

International Labour Conference

113th Session, Geneva, 2025

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► Statement by Ms Corinne Vargha, representative of the Secretary-General

I. Preliminary remarks

As the representative of the Secretary-General for your Committee, I have the privilege of leading your Committee's secretariat which provides the necessary assistance to ensure the effective functioning of your Committee.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the presence of the outgoing Chairperson of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Judge Graciela Dixon-Caton, who will address your Committee this morning in order to present the report of the Committee of Experts. I wish to thank Judge Dixon-Caton for her significant contribution to the functioning of the Committee of Experts and the constructive dialogue she has maintained with your Committee during her two terms as Chairperson of the Committee of Experts.

I also acknowledge the newly elected Chairperson of the Committee of Experts, Judge Alain Lacabarats, who will address your Committee at the end of the general discussion in relation to issues calling for a reply.

Finally, I welcome once again this year Professor Evance Kalula, Chairperson of the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) who will present the annual report of the CFA to your Committee.

Traditionally, I begin my intervention by recalling the constitutional mandate of your Committee and the rules governing your work, and I continue with a brief update of key developments concerning the ILO's normative work since the previous session of the Conference. I will keep to this tradition this year.

II. Constitutional mandate and work of the Conference Committee

1. Mandate of the Committee

Turning to its constitutional mandate, your Committee is a standing committee of the Conference and has met every time the Conference was in session since its creation in 1926. Your Committee's mandate consists of examining and bringing to the attention of the Plenary of the Conference the measures taken by Members to comply with their obligations to communicate information and reports under articles 19, 22, 23 and 35 of the Constitution, and to give effect to the provisions of Conventions to which they are parties.

This year, your Committee has before it the report produced by the Committee of Experts at its 96th Session (November-December 2024) along with the General Survey of the Committee of Experts entitled "Achieving comprehensive employment injury protection". The General Survey examines the application of four Conventions and two Recommendations in the area of employment injury protection across ratifying and non-ratifying Member States.

This year, the Committee also has before it the report of the 15th Session of the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART), established jointly by the ILO and UNESCO in 1967 after the adoption of a recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). This joint Committee convenes every three years to formulate recommendations for the ILO Governing Body and the Executive Board of UNESCO.

Through the fulfilment of its mandate, your Committee works to promote the application of international labour standards through social dialogue. Your Committee is the only permanent tripartite supervisory body of the United Nations system that examines the application of international labour standards by giving employers' and workers' organizations the opportunity to have their voice heard, along with the governments. On the occasion of its 100th anniversary, which will be celebrated at the forthcoming session of the Conference in 2026, your Committee will be able to highlight the impact and scope of its work since its establishment in 1926, demonstrating that ILO's standard-setting activities remain wholly relevant, as they not only protect people's rights but also maintain democratic governance in the world of work, particularly through social dialogue.

2. Work of the Committee

Turning to the work of your Committee, all the measures that will allow you to discharge the Committee's constitutional obligations are detailed in [Document D.1](#). These reflect the outcome of the informal tripartite consultations on the Committee's working methods which took place for the 19th time in April 2025. Over the years, these informal tripartite consultations have resulted in numerous improvements of your Committee's working methods described in detail on the [Committee's webpage](#).

I am pleased to inform the government delegates that once again this year, the adoption of the final list of "individual" cases to be discussed by the Committee, has been scheduled at today's opening session. This should no doubt facilitate preparations for the examination of the 24 individual cases.

As I conclude the first part of my intervention, please note that the Committee's report will be presented for adoption to the Plenary sitting of the Conference on Friday, 13 June.

III. Updates on the ILO's normative work

In the second part of my intervention, I wish to provide a brief update on this year's milestones.

Ratifications of international labour standards

First, with respect to new ratifications of international labour standards, I am pleased to report that since the Committee's last meeting in June 2024, 44 new ratifications have been registered, confirming the continuing commitment of Member States to a rules-based multilateral system in pursuit of social justice.

Of these, a total of 14 ratifications were registered on instruments concerning occupational safety and health, including the two fundamental Conventions, namely the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), which obtained two new ratifications and has a total of 83; and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), which obtained six new ratifications and has a total of 69.

The Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) obtained one new ratification, reaching a total of 61 ratifications.

On a less positive note, there has been no new ratification over the past 12 months for the "first generation" fundamental Conventions in the areas of forced labour, child labour, equality and non-discrimination, and freedom of association and collective bargaining. But rest assured that the ILO is pursuing its efforts in promoting ratifications and implementing fundamental standards in the framework of the follow-up to last year's Conference [Resolution on the third recurrent discussion concerning fundamental principles and rights at work](#), adopted at the Conference in 2024.¹

Let me acknowledge that three out of four governance Conventions received one ratification in the last 12 months: the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). Noting that the fourth governance instrument, the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), has not received any new ratification, I would like to highlight its significance for promoting sustainable jobs based on social dialogue, especially in Member States that benefit from ILO development cooperation programmes on employment policies and job creation.

I am pleased to note that gender-related instruments obtained a total of 13 ratifications over the past 12 months: nine for the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190); two for the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156); one for the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183); and one for the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, continues to draw interest with four new ratifications in the past 12 months and has reached a landmark of 110 ratifications. In addition, it continues to be amended to respond to the evolving needs of the maritime sector and the Conference is called upon to approve the amendments adopted by the Special Tripartite Committee at its fifth meeting which was held in April this year.

¹ Follow-up to the resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work, Document GB.352/INS/3/1.

Finally, the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), obtained two ratifications and, with a total of 67 ratifications is steadily advancing towards the goal of 70 ratifications set by the ILO Governing Body in the context of the [follow-up to the 2021 Recurrent Discussion](#).²

2. Anniversaries

Second, I would like to commemorate the anniversaries of international labour standards reached this year.

The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) marks its 95th anniversary. A beacon for the elimination of forced labour across the world, this Convention has set the foundation for Alliance 8.7 on the elimination of child labour, forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking. However, the compounding crises of the past few years, have negatively affected progress towards the eradication of forced labour and the elimination of child labour, calling for a renewed commitment to this noble cause.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), while last year was the 75th anniversary of the second instrument in this area, the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97). In these times of multilayered transformation, the subject of migration calls for special attention. Just a few weeks ago, the Fair Recruitment Initiative marked its 10th anniversary with a global conference and adopted a strategy to accelerate progress and strengthen commitments to make decent work a reality for all migrant workers in all countries, both sending and receiving.

The Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), has reached 55 years and 55 ratifications, having been ratified most recently in 2024. The central role of this Convention in addressing the escalating inequalities that challenge sustainable development and social justice in today's world cannot be overstated.

Among the instruments commemorated this year, a certain number have been the object of a request for promotion by the Governing Body as a result of the work of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (that is the SRM TWG). These are:

- the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160). Adopted 40 years ago, this Convention retains its full relevance in the context of the increased interest in labour statistics generated by the Sustainable Development Goals and related Indicators. It has so far received 53 ratifications, the latest by Pakistan this year;
- the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), adopted 35 years ago, which has received 24 ratifications, most recently in 2023 by Ukraine. Another instrument is the Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176), which was adopted 30 years ago and has received 35 ratifications, most recently in 2024 by Chile. The Governing Body decided to include the promotion of these two Conventions in the measures to be taken as part of the follow-up to the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Bonn Declaration, which it approved at its previous session in March 2025, as well as the promotion of several other Conventions in the area of occupational safety and health;

² Matters arising out of the work of the 109th Session (2021) of the International Labour Conference: Follow-up to the resolution concerning the recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (social security), Document GB.343/INS/3/1.

- the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), which sets the modern standard in a gender-related subject addressed by the ILO for the first time in 1919. The Convention has reached its 25th anniversary with 44 ratifications, most recently by Surinam in 2024;
- the Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171), which marks its 35th anniversary with 17 ratifications. It sets contemporary standards in the area of working time, which was the first topic to be addressed by international labour standards and which will be the subject of the next meeting of the Tripartite Working Group on the Standards Review Mechanism;
- last but not least is the Radiation Protection Convention, 1960 (No. 115), which celebrates its 65th anniversary and which continues to set the standard on exposure to ionizing radiation in 50 ratifying countries.

3. Standards policy

Finally, allow me to briefly mention the important steps underway in four areas of standards policy aimed at modernizing ILO's normative activities and promoting a body of standards that is robust, clear and up to date.

First of all, the [Tripartite Working Group established under the Standards Review Mechanism \(SRM\)](#) met for the ninth time in September 2024, and reviewed instruments in several areas, namely, fishers, dock work, inland navigation, non-metropolitan territories, hotels and restaurants, older workers, and indigenous and tribal persons. Even though the Tripartite Working Group reached consensual conclusions on all of the topics on its agenda, it had to postpone decisions on the classification of certain instruments and took no decision in relation to the abrogation and withdrawal of certain outdated instruments. The follow-up to the SRM is an institutional priority that calls for a redoubling of efforts in order to make sure that the relevant Governing Body decisions trickle down to the country level where normative records need to be modernized.

Second, with respect to streamlining reporting under articles 22 and 19 of the ILO Constitution, the Office is actively pursuing consultations with all stakeholders following an initial [discussion at the 352nd Session of the Governing Body](#) (October-November 2024). Further proposals on this subject will be presented to the Governing Body for its consideration at its 355th Session (November 2025).

Third, continued emphasis is placed on systematically connecting the supervisory body comments to technical assistance in order to ensure that normative guidance gives rise to tangible results at country level. As can be seen on your Committee's web page, the Office is in the process of following up on practically all cases discussed at the Committee's previous sessions in order to promote the concrete implementation of the conclusions and recommendations adopted by your Committee.

Finally, capacity-building continues to be delivered to constituents through online courses and in person, in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin. I am pleased to report that this year, the International Labour Standards Academy was delivered once again to tripartite constituents and legal professionals from all over the world in May 2025, both online and in the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin.

IV. Final observations

The International Labour Standards Department is pleased and honoured to place once again this year its expertise at the service of your Committee.

Ms Curtis, Chief of the Freedom of Association Branch, and Mr Horacio Guido, Chief of the Application of Standards Branch will accompany me in guiding the secretariat of your Committee this year, along with the two coordinators of the Committee's secretariat, Ms Rosinda Silva and Mr Carlos Magalhaes, whom I would like to thank for their outstanding work.

I wish to take this opportunity to make a special note of the fact that this will be the last Conference Committee on the Application of Standards to be attended by Ms Karen Curtis, Chief of the Freedom of Association Branch. With over 30 of your Committee's sessions behind her, Ms Curtis is an institutional pillar of the secretariat which supports your Committee's work. A staunch supporter of social dialogue based on freedom of association and collective bargaining, Mr Curtis generously contributed her rich experience and expertise to your Committee and the world of work at large. Well respected and trusted by the social partners, Ms Curtis has delivered on the Organization's core mandate with dedication and unrelenting force. At the start of our work, I wish to express to her our full recognition and gratitude.

With the entire team of the Secretariat, I look forward to working with you all, Chairperson, Vice Chairpersons, Reporter, and all the members of the Committee. Thank you for your attention.