



FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy**(d) Impact and lessons learned from the three subregional tripartite symposia and possible follow-up action**

1. As requested by the Governing Body,¹ this paper outlines the impact and lessons learned from the three subregional tripartite symposia that the Office organized in 2005 to promote the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as well as possible follow-up actions.

Background

2. In March 2002, the Office held in Geneva a Tripartite Forum on promoting the MNE Declaration, which provided the tripartite partners with an opportunity to exchange practical experiences on how to apply and promote the principles of the MNE Declaration. One recommendation of the Forum was to promote the MNE Declaration at the subregional level “in order to ensure greater impact and to reach wider audiences”.² Subsequently, in November 2003, the Governing Body approved the organization of three tripartite symposia to promote the MNE Declaration at the subregional level, covering ASEAN, MERCOSUR and SADC countries.³
3. The Office organized the three symposia between January and April 2005. The purpose of these symposia was twofold: to promote the MNE Declaration; and to help identify issues that might be tackled through subsequent technical cooperation activities. The agendas for the meetings, lists of participants and background papers were prepared in consultation with the Officers of the Subcommittee, as well as ACTRAV, ACT/EMP, ICFTU and IOE.

¹ See GB.294/10, para. 57(c).

² See GB.285/MNE/2, para. 5.

³ See GB.288/205, para. 29.

The Office sent invitations to the tripartite constituents of the countries of each subregion as requested by ACTRAV, ACT/EMP and the relevant field offices. Observers from relevant regional and global organizations, as well as related UN agencies and development banks present in each subregion, were invited.

4. A final report has been published for each symposium containing a summary record of the meeting, the conclusions adopted, the list of participants, and the background paper.

Impact

5. The appendix to this paper summarizes the participation at these meetings. The Plan of Action for 2005-07 that the Governing Body adopted in March 2005⁴ set a target participation rate of 75 per cent. In ASEAN and MERCOSUR, participation rates were higher than the target (92 and 83 per cent, respectively). The lower participation rate in SADC (55 per cent) can be explained partly by the higher number of countries involved and some communication and organization challenges encountered in organizing the symposium. Thirty per cent of the participants in the three symposia were women.
6. The symposia provided participants with an opportunity to dialogue with their subregional counterparts on the effects of multinationals and FDI in their countries. The nature of the discussions and the recommendations arising confirmed the relevance of the MNE Declaration as an instrument to discuss the impacts of multinationals and FDI on employment and wider economic and social issues.
7. Each symposium helped identify issues that required further work at the national or subregional level. Examples of such issues that were commonly expressed include:
 - promoting the MNE Declaration at the national level;
 - strengthening the government capacity to enforce national laws;
 - ratifying ILO Conventions, in particular the eight core Conventions and the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142);
 - building the capacity of the social partners in each country;
 - harmonizing FDI policies with social policies in order to improve multinationals' contribution to employment creation at the national level;
 - harmonizing labour laws at the subregional level to minimize the risk of companies transferring from one country to another.
8. A request for follow-up activities on promoting the MNE Declaration at national level has been received by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training of Malawi. The Office has also received requests for technical assistance dealing with particular aspects of the MNE Declaration.

⁴ See GB.292/MNE/2(& Corr.).

Lessons learned

9. Based on the experiences in organizing these symposia and the results arising, the Office has identified the following main lessons:
- It might have been more effective to broaden the participation at these meetings to include a wider range of government agencies, ministries and social partners that are involved with investment, MNEs and development issues.
 - Regional and global meetings are useful for identifying common issues and sharing experiences. However, practical follow-up issues are more likely to be identified at the national level.
 - More attention and resources need to be devoted to the preparatory work so that such meetings can become effective platforms for identifying and initiating actions. The information provided assumed that participants already had substantial knowledge about the ILO, which was not always the case. For many participants in the SADC regional symposium this meeting was their first introduction to the ILO; therefore, more focus should have been given to explaining the ILO and its instruments, such as the MNE Declaration.
 - As the MNE Declaration is addressed not only to governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations, but also the MNEs,⁵ finding ways to involve workers and management of MNEs could enrich the discussion at such events.
 - The final reports were sent to the participants of the symposia only in October 2005. The Office could have been more efficient in preparing the final reports and sending them to the participants, as well as in maintaining contact with the relevant field offices concerning possible follow-up actions.
 - In some cases the tripartite delegations were not complete, which hampered the possibility of creating national action plans for the promotion of the MNE Declaration. Furthermore, in many cases, the participants did not have the authority to engage in the kind of discussion that would be required to create such action plans.

Possible follow-up

10. The symposia have assisted the Office to identify issues to be addressed at the national and subregional levels.⁶ In addition to responding to requests received from specific countries, the information gathered through these symposia can inform future programming. Possible follow-up activities in the countries of the three subregions could include:
- developing a training package on the MNE Declaration, in cooperation with the ILO International Training Centre and relevant ILO field offices, and organizing training in the countries that participated in the symposia;

⁵ Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, 1977 (revised 2001), para. 5.

⁶ See para. 7 supra.

- undertaking further in-depth research at the country level, building on the background papers that were prepared for the symposia. Further research should be linked to project development and/or project implementation;
 - designing technical cooperation projects in areas relevant to the MNE Declaration, in accordance with the priorities identified by the countries concerned.
- 11.** At the time of preparing this paper, the Office is involved in programming on country level priorities for the biennium 2006-07. This exercise will help to identify the countries in which the work of the Office will focus, as well as the availability of ILO field offices to be involved in follow-up activities. The information and experiences gathered through the symposia concerning specific countries will contribute to this planning.
- 12.** *The Subcommittee may wish to recommend to the Governing Body that it request the Office to include in its plan of work for 2006-07, within the framework of the approved Programme and Budget for 2006-07, activities to follow up the symposia, taking into account the priorities identified in paragraph 7 and the proposals formulated in paragraph 10 above.*

Geneva, 10 January 2006.

Point for decision: Paragraph 12.

Appendix

	SADC	ASEAN	MERCOSUR	Total
Place and date	Pretoria 25-26 January	Jakarta 11-12 April	Montevideo 25-26 April	N/A
Invitations				
Countries	14	8	4	26
Participants expected	42	24	12	78
Participants				
Governments	8	7	4	19
Employers	7	7	4	18
Workers	8	8	2	18
Total (participation rate)	23 (55%)	22 (92%)	10 (83%)	55 (70%)
Observers	12	10	9	31
Total (participants + observers)	35	32	19	86
Total female participants + observers (percentage of total)	10 (28%)	10 (31%)	6 (31%)	26 (30%)