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Policy Development Section

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Social Dialogue Segment

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Progress report on the ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining

Purpose of the document

This document describes progress made in implementing the ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining, which was adopted by the Governing Body at its 349th Session (October–November 2023). The Governing Body is invited to take note of the report and to request the Director-General to take into account its guidance in the further implementation of the strategy (see the draft decision in paragraph 44).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Outcome 2: Strong, representative and influential tripartite constituents and effective social dialogue (2024–25).

Policy implications: Guiding ILO interventions to promote and implement the right to collective bargaining.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Subject to the guidance of the Governing Body.

Author unit: Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE).

Related documents: [GB.349/POL/2](#); [Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, 2018; [GB.335/INS/3\(Rev.\)](#).

► Background

1. At its 349th Session (October–November 2023), the Governing Body endorsed the ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining.¹ The strategy builds, notably, on the *Revised plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism for the period 2019–23 to give effect to the conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2018*² and on the Programme and Budget for 2024–25. Since then, at its 112th Session (2024), the International Labour Conference adopted conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work, in which it observed that freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are severely threatened around the world and highlighted the need for governments to give particular attention to them, noting “their particular importance to enable the attainment of the four strategic objectives, while ensuring balanced attention to all five categories.”³ At its 352nd Session (October–November 2024), the Governing Body adopted the key messages of the tripartite input to the Second World Summit for Social Development prepared by the Working Party on a New Social Contract for Our Common Agenda.⁴ One of these messages is that the promotion of workers’ rights, with a focus on freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, is a key element for the attainment of inclusive and sustainable growth. The Governing Body also identified “Delivering social justice using the power of social dialogue” as one of the key interventions of the Global Coalition for Social Justice,⁵ which will generate opportunities to advocate for social dialogue, including collective bargaining, and to promote the engagement of the social partners in United Nations processes and more broadly within the multilateral system.
2. This progress report responds to the Governing Body’s request to be kept informed of developments and provides an opportunity for the Governing Body to give guidance on the further implementation of the strategy. Its structure reflects the priority areas for action identified in the strategy.

► Progress in the priority areas for action

Promoting the ratification and implementation of international labour standards relevant to the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

3. This priority area concerns the relevant fundamental Conventions, namely the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right

¹ GB.349/POL/2.

² GB.335/INS/3(Rev.).

³ ILO, *Resolution and conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work*, International Labour Conference, 112th Session, 2024.

⁴ GB.352/INS/21/1(Rev.2).

⁵ GB.352/INS/4(Rev.1).

to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and other international labour standards relevant to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in both the private and the public sectors, notably the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), and the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151).

4. Some important progress was made in the period under review, with the Office's support, in respect of the ratification of these Conventions. For example, Congo ratified Conventions Nos 151 and 154, and Guinea-Bissau ratified Convention No. 87. Lesotho ratified Convention No. 151, with the Office providing follow-up technical services to assist with implementation (see below). In Nepal, a gap analysis was carried out on Convention No. 87 and the tripartite Central Labour Advisory Council approved the ratification of that Convention.
5. The Office will continue to carry out gap analyses and to provide technical assistance and cooperation to countries interested in ratification, in line with the Programme and Budget for 2024–25 and that for 2026–27 and as part of efforts to achieve universal ratification of the fundamental Conventions. In addition, the Office will seek to secure the integration into country-level activities of requests for assistance arising from the annual review under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, and of other requests from the constituents for technical assistance.

Setting an enabling environment for collective bargaining

6. While collective bargaining is a voluntary process of negotiation between two autonomous parties, governments play a key role in ensuring an enabling environment allowing for its full development at all appropriate levels.
7. In this regard, the Office supported legal and regulatory reform efforts throughout 2024. For example, it continued to provide technical assistance to support the Government of Bangladesh in developing amendments to labour legislation, including the Bangladesh Labour Act, based on comments by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in respect of Conventions Nos 87 and 98.⁶
8. Furthermore, guided by the comments of the Office, the Government of Malaysia brought into force amendments to the Industrial Relations Act and its accompanying regulations, with a view to streamlining the process for determining a sole bargaining agent. In Maldives and Kenya, legislation facilitating bargaining practices was adopted. In North Macedonia, the Constitutional Court repealed a regulatory provision giving the Ministry of Finance the right to approve public sector collective bargaining agreements already agreed upon by the parties. The Court's decision was in line with one of the recommendations made by the Direct Contacts Mission to the country in October 2023 concerning the application of Convention No. 98.
9. In Pakistan, where most labour legislation is adopted at the provincial level, Punjab and Sindh provinces are undertaking comprehensive legal reform efforts, following technical advice provided by the Office. If adopted, the new legislation would, among other things, extend coverage to all workers, including those in the informal economy. The Office also provided technical support for the amendment of the Balochistan Industrial Relations Act, 2022, based on comments by the Committee of Experts in respect of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, and for the development of accompanying regulations.

⁶ For further details see GB.353/INS/9.

10. In Serbia, a comprehensive law and practice review was undertaken to guide the implementation of a European Union-funded project to promote social dialogue and collective bargaining. One of the recommendations of that review was to develop charters, protocols and manuals outlining good bargaining practices. The project, to be implemented from March 2024 to February 2027, will also help to support Serbia's accession to the European Union.

Strengthening public authorities and institutions to promote collective bargaining

11. Governments are responsible for establishing sufficiently staffed and resourced systems of labour administration, with adequately trained personnel, including with regard to ensuring that the provisions of collective agreements are effectively implemented in practice and that cases of non-compliance are promptly addressed.
12. In Antigua and Barbuda, a report and plan of action on the implementation of Convention No. 151 was adopted by the constituents in November 2024, with the support of the Office. In Brazil, a new initiative will support the constituents in addressing occupational safety and health (OSH) issues, in particular heat stress, through collective bargaining. In Chile, the Office responded to the request of the Government to provide policy advice regarding the introduction of multi-employer bargaining by commissioning background research. It also supported the Government in convening policy dialogues. In Colombia, technical assistance is being provided to the labour inspectorate as part of a comprehensive compliance strategy to ensure freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. In Guatemala, the Office is providing technical assistance to the Government for the implementation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98. This has included, in the context of tripartite consultations for the revision of the regulatory framework applicable to collective bargaining, the elaboration of a study on collective bargaining in the public sector in Guatemala, with a special focus on the approval of collective agreements by public authorities and the identification of the main challenges and possible solutions in the light of ILO standards and comparative Latin American law.
13. In Lesotho, capacity-building was provided to the constituents with a view to establishing a bargaining council for the public sector, following that country's ratification of Convention No. 151. In Serbia, assistance was provided to update government databases relating to union registration and collective bargaining agreements, to improve collective bargaining processes.
14. In Sri Lanka, the Government is establishing, with the support of the Office, a pilot bipartite sectoral forum for the public transport sector, with collective bargaining as one of its key functions. It has established a bipartite committee to finalize the terms of reference of the forum. In addition, approximately 30 officials from the Department of Labour, including from the Social Dialogue and Workplace Cooperation Unit, received training on collective bargaining. A key function of the Department of Labour is to support collective bargaining in the private sector.
15. In the United Republic of Tanzania, a report and action plan on promoting collective bargaining in the public sector was adopted by the constituents in October 2024, with the support of the Office. Further support will be provided to assist with the implementation of the action plan.
16. In addition, during the period under review, the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) provided training on collective bargaining to nearly 1,500 participants through academies, diploma courses and online training modules. Self-guided modules on collective

bargaining, grievance handling and workplace cooperation were developed. These modules have generated significant interest among the constituents in all regions.

17. In Latin America and the Caribbean, as part of a regional initiative for the strengthening of social dialogue and labour relations, country profiles were prepared on collective bargaining in the public sector for the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. A technical note on Brazil's system for the registration of collective agreements was developed to document good practices. In addition, tripartite constituents from numerous Latin American countries took part in a certification course provided by the Turin Centre on conciliation skills to address collective labour disputes. A tripartite subregional conference for the Americas took place to examine, among other matters, the role of collective bargaining in dispute prevention.

Strengthening the capacity of the social partners

18. The role of employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) and trade unions in collective bargaining is central to sound industrial relations and well-coordinated bargaining. Their role varies according to national contexts. They may participate directly in multi-employer, sectoral or interprofessional bargaining. In addition, they may provide relevant information to their members, participate in policy discussions on collective bargaining, and provide legal advice and relevant training.
19. Between September and November 2024, the Turin Centre held the first Global Social Partners' Academy, with a focus on social dialogue and collective bargaining. Led by the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), this blended course comprised both online and in-person training, and involved some 90 representatives of workers' and employers' organizations from around the world. The aim was to equip employers and workers to study and implement actions and solutions to contemporary and emerging workplace issues through constructive industrial relations, meaningful social dialogue and collective bargaining. ACT/EMP and ACTRAV have indicated their commitment to hold the academy as an annual event, bringing together the global social partners to focus on contemporary and emerging issues and trends.
20. Capacity-building materials are being prepared to support EBMOs and workers' organizations in addressing OSH issues through collective bargaining agreements, in line with the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2024–30 and plan of action for its implementation.⁷
21. ACTRAV has supported trade unions in their efforts to enhance representation, inclusiveness and diversity through the Trade Unions in Transformation programme. In the period under review, it organized a series of foresight workshops and training sessions, following which it issued several publications focusing on strengthening unions' capacities to navigate multiple transitions in the world of work and develop strategies to represent a diverse workforce. Furthermore, ACTRAV is supporting trade unions in several countries in their efforts to organize workers in the informal economy, including in rural areas. The hybrid Global Workers' Academy on Addressing Transitions, offered by the Turin Centre starting in February 2025, will focus specifically on the transition to formality and is aimed at enhancing the capacity of workers' organizations to adopt innovative strategies to safeguard workers and to influence national formalization strategies. Research on good practices and innovative approaches

⁷ GB.349/INS/8.

among workers' organizations in respect of organizing, providing services for and representing workers in the informal economy is forthcoming.

22. During the period under review, ACT/EMP has continued to focus on enhancing the institutional capacity of employers' organizations in an environment marked by increasing challenges to freedom of association and political changes. A series of courses on membership development – with the aim of increasing the representativeness of EBMOs – has been delivered to EBMOs in Central Asia and Latin America, and will be extended to African-based organizations in 2025. Advisory services were provided to support the development and validation of the strategic plans of EBMOs in Namibia, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, among others, enabling these organizations to be better positioned to respond to current challenges and the needs of their members. In addition, ACT/EMP is currently developing a compendium of best practices on membership development to support EBMOs in reaching out to under-represented business segments.
23. In the Central African Republic and Gabon, the Office provided assistance to the constituents in signing new national and sectoral agreements, strengthening the framework for industrial relations. In Côte d'Ivoire, it is supporting the social partners in the re-negotiation of the intersectoral national agreement, last signed in 1977. The country's social partners recognized the need to modernize the agreement in the light of recent changes to the Labour Code.
24. In Ethiopia, capacity-building for the social partners is under way in the horticulture and garment and textile sectors, helping to inform collective bargaining processes. In Ghana, support is being provided to trade unions with a focus on enhancing the capacities of young workers to engage in social policy dialogue and collective bargaining processes.
25. In Indonesia, support was provided to both workers and employers for the purposes of signing collective agreements in 31 companies in the palm oil sector across five provinces in Sumatra and Kalimantan, covering some 20,000 workers. In Maldives, a training course for trainers on labour relations and collective bargaining was delivered to accompany new labour legislation.
26. In Mexico, the Office helped to monitor a number of union elections and assisted in the ratification of collective agreements under the "Observation and engagement for the realization of the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining" (OBSERVAR) development cooperation project. The Office is also supporting the "Building a comprehensive government approach towards combating child labour and forced labour in Mexico" (AccioNNAr) project, to advance collective bargaining agreements with clauses on the prevention and elimination of child labour in various sectors.
27. In Namibia, targeted social partners benefited from training that helped them to negotiate three new collective agreements, marking a significant step forward in promoting effective industrial relations. In the Republic of Moldova, the Office supported a training activity on branch-level bargaining, organized by the national trade union confederation, which both government and employer representatives were invited to attend. In Sao Tome and Principe, the constituents, with the support of the Office, adopted a new road map for advancing collective bargaining, aimed at helping the social partners to finalize a national collective agreement. In Uganda, capacity-building for the social partners is under way in the coffee sector, helping to inform collective bargaining processes. For example, under the "Ending child labour in supply chains: Addressing the root causes of child labour in supply chains through an area-based approach" (CLEAR Supply Chains) project, and in collaboration with ACTRAV and ACT/EMP, training was provided both to trade unions and to employer organizations on collective bargaining in the context of efforts to eliminate child labour in the coffee supply chain.

Knowledge development and advocacy

Research products on outcomes of collective bargaining

28. An important new stream of research has been developed on the impact of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights on a range of outcomes. These include the impacts on trade and investment flows; on wage and income inequality; on labour income share; and on the prevalence of child labour and forced labour. The results of this research will be published in 2025.
29. Furthermore, the 2024 edition of the flagship Social Dialogue Report highlights the conditions that are necessary for ensuring meaningful social dialogue, including collective bargaining, notably: respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; a supportive State and an enabling legal and regulatory framework; an environment conducive to fostering representative participation; and an institutional commitment to pluralism.⁸ One of the findings of the report is that collective bargaining over issues related to multiple transitions is limited to a relatively small number of countries due to the technical complexities of the issues and the need for relevant knowledge by the social partners. However, social dialogue, including collective bargaining, is key to ensuring that transitions are just.
30. The Office has conducted research on collective bargaining and just environmental transitions, to be published in a forthcoming working paper. A study on industrial relations in micro and small enterprises has been published.⁹
31. The report for the Tripartite Technical Meeting on Access to Labour Justice for All highlights how collective bargaining plays a pivotal role in relation to access to labour justice, not only in terms of prevention but also by providing for processes and mechanisms for dispute settlement, in both the public and the private sectors.¹⁰
32. A feasibility study is being commissioned to determine how the ILO can establish a database of a selection of collective agreements from around the world and make them available to the constituents. Research is also being conducted on comparative practices related to the inclusion of OSH in collective bargaining agreements in several regions.
33. An analysis of wage clauses in collective bargaining agreements in the fishing sector from different regions and countries was presented to ILO staff at a global meeting organized under the 8.7 Accelerator Lab initiative, to exchange good practices.

Advocacy

34. It is essential to continue to build the evidence base for advocacy around the benefits of collective bargaining. The knowledge products mentioned above will be converted into concrete tools for building evidence, advocacy and change, both within the ILO and among policymakers and other external actors.

⁸ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-level social dialogue for economic development and social progress*, 2024.

⁹ Melisa R. Serrano and Edlira Xhafa, "Industrial relations in micro and small enterprises: patterns, trends and prospects", ILO Working Paper No. 129, 2024.

¹⁰ ILO, *Access to labour justice for all: Prevention and resolution of labour disputes – Report for the Tripartite Technical Meeting on Access to Labour Justice for All*, 2025.

Cross-cutting issues, including strengthening capacity within the Office

35. In 2024, the Social Dialogue, Labour Relations and Governance of Work Branch (LABGOV) was created within the Governance and Tripartism Department, bringing together a number of fields of work related to labour market governance. Its objective is to lead global efforts to advance good governance and the realization of rights in the world of work through effective social dialogue, inclusive labour market institutions and integrated policy approaches. It supports the constituents in advancing sound social dialogue and labour relations; in developing and implementing labour law reforms and fostering access to labour justice; and in strengthening labour administration and labour inspection systems.
36. The Office has taken measures to integrate freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining in existing development cooperation projects on child and forced labour, with a view to testing the hypothesis that these rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Progress has been made in this regard, in particular in a number of countries in Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Tunisia and Uganda. Such measures include, for example, supporting trade unions in organizing in sectors where child labour is prevalent; supporting workers and employers in including child and forced labour clauses in collective agreements; and building the capacity of unions to identify and remediate instances of forced labour in the workplace.
37. The Better Work programme has initiated a comprehensive internal capacity-building effort to ensure that all factory staff have received training in respect of the ILO principles on freedom of association and collective bargaining, in collaboration with the Turin Centre and LABGOV.
38. The Office held a series of capacity-building webinars for each region on freedom of association and collective bargaining, for over 150 project staff, in order to ensure that staff working on development cooperation projects have a good understanding of Conventions Nos 87 and 98 in particular, and of how to ensure the practical application of these instruments in their work with the social partners.
39. In February 2024, the Meeting of Experts on wage policies, including living wages, adopted conclusions outlining an ILO concept of the living wage and identifying principles for the estimation of such a wage. The conclusions also provide guidance on the operationalization of a living wage, which includes strengthening social dialogue and wage-setting institutions, including collective bargaining and minimum-wage fixing institutions.¹¹

Monitoring and reporting and considerations for the future

40. The results reported under impact indicator 2.3.2 of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25,¹² will contribute to monitoring progress in the implementation of the strategy. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 8.8.2 will also be used to monitor changes at the country level.¹³

¹¹ GB.350/POL/1.

¹² Impact indicator 2.3.2: Number of Member States in which there are newly developed or strengthened policies or practices to promote: (a) collective bargaining; (b) workplace cooperation.

¹³ SDG 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.

41. The International Labour Conference will hold its next recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social dialogue at its 114th Session (2026), during which it will provide further guidance on this strategy.
42. The opportunities provided by collective bargaining to help the social partners to manage green and technological transitions are largely underutilized. Using these opportunities would require, among other things, measures to equip the social partners with the right skills and knowledge to shape tailored and balanced solutions. Collective bargaining is also providing greater opportunities to harness the renewed emphasis on OSH and access to labour justice with a view to expanding the ILO's work in these areas.
43. The strategy serves as a steady compass to guide the ILO in strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of its approach towards collective bargaining, including within the Office, and in developing its capacity to foster policy coherence on this subject within the multilateral system.

► Draft decision

44. **The Governing Body took note of the progress report on the ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance in the further implementation of the strategy.**