-up to the report has emphasized the business potential for large business of the “bottom of the pyramid”, i.e. making improved services for the poor into viable business opportunities.
- The Global Compact has now attracted over 2,000 enterprises to an agenda on promoting core human and labour rights, and environmental sustainability.
- Work by the World Bank such as the PRSP process and the global comparative study on “Doing business” increasingly focus on the role of the private sector and strategies for overcoming constraints to private sector growth.
- The private sector is seen as a key stakeholder in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), while the OECD recognizes fostering entrepreneurship and firm creation as a key driver of growth in a global economy. Similar strategies underpin the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development.
- Many bilateral donors (SIDA, CIDA, DFID) are following similar approaches with a search for strategies to “make markets work for the poor” and mobilizing the private sector in efforts to reach the MDGs.
- The World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004) identified the importance of local economic development and enterprise for a fair globalization.
- The Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189), and the Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), emphasize the link between appropriate policies and programmes for the promotion of small, medium and cooperative enterprises and quality employment creation.
- The 2002 ILC discussion on the informal economy addressed policies for upgrading informal economy units to become part of the mainstream economy and make a more effective contribution to socio-economic development.
- Entrepreneurship has a prominent place in the ILO’s Global Employment Agenda, whose fifth core element is on promoting decent employment through entrepreneurship.

19. In all the above, the central challenge is how to strengthen the contribution of enterprises to productive and equitable economic and employment growth.

Some issues for discussion

20. In an ILO context, enterprises can be seen as the place where employers and workers have the potential to realize decent work. A number of key questions could explore the circumstances most favourable to this undertaking:

- What are the most important framework conditions for effective and sustainable large-scale decent work creation by enterprises?

- How can the regulatory burden on business, and thus job creation, be lowered in ways which do not compromise respect for workers' rights?
- How can policy and regulatory compliance be enhanced while contributing to enterprise competitiveness, growth and sustainability?
- Which credit and financial services can most effectively support enterprise start-up, growth and quality job creation?
- How can management effectiveness, productivity and competitiveness be raised through improved labour standards? How can international labour standards best be harnessed as a productive factor?
- What can be done to reduce the special constraints which often reduce the ability of women entrepreneurs to create and sustain decent jobs?
- What are the policies, programmes, skills and competencies needed for continuous productivity improvement at the levels of enterprises, sectors and nationally? Moreover, how can the benefits and gains from productivity be distributed fairly and contribute most effectively to decent work creation?
- What measure can be taken to ensure that restructuring of enterprises and sectors under pressure from increased global competition is carried out in a manner which minimizes the economic and social dislocation?
- How can social dialogue at national, sectoral and enterprise level best support such a process? What can be done to enhance the participation of employers and workers, particularly in the small-scale sector, in this process?
- How can the ILO become a more effective proponent for ILO values in the global debate on "unleashing the employment potential of the private sector" which often calls for relatively one-dimensional measures of deregulation as a means to reduce the regulatory burden on enterprises?
- What are the most effective strategies for promoting entrepreneurship and employability, including among special groups such as youth and migrants?
- In all the above, what are the important roles of the social partners?

Intended outcomes

21. The intended outcome of the ILC general discussion would be:

- A stocktaking of the international debate on the role of the private sector and sustainable enterprise in overall social and economic development, and assess the relevance and implications of this trend for the implementation of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.
- An ILO contribution, centred on the Decent Work Agenda, to the global debate, currently led by the World Bank Group, OECD and others, on the role of the private sector in overall social and economic development.
- Recommendations for ILO work to enhance coherent policies and strategies that promote decent work through sustainable enterprise development.

3. **Skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development** (General discussion)

Summary

Skills development has a critical role to play in improving productivity and promoting employment growth and development. Many countries have made considerable investments in education and training, but these investments have not always yielded the benefits intended. The countries that have been successful were those that linked carefully targeted investments in skills development to investments in physical capital and industries. A significant feature of these countries' experience is that not only did they manage to achieve high economic and growth rates, but they managed to reduce poverty substantially at the same time. These issues were initially discussed in the 2000 general discussion on human resources training and development, and the 2003 and 2004 discussions leading up to the new Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195). This discussion would build upon this earlier work as well as the 2005 general discussion on youth employment. It could provide the opportunity for governments and the social partners to discuss the practical measures, including methodologies, strategies and tools to link skills development with other economic and social development policies to facilitate improvements in productivity, employment growth and development.

Background

22. In terms of the impact of skills development on productivity and employment, the objectives, *or rationale*, of education and training are set out in the Conclusions adopted by the ILC at its 88th Session (2000), as follows:

Education and training ... have a dual rationale: develop skills and knowledge that will help countries, enterprises and individuals utilize the new opportunities and enhance the employability, productivity and income-earning capacity of many population groups that have been adversely affected by globalization and changes in society at large. Education and training are necessary for economic and employment growth and social development. They also contribute to personal growth and provide the foundation of an informed citizenry. Education and training are a means to empower people, improve the quality and organization of work, enhance citizens' productivity, raise workers' incomes, improve enterprise competitiveness, promote job security and social equity and inclusion. Education and training are therefore a central pillar of decent work.⁷

23. The *Conclusions* set education and training in the broadest possible perspective. While it is clear that training cannot create jobs, it can assist individuals access and retain jobs, improve their mobility in the labour market, and raise their productivity, performance and earnings at work. It may also aim at non-economic outcomes: e.g. reducing criminal behaviour and drug use, a desired outcome of many youth training programmes. With this premise in mind, it is important to identify under *which conditions* the objectives can, and have been reached, using examples at the level of individuals/population groups, enterprises, and entire economies. The necessary conditions may include, for example: a favourable macroeconomic environment that ensures sustained economic and job growth; an environment and incentives that encourage enterprises and individuals to invest in education and training; and supportive science, technology, industrial, social and other policies.

Skills, employability and productivity

24. In considering the impact of skills on productivity and employability, it is important to look at the broad macroeconomic picture of countries, and major sectors within countries, which have invested massively in education and training, as an integral element of their

⁷ ILO: Conclusions concerning human resources training and development, International Labour Conference, 88th Session, Geneva, 2000.

economic and social development strategies, and reaped benefits in terms of exemplary employment, income and productivity growth. These are countries such as Ireland, Finland, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Mauritius. They have combined carefully targeted investments in education and skills with investments in physical capital and industries. Singapore, for example, by establishing strong linkages between education and training investments and trade and industry policies, was able to shape its national human resource policy to provide the necessary education and skills for each successive stage of development. The preliminary evidence shows a correlation between investment in education and training and productivity, employment and economic growth. A significant feature of these countries' experience is that they managed to achieve not only high economic and employment growth rates, but managed to reduce poverty significantly as broad sections of the population were provided with education, training and job opportunities. Poverty reduction was a significant side benefit of increases in employment and productivity. However, inferences about causality that investment in education and training *accounted for* this growth may be more difficult to make from this evidence.

25. Some insights may also be gained by examining, at sector level, the relationship between investing in education/training, and productivity and employment growth in that sector and related sectors. The ICT sector is perhaps the most obvious example. The cases of Costa Rica, Israel and Finland could be possible examples.
26. *Firstly*, the discussion could examine the effects of education and training on enterprises' productivity and performance. Most training in the world is done by enterprises to improve their productivity, performance and profitability, but in many enterprises also to enhance their workers' general employability, beyond the immediate needs of the enterprise. The ILO's work and, among other sources, the findings of the ILO publication on workplace learning,⁸ and its case studies in Africa and Asia on learning and training in SMEs could be useful background material. This work shows that learning and training, when *supported by* other enterprise policies and work practices, have contributed to improved individual and enterprise productivity and performance. To support this discussion, other information available could be drawn on, e.g. studies of effects of training on changing enterprise practice, including productivity, but also studies that measure productivity effects indirectly. These include case studies of job training, surveys of employers' training costs and statistical comparisons of matched plants and sectors.⁹
27. *Secondly*, the discussion could test the proposition that investment in marketable knowledge and skills improve *individuals'* labour market performance. This performance may be measured by means of various indicators such as: employment rates, stability of employment, etc. after training. It would be critical in the discussion to look at examples of how learning and training have increased earnings after training. Has training increased *decent* work, for example, by increasing job satisfaction? It would also be important to consider the contextual factors (type and quality of training, demand-driven training, buoyant labour markets, changes in work organization, etc.) that account for favourable outcomes, as there may be a number of programmes, particularly some labour market programmes that have had little effect on the labour market performance (and productivity) of participants. The discussion could also draw some lessons from their (relative) failure.

⁸ Ashton, D.N.; Sung, J. 2002. *Supporting workplace learning for high-performance working* (Geneva, ILO).

⁹ Grubb, W.N.; Ryan, P. 1999. *The roles of evaluation for vocational education and training: Plain talk in the field of dreams* (Geneva, ILO).

Conclusion

28. The proposal reflects the critical role skills development plays in improving productivity, and promoting employment growth and development. The *World Employment Report 2004-05* on employment, productivity and poverty reduction¹⁰ and the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195), emphasize the linkage between skills, productivity, employment growth and development. A general discussion would build upon the elements identified in the preceding sessions as well as the 2005 general discussion on youth employment. It could provide an opportunity for governments and the social partners to discuss the practical measures, including methodologies, strategies and tools that have been successfully applied.

Employment/social protection

4. ***Employment and social protection in the new demographic context*** (General discussion based on an integrated approach)

Summary

The demographic context of the twenty-first century is largely shaped by the ageing of the population. In many countries longer life expectancy has not been accompanied by longer working lives. Average effective retirement ages have dropped, posing a threat to the financial viability of public budgets and a risk of older people becoming socially excluded. Many older persons keen to work longer are discriminated against and forced to leave the labour market prematurely. While there is much debate about the impact of ageing on social security financing, this discussion obscures a key issue: a large number of women and men are unemployed, inactive or work in the informal economy, instead of being employed formally and contributing to pension systems. The promotion of decent work is the best way to ensure social protection for all and to allow older age groups the possibility of remaining active longer. This is crucial for developing countries where old-age poverty is an increasing concern and few older people can afford retirement. In these countries, it is essential to find ways of extending social security.

The ILO can play a key role in developing innovative strategies to meet these challenges and to facilitate the extension of working lives in productive and decent employment. It is proposed to hold a general discussion to develop an effective plan of action based on an integrated approach encompassing ILO instruments, research activities, technical cooperation and other means of action that together would contribute to promoting policies and strategies to ensure an active, decent and secure old age. While specifically addressing the objectives of employment and social protection, the proposal would contribute to achieving the four strategic objectives.

Contemporary trends

29. The world's population is growing older. Fertility rates are declining, and people live longer, not only in developed, but also in most developing countries. Between now and 2050, the number of people aged 60 and over should rise from about 600 million to 2 billion.¹¹

¹⁰ As explained in the report, the reason why the three issues were addressed together was "based on the simple observation that a substantial share of poor people in the world is already at work: it is not the absence of economic activity that is the source of their poverty, but the less productive nature of their activity" (Why a focus on productivity, p. 1).

¹¹ United Nations Population Division, *World Population Prospects, The 2002 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org>.

- 30.** Low-income countries are ageing faster than higher-income ones.¹² Over the next 50 years, the older population in these countries is expected to multiply by four¹³ and old-age dependency is expected to triple. The insufficiency or absence of social protection pushes older people into informal sector employment, and old-age poverty is a growing concern. At the same time, the effects of HIV/AIDS force older persons, notably women, to care for grandchildren. In these countries, it is crucial to promote productive and decent employment; more resources could then be devoted to social protection.
- 31.** In the industrialized world, longevity has not been accompanied by longer working lives. Older workers are exposed to discrimination and are often forced to withdraw early from the labour market or to move to low-quality jobs underutilizing their capacity. At the same time, countries are facing concerns about the financial viability of social protection systems. While there are sound reasons to increase activity rates, there are obvious constraints to reversing policies and practices. Employment promotion remains the overriding concern.

The ILO's response

- 32.** The ILO's response has mainly included research, advocacy and collaboration in international efforts and standard setting. Technical cooperation addressing older workers is practically non-existent.

Research and international collaboration

- 33.** Since the early 1990s, the ILO has been working on the employment situation of older workers. Training for older workers was discussed in the *World Labour Report* of 1995 and the *World Employment Reports* of 1998 and 2001. The ILO, together with the Governments of Germany and Japan, organized a High-level Conference on Social Dialogue and Ageing in the EU Accession Countries (Budapest, November 2002).
- 34.** The ILO was actively involved in the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, April 2002).¹⁴ The Assembly adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Political Declaration. The ILO also participated in the Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Berlin, September 2002)¹⁵ and continues to be actively involved in the follow-up of these conferences.¹⁶

¹² See table 2 "Velocity of ageing" in "An inclusive society for an ageing population: The employment and social protection challenge" paper contributed by the ILO to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 2002.

¹³ www.un.org/ageing/coverage/pr/socm3.htm; see also table 2 "Velocity of ageing", idem.

¹⁴ The ILO submitted the report "An inclusive society for an ageing population: Employment and social protection issues", GB.283/ESP/5 (Mar. 2002).

¹⁵ The Conference adopted the Regional Implementation Strategy for the MIPAA and the Berlin Ministerial Declaration: www.unece.org/ead/pau/age/conf2002frame.htm.

¹⁶ Expert Group Meeting on Modalities for Review and Appraisal of the MIPAA, Malta, November 2003; Expert Group Meeting on Indicators on Ageing, Madrid, April 2004.

- 35.** Ageing was on the agenda of the Seventh ILO European Regional Meeting (Budapest, February 2005). The report to this meeting includes a chapter devoted to ageing, labour market and pension reform.¹⁷

Labour standards and older workers

- 36.** The relevant Conventions on fundamental workers' rights apply to all workers irrespective of age. Older workers as a group with specific needs are identified in several Recommendations.¹⁸ The only instrument specifically relating to older workers is the Older Workers Recommendation, 1980 (No. 162). This instrument was examined by the Governing Body¹⁹ in November 2000 and it was decided to maintain the status quo.
- 37.** Regarding social security, the key instruments include Part V of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128) and Recommendation (No. 131). These instruments were examined in the light of consultations held at the general discussion on social security during the 89th Session (2001) of the International Labour Conference and were considered to be up to date. The Governing Body invited the Office to offer technical assistance with respect to these instruments including dissemination of information.²⁰
- 38.** The Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), has also been considered as up to date, while its accompanying Recommendation (No. 150) has been revised and replaced by the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195) adopted at the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference (June 2004).
- 39.** Regarding equality of opportunity, age is not listed among the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited in the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). About 35 countries have, however, included age among the prohibited grounds for discrimination in their legislation.

Proposed directions

- 40.** In terms of overarching policy, promoting employment is the best way to ensure that people have a secure pension when the time comes to leave employment. Attention should be given to identifying labour market policies for older workers including a gradual and flexible transition to retirement. Complementary measures such as those related to skills development within a lifelong learning framework are important. Measures to combat age discrimination and stereotypes with particular attention to older women are also crucial, and initiatives from employers are particularly important.
- 41.** Regarding social security, high-income countries face the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of social protection systems. The main challenge for low-income countries is

¹⁷ See report and conclusions of the Seventh European Regional Meeting (Budapest, 14-18 February 2005). GB.292/5, 292nd Session, Geneva, Mar. 2005.

¹⁸ The Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115); the Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169); the Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189); and the Safety and Health in Agriculture Recommendation, 2001 (No. 192), Paragraph 4.3.

¹⁹ In the context of the Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards, see GB.279/LILS/WP/PRS/4, p. 21, and GB.279/LILS/3.

²⁰ See GB.282/LILS/WP/PRS/3 and GB.283/LILS/5(Rev.).

to extend social security coverage to the most vulnerable groups, especially to those in the informal economy, and to secure the incomes of a growing number of vulnerable older women and men.²¹ Particular attention should be placed on women's access to social security. The challenges of demographic change are common to all countries, yet each will have different priorities and will find different strategies to address them, in view of strengthening the role of social security as a productive factor in promoting employment, stimulating structural change and fostering economic growth.²²

42. Examples from some countries have shown that basic income security for the older population is affordable also for low-income countries, and that the improved livelihoods of older people will equally benefit younger generations, especially in countries affected by HIV/AIDS.
43. Finally, providing an adequate working environment for older workers requires particular attention, including the elimination of conditions which are unsafe or unhealthy, or otherwise threaten their working capacity.
44. In order to assist constituents to prepare appropriate and effective strategies, it is therefore proposed to hold a general discussion which will focus on developing a comprehensive and integrated approach encompassing the actions and considerations outlined above.
45. In preparation for the discussion, the ILO plans to launch a survey covering all regions of the world in order to collect comprehensive and up-to-date information on the labour market situation of older workers, and on policies impeding or promoting their employment. This will provide a sound knowledge base for sharing best practices across countries.
46. A potential outcome of the Conference could be a plan of action encompassing advisory services and technical cooperation, research and analytical work with emphasis on advocating good examples, promotion of relevant ILO labour standards, as well as other means of action that would contribute to promoting policies to ensure a decent and secure old age. The Conference may wish to focus on how the Global Employment Agenda is addressing the employment issues.

Conclusion

47. Productive and decent employment is the most powerful lever to maintain and extend social protection. This requires complementary measures such as promoting the labour rights of older workers through, inter alia, combating age discrimination. Social dialogue plays a crucial role in the design and implementation of policies for older workers. All these measures are related to the ILO's four strategic objectives. For older people, the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda mean the opportunity to remain an active part of the economy and society in conditions of dignity, freedom, equality and security.
48. It would thus be timely for the Conference to address the aforementioned issues. Such a discussion could serve as a platform for future ILO activities.
 - As five years will have elapsed since the Second World Assembly on Ageing, it will provide an opportunity to discuss progress and future policy directions.

²¹ *World Labour Report 2000*, ILO, Geneva, Chapters 2 and 6.

²² See GB.294/ESP/4.

- This would also be in line with the resolution adopted by the General Assembly regarding follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing²³ which requests “the organizations and bodies of the UN system to: (i) incorporate ageing, as appropriate, into actions to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the UN Millennium Declaration, in particular the goal on the eradication of poverty; and to (ii) integrate ageing, including from a gender perspective, into their programmes of work”.

49. A discussion focused on an integrated approach would offer constituents a global view of the ILO’s expertise and means of intervention whilst at the same time facilitating the development of a coherent strategy.

Gender

5. ***Gender equality in the world of work: Successful practices in meeting the challenges of promoting equal opportunity in employment*** (General discussion based on an integrated approach)

Summary

An item on the agenda of the Conference in 2007 on gender equality in the world of work: successful practices in meeting the challenges of promoting equal opportunity in employment, would represent a significant opportunity to conduct a comprehensive up-to-date review of effective approaches taken by employers, workers and governments in promoting equal opportunity in employment and gender equality in the world of work and ILO action in light of changing labour markets and changing patterns in the world of work.

Against this background, the constituents could provide guidance on:

- initiatives they have taken in advancing equal opportunity in employment and gender equality in practice;
- integrating the ILO means of action to promote gender equality in the Decent Work Agenda;
- enhancing the Office and constituents’ efforts and impact on eliminating gender discrimination;
- action plan(s) to support constituents’ efforts to address equal opportunities in employment and gender equality in the world of work.

The review would be timely and relevant and enable the ILO to chart a strategic course for future work.

Introduction

50. During the 71st Session (1985) of the International Labour Conference, a general discussion examined the question of equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women in employment. This was the most recent comprehensive ILO review of progress on gender equality in the world of work and ILO action. At its 91st Session (2003), the ILC considered the Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work entitled: *Time for equality at work*.

51. Since 1985, tremendous changes have taken place in the global labour market with uneven progress in achieving gender equality. While there has been an increasing proportion of

²³ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [on the report of the Third Committee (A/58/498)], 58/134. Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 26 January 2004.

women in the labour force enabling many women to realize their potential in the labour market and to achieve economic independence, many challenges remain. These include higher rates of unemployment and poverty levels for women.²⁴

- 52.** Gender-based discrimination is inconsistent with fundamental principles and rights at work, human rights and social justice. It weakens economic growth and the optimal functioning of enterprises and labour markets. This has been repeatedly recognized by the international community (e.g. MDGs, Beijing+10 Declaration, Monterrey Consensus and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation). The ILO has an incontestable contribution to make in the attainment of internationally agreed commitments that have arisen from these meetings.
- 53.** Now is the time for the ILO to take stock of global developments in meeting the challenges of promoting equal opportunity in employment and gender equality in the world of work. This may lead to an updating of ILO policy and knowledge and help to determine priority areas for its work in promoting gender equality goals.

Background: Progress, challenges and gaps

- 54.** Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the United Nations has noted the progress that has been made in the status of the world's women over the last decade – improvement in girls' education, increased political participation, reforms to eliminate discriminatory laws and gains in the economic autonomy of women as a consequence of their increased participation in the labour market. The United Nations has also recognized that the promotion of women's economic autonomy and non-discrimination policies are necessary elements in the promotion of sustainable economic growth and sustainable development. However, the United Nations has also noted that significant obstacles impede the achievement of gender equality in employment. The Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 49th Session²⁵ which reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, amongst other things, calls on member States to eliminate discrimination against women in labour markets, employment practices and the workplace.
- 55.** Addressing gender issues in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is a key concern. The lack of adequate representation of women in decision-making positions in enterprises, and in political and labour institutions, hampers genuine progress in achieving gender equality in the world of work. Ensuring a balance between work and family responsibilities and between paid and unpaid work remains a critical challenge. Adequate maternity protection schemes are essential for preventing discrimination against women and actively promoting gender equality. Overcoming occupational segregation and gender income gaps are key to achieving pay equity. Assisting men and boys to play a positive role in changing gender relations is a new and crucial avenue for advancing gender equality.
- 56.** Figures derived from existing ILO statistics illustrate persistent gender disparities: more women as a proportion of the labour force are seeking work but unable to find it than men in almost all regions of the world, resulting in a global female unemployment rate of

²⁴ Of the world's 550 million working poor – or persons unable to lift themselves and their families above the US\$1 per day threshold – 330 million, or 60 per cent, are women. ILO: *Global employment trends for women*, 2004.

²⁵ UN Commission on the Status of Women, Declaration and Report of the 49th Session, February-March 2005.

6.4 per cent compared to 6.1 per cent for men in 2003.²⁶ Half the world's labour remains in gender-stereotyped occupations. Women continue to earn 20-30 per cent less than men. Nearly two-thirds of all part-time workers are female. Young women have great difficulty entering the labour market and retaining their jobs in periods of economic downturn. Women are much more likely to be underemployed or unemployed.²⁷

ILO action to date

57. In 1985, the International Labour Conference adopted a *Resolution on equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women in employment*. In 1991, the Conference adopted a *Resolution concerning ILO action for women workers*. In June 2004, the Conference adopted a *Resolution concerning the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection*, which recalls that non-discrimination and equal opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation are basic principles of social justice. These are means to an inclusive society, empowerment of women and economic growth for all.
58. The adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up has provided impetus, with inclusion of the principle of the elimination of discrimination. In particular, current efforts are being made to promote two key equality Conventions (the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)). The 2003 Global Report on discrimination, *Time for equality at work*, outlined progress and a plan of action.
59. The ILO strategic Programme and Budget for 2000-01 and the Strategic Policy Framework established gender as a cross-cutting concern in all activities. In March 2000, the Office's action plan on gender equality and mainstreaming was submitted to the Governing Body. A report was submitted to the Governing Body in March 2003 of the first Office-wide gender audit of programmes which assessed the extent to which institutional mechanisms have been established and are operational. In 2004 and 2005, gender audits were piloted with ILO constituents. The Programme and Budget for 2004-05 includes a specific operational objective on gender equality, and the Programme and Budget for 2006-07 has gender equality as a mainstreamed strategy. Finally, in March 2005, the Governing Body requested the Director-General to take certain steps to mainstream gender into technical cooperation projects and programmes, work with donors to ensure that agreements make provisions to guarantee and support gender mainstreaming and increase the capacity of constituents to implement gender equality in the world of work.
60. Through these actions the ILO has focused on promoting equality between men and women with increasing attention being given to mainstreaming gender concerns in ILO programmes, and building the capacity of the Office and the constituents to ensure that gender is integrated into activities.

Key elements of a Conference discussion

61. In light of the above, an item on the Conference agenda in 2007 would allow constituents to showcase and debate effective approaches they have taken to address equal opportunity in employment and gender equality in all stages of the employment relationship. This would include: access to vocational guidance, vocational training and placement services;

²⁶ *Global employment trends for women, 2004*.

²⁷ Women generally have higher unemployment rates than men. There are variations by region with women having significantly higher rates in all regions except in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where men's unemployment was higher than women's in 2003. ILO: *Global employment trends for women, 2004*.

recruitment and entry into the labour market; access to training; career advancement and promotion, retention; payment of wages; conditions of work; social security and retirement. The discussion of changing patterns in the world of work, work-life balance and work and family issues, support for women entrepreneurs and the changing role of men and women in the labour market could contribute to the further development of ILO gender policy and action plans.

62. The tripartite discussion at the Conference could provide the opportunity to highlight good workplace practices undertaken by employers, workers and governments demonstrating positive linkages between gender equality measures and productivity and efficiency. It could also provide insights on advocacy and awareness-raising work of the ILO and the implementation of technical cooperation in gender equality.
63. Good practices on the following themes could be prioritized for discussion to demonstrate what works well in the workplace and in key labour market institutions and what lessons there are for others:
 - (a) vocational training and skills development;
 - (b) youth employment;
 - (c) work and family and work-life balance.
64. Finally, the discussion could also give recognition to the pivotal role of gender equality for achieving the Decent Work Agenda and highlight integrated approaches and strategies to speed up the advancement of gender equality in practice.

Future ILO action

65. The discussion could underline where the Office could assist constituents in addressing these challenges. This assistance could be from an institutional perspective such as intensifying efforts to build the capacity of constituents on gender mainstreaming and/or from a technical perspective, such as improving access to vocational training, developing effective equal employment opportunity policies and so on. The agreement to produce a good practice guide could result from the discussion. A time-bound plan of action for the Organization with clear objectives, results, indicators and means of verification drawing on the follow-up to the 2004 ILC resolution could also be considered. The focus of support would be on assisting the constituents' efforts to address equal opportunities in employment and gender equality in the world of work.

Geneva, 26 September 2005.

Point for decision: Paragraph 7.