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Policy Development Section

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Social Dialogue Segment

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Report on the implementation of the revised plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism for the period 2019–23

Purpose of the document

This document provides an overview and examples of work and results accomplished under the plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism (2019–23) and identifies some lessons learned. The Governing Body is invited to provide guidance to reinforce the work of the Office on social dialogue in all its forms (see the draft decision in paragraph 59).

Relevant strategic objective: Social dialogue and tripartism.

Main relevant outcome: Outcome 2: Strong, representative and influential tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: The Office will draw on the guidance provided by the Governing Body in future planning and implementation of work to promote social dialogue and tripartism.

Author unit: Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE).

Related documents: [GB.335/INS/3\(Rev.\)](#).

► Introduction

1. At its 107th Session (June 2018), the International Labour Conference conducted a second recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social dialogue and tripartism and adopted conclusions. A plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism (2019–23) was adopted by the Governing Body at its 335th Session in March 2019. It is structured according to the ILO means of action, set out in the framework for action in the Conference conclusions: (i) building capacity and strengthening development cooperation; (ii) enhanced research and training; (iii) standards-related action and (iv) enhancing policy coherence.¹
2. The objective of the plan of action is to “assist Members in strengthening social dialogue in all its forms and at all levels in line with ILO standards.”² This paper provides an overview and examples of the work and results accomplished under the plan of action and identifies some lessons learned. “Reinforcing institutions of social dialogue” is a thematic priority of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, underscoring the continued centrality of social dialogue in the pursuit of decent work and social justice.
3. The global context in the period was particularly challenging, characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic, threats to fundamental principles and rights at work globally, an intensification of the impact of climate change, accelerated digital and other transformations in the world of work, growing inequalities, heightened geopolitical tensions and a cost-of-living crisis that led to increased economic insecurity in all regions. These challenges had an impact on ILO constituents and social dialogue at all levels.

► The plan of action: Examples of work and results accomplished

4. The Office delivered on a broad programme of work to promote and enhance social dialogue and tripartism. Global outputs produced primarily at headquarters, such as research reports, capacity-building tools and policy guidance, supported and complemented action at national and other levels to strengthen social dialogue in Member States and to position the ILO in global debates.

Component 1: Building capacity of constituents and social dialogue institutions and strengthening development cooperation

5. Capacity-building of ILO constituents and social dialogue institutions lies at the heart of ILO action to strengthen the effectiveness, inclusiveness, influence and impact of social dialogue in Member States. A wide range of knowledge products and tools were used for capacity-building of constituents, support to social dialogue institutions and processes and related technical assistance. Development cooperation projects offered the possibility for

¹ ILO [Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#). International Labour Conference, 107th Session, 2018.

² See paragraph 4 of above resolution.

larger-scale and more sustained support than is generally possible using only regular budget resources.

6. With respect to the **transition from the informal to the formal economy**, constituents' capacities to formulate, through social dialogue, policy interventions to formalize workers and enterprises were enhanced. Relevant publications include [Organizing Informal Workers into Trade Unions – A Trade Union Guide](#) (2019); [Interactions between Workers' Organizations and Workers in the Informal Economy: A Compendium of Practice](#) (2020); [Social Dialogue for the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy](#) (2020), [Membership Strategies and Policies: A Manual for Employers and Business Member Organizations](#) (2021) and a business perspective on the [transition from the informal to the formal economy in Angola](#) (2021). These outputs were used for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing on novel approaches for reaching out to employers and workers in the informal economy, promoting social dialogue and supporting the transition to formality. The Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan was supported to adopt a strategy and measures to protect, integrate and represent workers in the informal economy, contributing to the recruitment by its affiliates of around 900,000 seasonal cotton pickers. Discussions on the recruitment and working conditions of cotton pickers at National Tripartite Commission on Social and Labour Issues in Uzbekistan helped increase the effectiveness of that body.
7. A project on social dialogue for formalization and employability in the Southern Neighbourhood Region supported in-depth diagnostic studies of informality in Algeria, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, involving the tripartite constituents throughout. The studies created a shared understanding of the characteristics and drivers of informality and the relevant legal, institutional and policy frameworks. Complementary capacity-building of constituents and pilot interventions provided the basis for the development of formalization road maps through social dialogue.
8. Another priority of the action plan is the **inclusion of excluded workers and those in new and emerging forms of employment in social dialogue**. One such category that has garnered intensive policy attention in recent years is workers in the platform economy. [Realizing the Opportunities of the Platform Economy through Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining](#) (2022) shed light on social dialogue for and among these workers, in addition to a [background report](#) for a meeting of experts. [A Guide for Employers' Organizations in Southeast Asia](#) (2023) examines how Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMO) can contribute to shaping the legal and regulatory frameworks on the platform economy, while delivering more effective policy advocacy and membership services. The guide was used for advocacy, innovative campaigning and sharing of good practice by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Confederation of Employers in 2022.
9. A review of [Migrant Workers' Rights to Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining](#) (2023) provided insights into the obstacles to their enjoyment of these rights, as well as effective strategies to overcome them. [Organizing Women Migrant Workers: Manual for Trade Unionists in ASEAN](#) (2021) was applied by the [Safe and Fair](#) project to help safeguard the rights of women migrant domestic workers. In collaboration with the ASEAN Trade Union Council, field-level organizers benefited from training on gender equality, violence and harassment and different organizing techniques, while vulnerable health and social care workers were unionized in India, Indonesia, the Maldives and the Philippines through collaboration with Public Services International – Asia Pacific.
10. Outputs to strengthen constituents' capacity for **collective bargaining** include [Negotiating for Decent Working Time: A Review of Practice](#) (2019) and a comprehensive [Review of Wage Setting](#)

through [Collective Bargaining](#) (2023). The latter provides insights into the wage component in collective agreements and was accompanied by a training tool on wage bargaining for the social partners. The ILO Industrial Relations Global Toolkit includes modules on collective bargaining and negotiation skills. The use of these and other tools, including the first edition of the flagship report on [social dialogue](#) (2022), together with technical guidance, led, for example, to the inclusion of wage clauses in collective agreements in the mining sector in Côte d'Ivoire and in the mining and media sectors in Guinea in 2023. Elsewhere, gender equality issues were included in collective agreements, for example in Togo regarding equality for pregnant women journalists and media professionals (2022) and in Senegal, on maternity protection and women's work in the petroleum and gas sector (2019).

11. Trade unions' capacity for wage bargaining, minimum wages, wage protection and equal pay was strengthened in countries such as Armenia, India and Namibia. A guide on minimum wage setting for EBMOs in the Pacific enhanced their understanding of wage-setting standards and mechanisms.
12. A project on fundamental principles and rights at work in the cotton supply chain in Pakistan supported provincial collective bargaining agreements, including clauses to prevent child labour, while three enterprise-level collective bargaining agreements in the agricultural sector were supported in Morocco.
13. Social partners' capacities for **workplace cooperation and grievance handling** were enhanced using modules of the ILO Industrial Relations Global Toolkit, including in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nepal and Sri Lanka, leading to the adoption of new, or improvement of existing, grievance handling mechanisms and procedures.
14. In order to enhance the **inclusiveness, effectiveness and influence on policy of national tripartite social dialogue institutions**, the Office used a participatory process with tripartite representatives, to develop a [self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions](#) (2021). The tool enables constituents to explore the strengths and weaknesses of their social dialogue institutions and develop an action plan. In most cases with Office facilitation, tripartite members of social dialogue institutions in six countries applied the tool to identify actions to increase the influence and impact of their institutions.
15. In relation to **skills**, [Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations](#), policy briefs on [Effective Governance and Coordination in Skills Systems: Towards a Lifelong Learning Ecosystem](#) and on [The Role of Employers in Skills Development Systems](#) (2020) and a [Resource Guide for Sector Skills Bodies](#) (2021) were used in technical assistance for the establishment of Tripartite Sector Skills Bodies. These bodies enabled the social partners to engage in strategic skills policy design and implementation for a better alignment of skills supply and demand, including in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Lebanon, Morocco, Panama and Viet Nam. Tripartite Sector Skills Bodies can extend their role to address structural issues beyond the sector concerned. For example, the Council for Renewable Energies in Ghana promotes a broader adoption of green technologies, while the Indonesian Council for the Maritime Sector supports the national apprenticeship system. A bipartite social dialogue process in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021 forged a shared vision on specific aspects of vocational training. This has informed an Ibero-American tripartite social dialogue process (2023–24) to facilitate the implementation of vocational training programmes.
16. Capacity development of the social partners has enabled their meaningful participation in social dialogue for **social protection policymaking and in the governance of social security schemes**. Support for [assessment-based national dialogues](#) involving tripartite constituents in at least five countries over the reporting period led to the development of national social

protection policies, strategies and reforms. Regarding social dialogue and **national employment policies**, tripartite constituents and other stakeholders were engaged throughout the policy design process by means of different tools and methods. A [review of national employment policies](#) (2021) observed that such processes extended the scope of social dialogue to cover broader socio-economic policy issues, included diverse government ministries and revived inactive social dialogue bodies.

17. With regard to **adaptations to the changing world of work**, EBMOs in almost 50 Member States generated data on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on enterprises. Analysis of this data in a single data warehouse helped shape EBMOs' policy positions on issues such as skills development, business environment and digitalization, while also contributing to strategic planning, service delivery and policy advocacy.
18. Knowledge development, awareness-raising and training using innovative tools developed by the [Trade Unions in Transformation: Actors for Change](#) programme strengthened trade union leaders' capacities to navigate the changing labour landscape, including through strategic foresight techniques.
19. To harness **social dialogue as a tool in crisis situations and for the promotion of peace**, as called for by the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), capacity-building tools were produced and used: [Employment and Decent Work in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#) (2021), [Peace and Conflict Analysis: Guidance for ILO's Programming in Fragile and Conflict-affected contexts](#) (2021) and [Managing Conflicts and Disasters: Exploring Collaboration between Employers' and Workers' Organizations](#) (2020). Projects supported by the Peacebuilding Fund in Haiti and Sri Lanka (and soon to begin in Tunisia) aim to demonstrate the critical role of social dialogue in stabilization, recovery, conflict prevention and peacebuilding within and beyond the world of work.
20. With respect to **occupational safety and health (OSH)**, [Implementing a safe and healthy working environment: Where are we now?](#) (2023) examined the status of national tripartite OSH bodies and workplace committees. The [Safety + Health for All](#) flagship programme has supported the establishment and strengthening of nearly 450 bipartite workplace OSH committees, in order to promote a preventive OSH culture and encourage dialogue between management and workers. In Sri Lanka, more than 500 low-cost or no-cost OSH measures in tea and cardamom plantations were introduced in two regions, while national tripartite social dialogue on critical aspects of building national systems and capacities was enhanced. In Nepal, a national OSH committee was supported to adopt the first ever national OSH programme.
21. Regarding **cross-border social dialogue**, national or home-host country tripartite dialogues were conducted in nine Member States, while voluntary tripartite-appointed national focal points for the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) were supported in 12 Member States. Training on multinational enterprises, development and decent work in 2021 supported 40 tripartite constituents and social dialogue institution representatives from the West African Economic and Monetary Union to develop national road maps to realize the potential of the MNE Declaration for achieving decent work. This led, in Togo, to the appointment of four national focal points drawn from the Ministry of Labour, the social partners and the National Social Dialogue Council. The nomination of focal points from various government ministries can bring additional policy perspectives that have a direct impact on business operations.
22. An ILO [repository of knowledge on cross-border social dialogue](#) includes comprehensive information on public and private cross-border social dialogue processes and initiatives under

four clusters: (i) multilateral spaces for a fair globalization; (ii) regional economic communities, trade agreements and interregional groups; (iii) transnational company agreements; and (iv) [Corporate social responsibility and responsible business conduct initiatives](#).

23. Some 36 **sectoral** global and regional technical meetings brought together tripartite constituents to negotiate policy guidelines or codes of practice concerning diverse sectoral topics, such as a code of practice on safety and health in textiles, clothing, leather and footwear adopted in 2021. The [Code](#) was widely disseminated, including through collaboration with IndustriALL, and used in countries including Cambodia and Pakistan.
24. The pursuit of **gender equality** in and through social dialogue remains a core ILO objective. A thematic brief on the [Contribution of Social Dialogue to Gender Equality](#) (2021) provided an overview of the topic, examples of action and recommendations to enhance the representation of women in social dialogue and promote gender equality, including through collective bargaining. In Ukraine, in 2022, the Office supported the development and adoption by the regional trade unions council in the Kyiv region of a policy to address discrimination, violence and harassment in the world of work, also signed by the regional employers' association. This contributed to the inclusion of provisions on HIV, as well as on violence and harassment, in the collective bargaining agreement for 2023–25 by a large forestry company.
25. Outputs to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the private sector and EBMOs include [Women in Business and Management: the Business Case for Change](#) (2019), [Transforming Enterprises through Diversity and Inclusion](#) (2022) and [Women in Business: How Employer and Business Membership Organizations Drive Gender Equality](#) (2024). These reports have led to new commitments at the national level, for example, by the Employers Confederation and the Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment in the Philippines to embed gender diversity and inclusion in their business strategies.
26. Effective **labour dispute prevention and resolution** systems should be based on social dialogue and the rule of law. A report on [Comparative Law and Practice on Labour Disputes Prevention and Resolution](#) (2023) highlights examples showing the role of the social partners in the design and operation of labour justice institutions. [Access to labour justice in collective labour disputes](#) (2023), based on comparative analysis of legislation on the topic, underpinned legal advice by the Office on labour law reform processes for tripartite consultation at national level.
27. A [diagnostic tool for self-assessing the effectiveness of labour dispute prevention and resolution](#) (2023) enables tripartite constituents to build a common understanding of their systems, and identify challenges, opportunities and measures to enhance them. The Office facilitated the application of this tool in 13 Member States. Results included the restructuring of the Employment Rights Tribunal in Barbados and the development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a Code of Ethics for judges and staff of labour tribunals, and improved collaboration between labour tribunals and labour inspection.
28. The Office supported national systems to prevent and resolve disputes related to international labour standards in general, or freedom of association and collective bargaining, in particular, in Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama.³

³ In 2024–25, the Office is further reinforcing its action to support conciliation bodies based on social dialogue, strengthen industrial relations mechanisms and address the root causes of the complaints.

Component 2: Enhanced research and training

29. Research provides the necessary evidence base for advocacy, sound policymaking through social dialogue and training of constituents.
30. The first social dialogue flagship report, [Collective Bargaining for an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery](#) (2022), provided an in-depth examination of key regulatory trends in respect of the realization of the right to collective bargaining and the coverage of collective agreements. It examined, for the first time, the scope of collective agreements and their impact on inequality and compliance with OSH standards. It also explored how collective bargaining helped to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment, earnings and inequality, while reinforcing the resilience of enterprises and labour markets. The report received extensive media coverage and was widely disseminated through a range of by-products. Its findings were used in capacity-building activities of the International Training Centre of the ILO. They were also used in other training forums, including in programmes to support trade unions' engagement in social dialogue and collective bargaining, for example in East Africa and South Asia (2022) and ASEAN countries (2023). Further analysis of the databases on collective agreements has provided insights on how specific clauses in collective agreements are shaping the integration of technology into workplaces, just transitions and gender equality. The second edition of the flagship report will be published in December 2024.
31. The number of Member States covered by the [Industrial Relations Data \(IRdata\)](#) increased and the [Legal Database on Industrial Relations \(IRLex\)](#) was expanded and updated. Constituents' capacity to collect high-quality and comparable data was strengthened through training activities at the International Training Centre of the ILO, in North Macedonia and Portugal, using a guidebook on [How and why to collect and use data on industrial relations](#) (2020). The 21st Session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2023 supported the proposal for standard-setting on industrial relations data at the 22nd Session of the Conference in 2028. A new database on national social dialogue institutions includes key information on such bodies in some 160 Member States.
32. The **measurement of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights** advanced significantly in relation to the Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.8.2, of which the ILO is custodian.⁴ The Office has produced annual data on the indicator since 2018. Refinements to the methodology were agreed through tripartite consultations in 2022⁵ and revised scores for all ILO Member States from 2015 to 2021 were generated.⁶ The [Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024](#) incorporated analysis of the indicator from 2015–22. Countries including Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Colombia and Germany benefited from technical support to use the indicator.
33. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Office resources were swiftly redeployed to support constituents in responding to the crisis and to document how social dialogue-based approaches contributed to the protection of workers and resilience of enterprises.⁷ Reviews of practice on [negotiations between employers and workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

⁴ Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.8.2: Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status.

⁵ GB.347/INS/INF/5.

⁶ The dataset, coding and accompanying explanatory information are available in [ILOSTAT](#).

⁷ The response of the Office to the COVID-19 pandemic up to September 2020 is summarized in [GB.340/INS/18/6](#) which includes a review of achievements under Pillar 4: Relying on social dialogue for solutions (paras 41–50).

(2020) and of [peak-level social dialogue](#) (2020) and its [outcomes](#) (2021) were produced. A [rapid assessment of the response of labour dispute resolution mechanisms to the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (2021) drew on extensive survey data, while policy briefs and reports explored the role of social dialogue in relation to OSH and social protection responses, among other themes. Tripartite sectoral activities addressed COVID-19 issues in the tourism sector (2022) and among transport workers (2022–23). Research on the [impact and responses to COVID-19 by EBMOs](#) (2020) revealed some constraints on the ability of EBMOs to operate effectively while [Leading business in times of Covid crisis](#) (2021) observed that cooperation between EBMOs, workers' organizations, government and other stakeholders during the crisis augured well for the future. [Covid-19, Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue](#) (2021) provided evidence of trade unions' ability to protect their members through social dialogue and of its contribution to the implementation of effective policy responses.

34. Research on the role of social dialogue in social protection policymaking and governance included 16 country case studies and a global analysis across 60 countries. A paper on professional elections for the regulation of representativeness was used to support several countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Mauritania. Policy briefs on the role of social dialogue in a just transition, the Sustainable Development Goals and the governance of international labour migration were used for capacity-building. In the framework of the Equal Pay International Coalition, the role of employers' and workers' organizations in pay transparency for equal pay was explored. Partnerships with research institutions and networks, such as the UN Research Institute for Social Development, the European Economic and Social Committee and the African Regional Centre for Labour Administration extended the reach and impact of research outputs.
35. **Training of ILO constituents** in social dialogue and industrial relations remained a top priority including through expanded provision by the International Training Centre of the ILO. Seventy-eight activities on social dialogue and tripartism were delivered in Turin, in the field or online, for a total of 2,421 participants (1,143 women and 1,278 men), not including training for the social partners provided by ACTRAV and ACT/EMP. Forty per cent of the activities were delivered online while 60 per cent were a mix of in-person and blended activities. Four editions of the Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations Academy were held during the period, including online events during the pandemic which attracted high numbers of tripartite participants. A 2022 [Evaluation of the Online Training Activities of the International Training Centre](#) showed that a majority of training participants preferred blended learning, followed by in-person and, lastly, online courses.
36. Online self-learning tools in multiple languages were made available on [social dialogue and industrial relations](#), aspects of [industrial relations](#) and the [2030 Agenda, decent work and social dialogue](#). Certification courses on conciliation and mediation of labour disputes were made available in additional languages, and the Master on Industrial and Employment Relations became a fully online course. Training to promote good practices in South–South and Triangular Cooperation emphasized the need for tripartite constituents' involvement through social dialogue.
37. A Diploma on Social Dialogue and Labour Relations was delivered jointly by labour research and training institutions and the International Training Centre of the ILO in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and two states in India, thereby increasing outreach and strengthening national training capacities. Training was also delivered through projects including in Saudi Arabia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

38. The Office strengthened the research capacity of a number of EBMOs during the pandemic, including in Colombia, Fiji, Serbia and Seychelles, leading to more effective policy advocacy and partnerships with other business organizations, research institutes and trade unions.

Component 3: Standards-related action

39. Over the action plan period, there were 12 ratifications of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144),⁸ one of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), one of the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), four of the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151) and three of the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154).⁹
40. The Office conducted campaigns and other activities to support ratification and implementation of the Conventions. Some activities were the direct result of missions requested by the ILO supervisory bodies while others were conducted under development cooperation projects, such as Trade for Decent Work (Bangladesh, the Philippines, Viet Nam) and OBSERVAR (Mexico). In Bangladesh, following a complaint submitted in 2019 under article 26 of the ILO Constitution,¹⁰ the Office has supported the tripartite constituents to implement a road map to address the issues raised, which includes labour law reform and strengthening of tripartite social dialogue and dispute resolution institutions. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Office provided technical assistance to support the tripartite constituents in implementing the recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry (2019), including on freedom of association and tripartite consultations. Three social dialogue forums resulted in a tripartite commitment being made to take specific measures to strengthen social dialogue. The Governing Body has urged the Government to accelerate implementation in order to achieve tangible results without delay.
41. To cast a spotlight on the fundamental rights of freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, a [thematic forum](#) during the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference (2019) brought together tripartite national and international constituents, UN Special Rapporteurs, the chairpersons of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA), among others. They highlighted the key role these principles and rights have played over the past century as well as their prospects for the future.

⁸ Ratification of Convention No. 144 by Kiribati, Malta, Mauritania, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 2019; Angola, Cabo Verde and Croatia in 2020; Luxembourg, Somalia and Sudan in 2021; and Papua New Guinea in 2023. The total number of ratifications as of September 2024 was 158.

⁹ Ratification of Convention No. 87 by Guinea Bissau in 2023 and of Convention No. 98 by the Republic of Korea in 2021. Ratification of Convention No. 151 by Madagascar and Montenegro in 2019 and Congo and Lesotho in 2023, and of Convention No. 154 by Madagascar in 2019, El Salvador in 2022 and Congo in 2023. This brought the total number of ratifications as of September 2024 to 158 for Convention No. 87; 168 for Convention No. 98; 59 for Convention No. 151 and 51 for Convention No. 154.

¹⁰ [GB.337/INS/13/1](#). The complaint concerned alleged non-observance of the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), Convention No. 87 and Convention No. 98.

Component 4: Enhancing policy coherence

42. The Plan of Action refers to coherence in the delivery of work on social dialogue and tripartism by the Office, and coherence in the engagement of the Organization with the UN system and development communities to promote these values more broadly.
43. The positioning of social dialogue and tripartism within the ILO programme and budget evolved over the period. In 2018–19, social dialogue and tripartism was a cross-cutting policy driver, while an indicator captured the development or strengthening of institutions for tripartite social dialogue, collective bargaining and industrial relations. In 2020–21 and 2022–23, “Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue” became a policy outcome, with outputs on labour administration, social dialogue institutions and collective bargaining and workplace cooperation. This gave social dialogue greater visibility and focus, facilitated in-house coordination, and contributed to more transparent reporting on global and country-level results in programme implementation reports.
44. Social dialogue and tripartism were **mainstreamed across other policy areas, in development cooperation projects and Decent Work Country Programmes**. A toolkit for ILO officials to further strengthen these efforts is under preparation, while existing tools include Q&As on the implications for the ILO and Decent Work Country Programmes of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, model Terms of Reference for a Decent Work Country Programme Tripartite Steering Committee and podcasts and an infographic on how to involve the social partners and mainstream social dialogue in project design.
45. Among many **UN-wide initiatives**, Office involvement in an inter-agency task force on civic space provided an opportunity to advocate for social dialogue and engagement of the social partners in the broader UN context. The Management and Accountability Framework and job descriptions of resident coordinators now task them with engaging and consulting with ILO social partners as groups distinct from civil society. The Office promoted the integration of the Decent Work Agenda, and social dialogue and tripartism in UN processes – through, for example, the Decent Work for Sustainable Development Resource Platform Package – in the joint UN training package on Human Rights, UN checklists on the Mainstreaming of Human Rights in Common Country Analyses and UN Cooperation Frameworks and the UN Framework assessing the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19. Collaboration was strengthened with other UN entities, such as the Peacebuilding Fund.
46. A Trade Union reference manual on the [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation and the Decent Work Agenda](#) (2020), capacity-building activities in more than 20 countries and an e-learning course supported the engagement of trade unions in UN system processes. A brief on the [United Nations Development System: What Employers’ and Business Membership Organizations Need to Know and how they should Engage](#) (2020) and a handbook on [Employers’ and Business Member Organizations and Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2019) supported EBMOs’ engagement. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, a joint business coalition promoted the Sustainable Development Goals.
47. **ILO partnerships**, such as with the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS), have promoted social dialogue and tripartism in the international arena. Joint ILO-AICESIS international conferences on the role of social dialogue in governance of the digital economy (2019) and on combating inequalities in the world of work (2023) allowed ILO constituents to interact with high-level representatives of international organizations such as the World Bank, UNCTAD, UNDESA and OECD, in pursuit of policy coherence. Ongoing partnerships with the International Francophone of Social Dialogue and

the employment and labour sector of the Southern African Development Community strengthened social dialogue in those subregions.

48. Government, employers' and workers' representatives were mobilized to engage in the negotiation process of the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Bonn Declaration between 2019 and 2023, resulting in the incorporation of world of work concerns in those instruments. Social partners' participation was also facilitated in several regional labour migration policy forums, such as the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, the interregional Colombo Process and for the development of CARICOM's migration policy for the Caribbean region.

► Conclusions

49. While lessons learned from implementing the action plan are necessarily tentative at this stage, some findings may be advanced regarding the role of social dialogue as the principal tool of governance in the world of work, and how the Office supports ILO constituents in this domain.

The role of social dialogue in the world of work

50. The COVID-19 pandemic caused massive disruption to the world of work. In many countries, social dialogue proved its value in developing effective policy responses to the crisis, especially with respect to social protection, OSH and business continuity. This often came about through ad hoc social dialogue mechanisms rather than formal institutions. In other instances, however, social partners were excluded from or marginalized in decision-making processes led by governments, due to a lack of political commitment to social dialogue or to perceived inadequacies of the institutions. Policies developed through social dialogue were better designed and implemented than those developed without it. Research should fully document the nature and impact of social dialogue in policymaking, exploring how the maintenance of effective social dialogue institutions in "normal" times enables them to respond quickly and efficiently when crises emerge.
51. Social dialogue can flourish only when there is full respect for freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Violations of these rights continued to impact the ability of employers' and workers' organizations to protect the rights and interests of their members, including through social dialogue. Intensified efforts to promote full realization of these fundamental principles and rights at work and to further enhance the representativeness of the social partners and the inclusiveness of social dialogue are required. This is key to ensuring that vast segments of the working population, including those in the informal, rural and platform economies, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, migrant workers and youth, are fully represented in social dialogue.
52. Collective bargaining is a voluntary process of negotiation between two autonomous parties while governments play a key role in ensuring the legal and regulatory environment allowing for its full development at all appropriate levels.
53. The policy successes achieved through social dialogue must be celebrated and made more visible through more effective communication at national and international levels. This is critical for rebuilding public trust in democracy at work and beyond, and for tackling high and stubborn inequalities, the cost-of-living crisis, youth unemployment and continued gaps in the coverage of social protection. The role of social dialogue has evolved over the years in form,

depth and scope, extending beyond traditional areas such as wages, pensions and labour law reform to address broader socio-economic concerns, and engaging ministries of economy, finance, planning and others in a whole-of-government approach. There is a need for public authorities and the social partners to acquire new knowledge and skills to deal effectively with emerging, often complex, issues and to have access to robust data and evidence to inform their debates and decisions.

Support provided by the Office for social dialogue

54. Capacity-building of the tripartite constituents remains at the heart of the Office's work to support social dialogue. During the pandemic, the Office and the International Training Centre of the ILO quickly adapted their mode of delivery to the virtual realm, and adjusted training content to respond to constituents' needs in the pandemic context. Useful lessons were learned, and elements of virtual and blended training approaches have been retained where appropriate. Nonetheless, a return to face-to-face interactions for capacity-building is welcomed in many instances.
55. Constituents appreciated the usefulness of self-assessment tools for social dialogue institutions and for dispute resolution bodies. The Office should provide ongoing support for the implementation of resulting plans of action and the mobilization of additional extra-budgetary resources is essential to enable such sustained assistance.
56. Continued efforts by the Office and ILO constituents, notably the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), to promote the engagement of representatives of the social partners alongside governments in broader UN system processes have led to some progress, but not enough. The Office needs to intensify efforts to demonstrate the added value of social dialogue and tripartism to UN Resident Coordinators and others.
57. The limited number of social dialogue and industrial relations specialists in the field remains a serious constraint affecting certain regions, notably the Arab States and Latin America. Building on the close cooperation between technical specialists within Decent Work Teams, cooperation between the field and headquarters, and across policy areas and technical departments, should be further enhanced. To this end, recent initiatives include, first, the development of an Office framework for action on freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining and social dialogue in 2023; second, an ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining (endorsed by the 349th Session of the Governing Body in November 2023); and third, the creation of the Social Dialogue, Labour Relations and Governance of Work Branch (LABGOV) of the Governance Department in 2024, bringing together teams on social dialogue, collective bargaining, labour administration and inspection, labour law and dispute prevention and resolution. These initiatives provide a solid basis for stronger coherence in the Office's work on these interrelated themes.
58. Measuring the impact of social dialogue requires greater focus. Demonstrating the positive impact of social dialogue is essential in order that the ILO can successfully promote and advocate for it in Member States, the UN system and beyond.

► Draft decision

- 59. The Governing Body requested the Director-General to take into account the views expressed during the discussion when implementing the Programme and Budget 2024–25, developing the Programme and Budget 2026–27 and preparing the third recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism at the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2026.**