



**FOR DEBATE AND GUIDANCE**

SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Follow-up to the Report of the Chairperson  
on the November 2005 session of the  
Working Party on an ILO forum**

**Issues arising from the November discussions**

1. This paper, which was prepared following several rounds of tripartite discussion and consultation with the Officers, follows up on the report by the Chairperson to the Governing Body on the November 2005 session of the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization with regard to a possible ILO forum. It will be recalled that the Chairperson closed the debate saying:

We had a lively discussion and heard a number of different points of view. As a conclusion to our discussions and subsequent consultations, I believe it is appropriate to invite the Director-General to prepare a detailed paper for the next session of the Working Party which will be held during the next session of the Governing Body in March 2006. Such a paper, according to what is proposed in paragraph 34 of the document GB.294/WP/SDG/1, will need to set out the modalities of the forum and should be prepared in full consultation with the Officers of the Governing Body, so that by March we can come up with a proposal that will reflect a broad consensus among all of us.<sup>1</sup>

2. In proposing this course of action, the Chairperson noted the growing acceptance of the ILO's central message – of making decent work a global goal and a national reality – among the international community at the highest political level. On the specific question of an ILO-hosted Globalization Policy Forum, the Workers' group and most Government members had expressed support while offering a number of specific comments on the form such an event might take and the importance of looking for practical outcomes. The Employers' group, while favouring high-level dialogues through the Working Party, had

<sup>1</sup> Para. 34 of GB.294/WP/SDG/1 reads as follows: "The preparatory work for the forum, including detailed design, agenda, participation and outreach activities, would be carried out by the Office in close consultation with the Officers of the Governing Body, and subject to regular reporting to the Working Party for its review and approval. The Director-General and the Officers would oversee and guide the process, in consultation with the constituents. They would ensure full tripartite involvement in the conception and design of this initiative."

not supported the proposal, citing concerns about cost, staff resources and governance, but had expressed readiness to carry on discussing the idea of a forum.

3. During the course of the consultations since the last meeting of the Working Party, a number of issues were discussed concerning the purpose, content, expected outcome and format of a forum. Concerning the purpose of such an event, it was agreed that it would be important not to restart a discussion of the merits or not of globalization. The World Commission had moved the debate on to the much more constructive issue of how to shape a fair globalization with decent work as the major preoccupation of people in all countries. A forum should support the ILO's work to this end. It was also agreed that it would not be appropriate for a forum to address issues within the specific decision-making authority of the ILO but rather the opportunity should be taken to bring information and views to the ILO that would add value to the Organization's knowledge base. The subjects for discussion should have a practical tenor and include important fields such as education, skills development, technology, youth employment and upgrading the informal economy. Gender equality should be integrated into the programme throughout. On expected outcomes, the consultations focused on how to ensure that the process enhanced the ILO's capacity to collaborate with actors able to make a contribution to the Decent Work Agenda. In this regard, the final invitation list would need to select organizations and individuals that were active in fields of most interest to those of the ILO. The aim should also be to ensure a high-level representation including members of the Governing Body. The format of the event should be tailored to meet these considerations. It should not be too long – two to three days was the maximum length for high-level participants. Sessions should be lively and provocative with plenty of opportunity for debate from the floor. The consultations also concluded that an outline of a forum should be presented to the Working Party and that the Office should continue to consult the Officers during the preparation of the forum on issues such as the programme and invitation list.

## Theme

4. Following the further support for a fair globalization of decent work as a global goal expressed in the United Nations Summit Outcome Document by 150 Heads of State and Government in September 2005, the ILO's distinctive contribution is recognized within the United Nations and multilateral system.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as several members of the Working Party suggested in November, a forum organized by the ILO with the challenge of decent work for a fair globalization as its main theme could help to broaden and deepen commitment to action by interested actors in the global community (see paragraph 20 below). It would also constitute an ILO contribution to the practical implementation of paragraph 47 of the Outcome Document.<sup>3</sup>
5. The practical implementation of decent work as a global goal is an objective that will require a major drive by many actors within international, regional, national and local frameworks. As several members of the Working Party pointed out, the ILO should, and is

<sup>2</sup> See GB.295/WP/SDG/1.

<sup>3</sup> "47. We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. These measures should also encompass the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as defined in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, and forced labour. We also resolve to ensure full respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work." UN General Assembly A/RES/60/1.

expected to, take the lead in promoting this drive but cannot achieve such a global goal without action by others in their own spheres of influence. While some aspects of promoting decent work are exclusively within the ILO's mandate, the ILO could gain from discussions on a number of issues on its agenda where other organizations also have knowledge and competence. The driving force for such an effort is the tripartite commitment of the ILO's constituents and their capacity to make common cause with key partners in the formal multilateral system, and more widely among diverse networks of state and non-state actors.

6. The Officers of the Governing Body reflected on these considerations and after several rounds of consultation it became apparent that a suitable title for the envisaged meeting might be "ILO Forum on Decent Work for a Fair Globalization".
7. Building on the November discussion and the promotion of a fair globalization as a mainstreamed objective in the programme and budget,<sup>4</sup> this paper puts forward a format, possible subject areas, participation and an estimation of resource implications for a forum as a practical tool to expand dialogues, cooperation and eventual external partnerships on decent work for a fair globalization.<sup>5</sup> Such focused and practical discussions would add value to the knowledge base and networking capacity of the ILO.
8. There are several possible dimensions for external linkages arising from the discussion at the November session. Thinking in terms of practical proposals for action, some members characterized a forum as a potentially useful space for sharing experiences and identifying priorities upon which to base either joint work or convergent activities. Others noted that a forum could be an important step towards bringing about greater policy coherence between international actors. While the objective of working more closely with sister institutions in the multilateral system received support, others also underlined the importance of the quality of national policies and institutions which were seen as strongly influencing a country's ability to benefit from globalization. Operationalizing the Decent Work Agenda connects the priorities of the ILO's constituents to internationally agreed development goals, the Outcome Document of the 2005 United Nations World Summit and the process of change and reform it has set in motion.
9. Turning to the issue of how to realize these elements into a well-structured event, several members of the Working Party voiced particular support for the proposition that the planning for a forum would be the subject of continuous consultation between the Office and the Officers of the Governing Body. The ILO's constituents have a balanced and in-depth knowledge of the opportunities and risks that accompany globalization, as well as a long experience of dialogue as a method of developing understanding, agreed actions and shared responsibilities. The ILO is thus a logical convenor for a forum on decent work and the contribution it can make to a fair globalization. Taking up this role also offers opportunities to add value to the Organization's knowledge base, advocate its values, promote its objectives, demonstrate the vitality of tripartism and show its capacity to convene a diversity of actors around the Decent Work Agenda.

<sup>4</sup> Para. 290 of the programme and budget proposals for the current biennium (GB.292/PFA/8) observes that: "The nature of the ILO's strategic mission makes it imperative to develop further the strategic role of external partnerships in promoting decent work."

<sup>5</sup> Paras. 251-258 of the Programme and Budget for 2006-07.

## The timing and format of a forum

10. April 2007 would be an appropriate time to organize a forum. The venue would be the ILO headquarters in Geneva. This would give the Office sufficient time to prepare the event. A firm date should be fixed with the Officers as early as possible should the proposal for such a forum be accepted.
11. As was noted in the November 2005 Working Party session, the Office has the model of the successful 2001 ILO Global Employment Forum (GEF) to build on. It might be recalled that the GEF combined a mix of plenary sessions, panel debates and guest speakers on a variety of themes. The format worked well and was subsequently used at the China Employment Forum in 2004. It is a model, moreover, that allows for in-depth discussions of several sharply focused issues – and focus was recommended by several Working Party members in November – rather than tending toward an overly general discussion.
12. In suggesting this structure for the present forum proposal, the Office foresees the possibility of a two- or three-day forum consisting of perhaps two plenary sessions to open and close the forum, and two or three sessions of three parallel panels. Panels would be chaired by Governing Body members or leading figures drawn from the ILO's constituents from the three groups. Panellists would be invited by the Office in consultation with the Officers of the Governing Body. They would be asked to stimulate interactive debates with the forum participants. Every effort would be made to ensure an overall gender and regional balance to the panels. The panels would endeavour to encourage dialogue between ILO constituents, other agencies, researchers and experts, advocacy groups and service NGOs and where feasible some form of follow-up initiatives among participants either through collaborative or separate but linked actions.
13. A purely illustrative list of possible subject areas for such interactive debates is appended to the present paper from which potential issues could be developed for a well-defined programme. Such a programme would be developed in consultation with the Officers over the coming months. The list suggests broad subject areas which the Office in consultation with the Officers would narrow down to a much more focused and balanced series of issues that might elicit practical policy and operational ideas from participants particularly on topics that would add value to the ILO's knowledge base and networking capacity. A final programme should aim to promote individual or joint initiatives among participants for doable actions towards realizing decent work for a fair globalization.
14. The format of opening and closing plenary sessions and parallel working groups is quite flexible and would be shaped in the envisaged consultations between the Office and the Officers of the Working Party. It might be desirable to intersperse the working groups with short special plenary sessions to hear high-level guest speakers. A further consideration is that in order to encourage the networking and collaboration that is the main purpose of such a forum, an exchange of ideas on the issues for discussion might be useful with interested international organizations and others.

## Financial and human resources

15. As in any international meeting, travel and interpretation constitute the major component of the budget. The ILO Governing Body room holds approximately 300 people. The Global Employment Forum (GEF) was planned for this number although ended up attracting many more participants than initially foreseen, necessitating closed circuit TV to overflow rooms during plenary sessions. Most participants met their own costs of participation. For the GEF, US\$440,000 was used from the ILO's regular budget as core

funding. The event also attracted support from donors of over US\$116,000 for a total expenditure of US\$556,000.

16. On the basis of this experience and estimates of cost increases, it is suggested that the ILO set aside US\$300,000 from the budget line for the mainstreamed strategy on a fair globalization and immediately initiate discussions with possible donors for supplementary funding. Final decisions on the number of parallel working groups requiring interpretation and the number of participants who could be offered supported participation could be taken in light of the success of fund-raising activities. Preliminary informal contacts suggest that a total budget from all sources comparable in real terms to that of the GEF is realizable.
17. The staff time involved in organizing such a forum consists of logistical support involved in ensuring a good participation in a forum and hosting the event, and research and writing of background documentation. For the type of meeting envisaged it is suggested that a 40-page background document with short separate chapters on the chosen sub-themes of a forum be prepared to stimulate prior thinking by participants. In addition, panellists would be offered the opportunity to also present short papers which could be circulated in the languages submitted.

## Participation

18. The capacity of the Governing Body room needs to be borne in mind in drawing up a list of invitees. A total participation of between 200 and 300 might be envisaged. Previous experience of the GEF suggests that it would be useful for some organizations to send several delegates, so in order to accommodate them, the initial list of organizations and individuals to be invited should be somewhat lower.
19. Beyond these practical issues the main consideration in preparing a list of invitees is to select organizations and individuals who operate within existing networks (with convening and communication capacities) so that they can add value to the knowledge of the ILO and promote on their own, or with others, the objectives of decent work for a fair globalization. Demonstrated relevance, engagement or expertise on these issues is therefore the guiding principle when drawing up the invitation list prepared in consultation with the Officers.
20. Possible participants fall into nine main categories:
  - (a) members of the Governing Body of the ILO;
  - (b) the eight non-governmental organizations that have general consultative status with the ILO (IOE, Pan African Employers' Confederation, ICFTU, WCL, OATUU, WFTU, ICA, IFAP). The Global Union Federations. Business and trade associations that work with the IOE on ILO sectoral committees;
  - (c) professional associations that work closely with the ILO, e.g. ISSA, IIRA, World Association of Public Employment Services;
  - (d) international organizations with a mandate and policies relevant to the social dimension of globalization, e.g. WB, IMF, WTO, UNDESA, UNDP, UNCTAD, FAO, UNIDO, WHO, UNESCO, UNEP etc. Regional organizations, economic commissions and development banks, e.g. European Commission, OAS, AU, ECLAC, ESCWA, ADB, AfDB, IDB, etc.;
  - (e) parliamentary and local authority bodies, e.g. Inter-Parliamentary Union, united cities and local governments;

- (f) non-governmental international organizations on the ILO special list selected for relevance and active engagement on the decent work/fair globalization agenda, e.g. Caritas International, International Association of Economic and Social Councils, International Council on Social Welfare, SOLIDAR, World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises, World Council of Churches, World Council of Management, etc.;
- (g) other NGOs not currently on the ILO special list but with a proven interest in contributing to this debate;
- (h) think-tanks or individual academics working on issues closely related to the forum theme; and
- (i) political leaders and opinion formers.

**21.** A selective invitation list based on these categories is likely to generate about 200-300 participants. In the light of discussion in the Working Party, the Office would draw up a more complete list of possible invitees to serve as a guide for the Officers and the Office in finalizing invitations, panels and speakers.

## Conclusion

**22.** The Working Party is invited to discuss the proposed modalities for an ILO forum on decent work for a fair globalization. It is suggested that should the timing, format, participation and resourcing outlined in the paper be accepted, the Director-General in consultation with the Officers, would go ahead with preparations for such an event. A progress report would be given to the Working Party in November 2006.

Geneva, 22 March 2006.

*Submitted for debate and guidance.*

## Appendix

### **Illustrative list of possible subject areas for a forum on decent work for a fair globalization**

#### ***Creating a conducive environment for enterprise development and decent work:***

- employability: education, skills development and technology;
- upgrading work and enterprises in the urban and rural informal economy;
- decent work in global sourcing;
- micro- and small enterprise development: microfinance.

#### ***Socially inclusive employment strategies:***

- migration for work, within borders and internationally;
- overcoming discrimination and disadvantage;
- social protection policies for social cohesion and economic growth;
- working out of poverty: the decent work development agenda; and
- starting right – decent work opportunities for young women and men.

#### ***Proactive decent work strategies to meet the challenges of change:***

- agricultural development and decent rural jobs;
- environmentally sustainable employment strategies;
- flexibility or security? security through flexibility? flexicurity?; and
- cooperatives and social entrepreneurship.

#### ***Making decent work central to economic and social development:***

- employment intensive local development;
- increasing the employment intensity of growth;
- building national convergence in decent work; and
- development cooperation policies objectives.

#### ***Better governance for decent work:***

- the contribution of local authorities;
- the contribution of parliaments;
- policy coherence among international organizations;
- development contribution mechanisms (UNDAF, PRS and others); and
- research and information networks.