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Review of the modalities of recurrent discussions under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022

Purpose of the document

Following the decision taken by the Governing Body at its 350th Session (March 2024), this document reviews the modalities of recurrent discussions under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022, and proposes means of strengthening the effectiveness of recurrent discussions (see the draft decision in para. 58).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: All.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: To be decided by the Governing Body.

Author unit: Office of the Assistant Director-General for the Governance, Rights and Dialogue cluster.

Related documents: GB.356/INS/7; GB.350/PV; GB.350/INS/2/1; GB.347/INS/2/1; GB.347/PV(Rev.); GB.331/INS/3; GB.328/PV; GB.304/SG/DECL/1(Rev.).

► I. Introduction

1. The ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022, institutionalizes the ILO's Decent Work Agenda as an essential means of realizing the ILO's constitutional objectives. It lays out an integrated approach to achieving them based on the four interrelated strategic objectives stemming from the ILO's constitutional mandate: employment promotion, social protection (social security and labour protection), social dialogue and tripartism, and fundamental principles and rights at work.
2. The Declaration includes an annex on follow-up, the aim of which is "to address the means by which the Organization will assist the efforts of its Members to give effect to their commitment to pursue the four strategic objectives important for implementing the constitutional mandate of the Organization".¹ A central feature of this follow-up is a scheme of recurrent discussions by the International Labour Conference, each of them focusing on one of the ILO's strategic objectives set out in the Declaration.
3. Recurrent discussions are based on modalities agreed by the Governing Body so as to:
 - (i) understand better the diverse realities and needs of its Members with respect to each of the strategic objectives, respond more effectively to them, using all the means of action at its disposal, including standards related action, technical cooperation, and the technical and research capacity of the Office, and adjust its priorities and programmes of action accordingly; and
 - (ii) assess the results of the ILO's activities with a view to informing programme, budget and other governance decisions.²
4. The Governing Body put in place initial modalities for the recurrent discussions in March 2009.³ In June 2016, the Conference undertook a first evaluation of the Declaration's impact,⁴ the outcome of which identified several areas in which the modalities for recurrent discussions may require adjustments to better focus the discussions and ensure that they are grounded in prevailing realities and challenges.⁵ Following up on the decisions of the Conference, the Governing Body decided at its 328th Session (October–November 2016) on a new five-year cycle and sequence for recurrent discussions for the period 2018–24,⁶ and adopted adjusted modalities in the form of a framework for recurrent discussions at its 331st Session (October–November 2017).⁷ In March 2023, the Governing Body decided to initiate in 2026 a new cycle

¹ [Social Justice Declaration](#), Annex, I.A.

² [Social Justice Declaration](#), Annex, II.B.

³ [GB.304/SG/DECL/1\(Rev.\)](#), paras 12–16.

⁴ As envisaged in Part III of the Annex to the Declaration.

⁵ [Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work](#), 2016, para. 15.2.

⁶ This cycle of recurrent discussions concluded only in 2024 because the Conference did not take place in 2020 due to COVID-19, shifting the resumption of the recurrent discussion cycle to 2021.

⁷ [GB.331/PV](#), para. 42. The framework is set out in the appendix to document [GB.331/INS/3](#).

of recurrent discussions and to place an item on the strategic objective of social dialogue and tripartism on the agenda of the 114th Session (2026) of the Conference for such a discussion.⁸

5. Having discussed in March 2023 the possibility of a second evaluation of the Social Justice Declaration after the completion of the recurrent discussion cycle ending in 2030,⁹ the Governing Body decided at its 350th Session (March 2024) to review the modalities of recurrent discussions at its 356th Session (March–April 2026). The Governing Body indicated in March 2024 that this review should consider aspects that have been the subject of past proposals on modalities of recurrent discussions, namely: the preparation of the report for recurrent discussions; the organization of recurrent discussions; the outcome of the recurrent discussion and its follow-up; and linkages between recurrent discussions and the General Surveys and other items related to international labour standards. It was also suggested that the review should consider the link between recurrent discussions and the outcome of and follow-up to the Doha Political Declaration.¹⁰
6. Recalling the origins and rationale of the recurrent discussions and drawing on the guidance provided by the Governing Body in March 2024, the 2017 framework for recurrent discussions and the experience under the cycle of recurrent discussions from 2018 to 2024, this document identifies good practices and areas for improvement and offers suggestions on ways to enhance the effectiveness of the modalities of recurrent discussions.
7. Considering the timing for the publication of the background report (two months before the start of the Conference), the 2026 recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism would benefit only in part from the guidance provided by the Governing Body at the current session.

► II. Origins and rationale of the recurrent discussions

8. The introduction of recurrent discussions by the Social Justice Declaration in 2008 was based on the need to strengthen the ILO's capacity to assist its Member States in the context of globalization. In its 2004 report,¹¹ the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization had maintained that globalization could not be sustainable without strengthening its social dimension, and that the ILO had been playing, and was expected to continue to play, a major and unique role in a rapidly emerging global market economy. However, this raised the issue of the ILO's institutional capacity being commensurate to the challenge.¹²

⁸ GB.347/PV(Rev.), para. 58(d). The resumption of recurrent discussions in 2026, instead of 2025 as previously decided, permitted the Governing Body to take stock, at its 355th Session (November 2025), of the outcome of the Second World Summit for Social Development (Doha, 4–6 November 2025) and to discuss its follow-up.

⁹ GB.347/INS/2/1, paras 32–46; GB.347/PV(Rev.), paras 15–57; GB.350/INS/2/1, paras 42–48; GB.350/PV, para. 80(c).

¹⁰ GB.350/PV, paras 21–79.

¹¹ World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*, 2004.

¹² ILC.97/Report VI, 2008, para. 8.

9. During the 2007 and 2008 Conference discussions on the ILO's capacity – which culminated in the adoption of the Social Justice Declaration – the idea of “cyclical reviews” of the ILO's strategic objectives was considered as a governance mechanism, rather than as a new supervisory or reporting obligation. The central purpose of these cyclical reviews was to:
- systematically identify Members' needs and realities in relation to the ILO's strategic objectives;
 - assess the effectiveness and impact of ILO action in assisting Members in their efforts under the Declaration;
 - create a structured feedback loop between Members' needs, action taken by the Organization, the assessment by the Conference of the ILO's activities, and the adoption of a plan of action for a new cycle and its implementation.¹³
10. Cyclical reviews were meant to address a perceived structural weakness: the insufficiently institutionalized link between constituents' evolving needs in a globalized economy and the ILO's use of its diverse means of action (standards, technical cooperation, knowledge and policy advice).¹⁴ The underlying rationale was to operationalize the ILO's strategic objectives. It was expected that cyclical reviews would contribute to:
- strengthening the knowledge base and analytical capacity of the Office;
 - placing the tripartite Conference, as the highest and most representative organ, “in the driver's seat” of agenda-setting;
 - introducing regularity and predictability into the Governing Body's discussions on the setting of the agenda of the Conference, including by automatically fixing one item;
 - facilitating evaluation over time, by revisiting the same strategic objective on a recurring basis.¹⁵
11. Cyclical reviews – which were eventually referred to as recurrent discussions – were meant to have greater authority and influence than general discussions in shaping the choice of ILO programmes, as unlike general discussions, they are not policy discussions per se, although they are intended to identify, and have indeed identified, policy issues for further consideration by the appropriate bodies (see section V on follow-up to recurrent discussions and section VI on linkages with General Surveys and other standards-related items). The multi-year cycle would allow enough time to carry out the in-depth examination of each strategic objective in a wholistic manner which is required to reach conclusions with the desired weight, not only vis-à-vis the Governing Body but also vis-à-vis external funding.¹⁶
12. Furthermore, the cyclical reviews were also expected to inform strategic budgeting in the biennial programme and budget process. While exact synchronization was not possible given the longer cycle of the recurrent discussion (five years) versus the programme and budget

¹³ ILC.96, [Provisional Record No. 23](#), 2007, para. 48.

¹⁴ ILC.97/Report VI, paras 12–15.

¹⁵ ILC.96, [Provisional Record No. 23](#), [Conclusions on strengthening the ILO's capacity](#), point 5.

¹⁶ [ILC.96/Report V](#), 2007, para. 46.

cycles (two years), it was nonetheless suggested that the recurrent discussions could be linked to the Organization's six-year Strategic Policy Framework.¹⁷

► III. Preparation of the report for recurrent discussions

13. Given the constitutional functions of the Office as set out in article 10(1) of the Constitution, including the gathering and dissemination of information relevant to the ILO's objectives, the preparation of the report for recurrent discussions is an important endeavour for the Office, involving cooperation between different departments in Geneva and between headquarters and the field. As recommended by the framework for recurrent discussions adopted by the Governing Body in March 2017, working groups were established for the preparation of reports for all recurrent discussions of the cycle that ended in 2024. They consistently included specialists from all policy departments and colleagues from the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). Field colleagues were also involved, either as members of the working groups or by providing specific inputs upon request. It is suggested that relevant field specialists should be systematically involved in the development of background reports from an early stage, not only to ensure that regional and country realities, and constituents' needs, are more accurately captured, but also for greater field ownership and accountability in the implementation of priority follow-up actions. This would be in line with the ongoing ILO reform, which seeks to ensure better alignment between the field and headquarters and to enhance technical capacity in the field.¹⁸ The preparation process for the forthcoming report for the 2026 recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism, in which focus groups composed of social dialogue and labour relations specialists alongside ACT/EMP and ACTRAV specialists were established for each region and subregion to discuss good practices, opportunities and challenges, is an interesting model to consider for future recurrent discussions.
14. The 2017 framework acknowledges that, while recurrent discussions fulfil a common purpose, each strategic objective has its specificities. It therefore recommends a "common yet flexible structure" for reports and identifies the elements of such a common structure. The framework also stresses that reports should be succinct and evidence-based and should contain information on trends and action taken since the previous recurrent discussion on the same strategic objective. They should point to emerging trends and innovative, replicable approaches by drawing on a variety of sources, including syntheses of evaluative evidence or related high-level evaluations by the ILO Evaluation Office and General Surveys.
15. The length of recurrent discussion reports has declined since they were first introduced in 2010, from 65,000 words to an average of 30,000 words for the most recent reports. Overall, they have featured many of the components of the structure recommended by the framework. They typically provide a review and analysis of global trends and challenges, and examine action, including efforts concerning the ratification and implementation of ILO standards, that has been taken by constituents, often with the Office's support. The underlying aim is to identify good practices, constituents' needs and gaps. Common across all reports of the cycle

¹⁷ ILC.96/Report V, para. 50. The Strategic Policy Framework for 2010–15 covered a six-year period. It was followed by a two-year Transitional Strategic Plan for 2016–17, followed by Strategic Plans covering four years each for 2018–21, 2022–25 and 2026–29.

¹⁸ GB.356/INS/7.

that ended in 2024 is an assessment of action taken by the Organization in terms of governance, international labour standards and programming frameworks, and the formulation of proposals for future ILO priorities and activities to address the identified gaps and emerging needs. The assessment of the ILO's action has focused more on reporting on activities carried out in the period under review than on analysing their effectiveness and the underlying reasons. This is due in part to the sometimes limited availability of relevant information (see paragraph 19 below).

16. However, two components of the recommended structure for background reports have been unevenly addressed thus far. The first relates to the extent to which these reports analyse the integrated approach to decent work, the interactions of the strategic objective under review with the other three strategic objectives and how synergies among them could be strengthened. While some efforts have been made in this direction in recent years,¹⁹ they should become more systematic.
17. The other aspect that has received uneven attention across the background reports for recurrent discussions are the interrelations between the ILO's actions and those of other international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields. The Social Justice Declaration acknowledges that those organizations can make a substantial contribution to the implementation of an integrated approach towards decent work, and the framework calls for recurrent discussions to assess synergies between them and the ILO and to minimize contradictions or duplication.²⁰ Considering the ongoing reprioritization efforts within the ILO and the calls upon United Nations agencies to avoid duplication and ensure a more efficient use of scarce resources, striving for policy coherence within the multilateral system in respect of the four strategic objectives is currently even more significant. Therefore, it is suggested that background reports for future recurrent discussions should include a dedicated section on this important aspect.
18. Since 2012, the assessment of the ILO's action has been based on high-level evaluations or synthesis reviews. This practice was formally recognized as a means of providing independent evaluative material that could be incorporated into recurrent discussion processes. Whenever possible, the Evaluation Office has aligned the rolling evaluation work plan so that high-level evaluations are conducted in the year preceding the relevant recurrent discussion. When this has not been possible due to competing demands, a synthesis review has been undertaken instead. Synthesis reviews are reports that appraise previous evaluations of development cooperation projects or programmes falling within the remit of a particular strategic objective to draw findings and recommendations. They have proven to be very useful for strategic objectives that are associated with relatively rich development cooperation portfolios, but are of lesser relevance for strategic objectives with less robust development cooperation programmes.

¹⁹ For example, the background report for the **third recurrent discussion on employment (2022)** concluded, among other things, that: international labour standards constitute the basis of employment policy processes; to achieve full and productive employment, employment policies should be grounded in social dialogue and supported by strong institutions; and to fully address the future of work challenges necessitates a better integration of employment and social protection policies. The background report for the **second recurrent discussion on labour protection (2023)** considered that affording adequate and effective labour protection requires generating formal and productive employment, bringing labour protection and social protection closer together as they are both equally vital and mutually reinforcing, and creating an enabling environment, including for fostering tripartite and bipartite social dialogue as crucial mechanisms to ensure adequate labour protection.

²⁰ Social Justice Declaration, Part II.C, and Annex, Parts III.B(iii) and III.C; GB.331/INS/3, Appendix, para. 6(d).

19. High-level evaluations present two major advantages over synthesis reviews: they assess the whole range of ILO initiatives, spanning all means of action related to a strategic objective, and their findings and recommendations are submitted to the Governing Body for input prior to the Conference discussion. Therefore, the recommendations of high-level evaluations and the Governing Body's guidance provide valuable insights that lend further legitimacy to the reports for recurrent discussions. This was the case, for instance, with the high-level evaluation on fundamental principles and rights at work, which highlighted that work on fundamental principles and rights at work is an Office-wide responsibility; that the imbalanced focus among the five categories of fundamental principles needed to be redressed; and that synergies between the supervisory bodies and the fundamental principles were to be strengthened and strategic partnerships reinforced. These recommendations, which were endorsed by the Governing Body in November 2023, were incorporated in the background report and the outcome document of the recurrent discussion concerning the fundamental principles and rights at work in 2024. For the preparation of the report for the recurrent discussion on social protection (social security) in 2027, a high-level evaluation of the ILO's strategies and actions on universal social protection, and a synthesis review of related development cooperation activities, are currently being conducted and will be made available to the Office and the Governing Body in 2026, in time for their findings and guidance to be included in the background report.
20. Ideally, both types of assessments should be carried out for all recurrent discussions. When this may not be possible, high-level evaluations should be preferred over synthesis reviews because they cover all means of action, not only development cooperation. In the future, improved alignment of timelines is needed to ensure that synthesis reviews are completed early enough to inform the background report.
21. Better use of relevant information in the biennial programme implementation reports for the period under consideration should be also considered. These reports provide a wealth of information on results achieved under the four strategic objectives across regions and countries, lessons learned and InfoStories that highlight the impact of ILO interventions on workers and enterprises. Making better use of these reports would mean that background reports for recurrent discussions could be focused more on the results of and lessons learned from ILO action instead of providing an exhaustive compilation of the ILO's activities and the products developed under the relevant strategic objectives in the period under consideration.
22. Another key source of information for background reports of recurrent discussions are General Surveys (see section VI below).

► IV. Organization of recurrent discussions

23. Informal consultations with constituents – whether tripartite or separate – typically take place after the completion of the background report and focus on the proposed points for discussion and working methods of the Conference committee. Resource materials, such as videos, presentations or briefing notes, are developed and disseminated online. Upon request by constituents, briefing sessions are organized by the Office, including by field offices in collaboration with headquarters, to facilitate a better-informed discussion by the Conference.
24. The plan of work for recurrent discussions is typically structured in three main blocks: statements on the points for discussion; the drafting group, which prepares draft conclusions;

and the submission of amendments to the draft conclusions and their discussion by the full Committee.

25. The framework adopted by the Governing Body in 2017 suggested the inclusion of high-level exchanges with “representatives from relevant regional and international organizations, as well as with representatives of the social partners and government entities, and other external experts”²¹ to share their views on the linkages and complementarities between the strategic approach of their organizations and that of the ILO in respect of the strategic objective under review. The Governing Body underscored the usefulness, in principle, of engaging with external experts, but stressed the need for such exchanges to take place on a case-by-case basis and with the agreement of constituents, provided that the purpose of the panels and the role of the guest organizations and their contribution to the Decent Work Agenda were clearly defined and that such panels did not dilute the tripartite nature of the ILO’s decision-making process.²²
26. To date, only two high-level panels with representatives from relevant international organizations have been organized: one in the framework of the recurrent discussion on social protection (social security) in 2011 and one within the recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work in 2017. Without prejudice to the concerns and conditions mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the Governing Body may wish to discuss whether, and in which circumstances, it would be desirable to hold high-level interactive panels for assessing synergies and coherence with other international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields, in respect of specific strategic objectives of the ILO.²³ As mentioned earlier, this would be aligned with current efforts to streamline and increase the effectiveness of the multilateral system. As proposed in the 2017 framework, high-level panels could also be organized for ILO constituents to share country experiences in advancing integrated approaches towards the realization of decent work – an aspect that, as mentioned earlier, has received uneven consideration thus far. Considering that, in recent years, the statements on the points for discussion have typically concluded within the first day and a half, instead of the first three days, there would be sufficient time to hold possible interactive panels on the first Wednesday morning of each recurrent discussion.

► V. Outcome document and follow-up

27. The outcome document (or conclusions) adopted by the Committee and the Conference is based on the Committee’s deliberations. These conclusions are typically divided into three main parts: a background section outlining the main trends, progress and outstanding challenges in respect of the strategic objective under consideration, and, in some cases, guiding principles; a section on priority actions to be taken by Members during the upcoming period; and a final section listing the priority areas for ILO activity, including by the Office, to support Members in their endeavours. The proposed ILO activities generally cover all of the ILO’s means of action, ranging from research and knowledge development to international labour standards, capacity-building, policy advice and development cooperation.

²¹ GB.331/INS/3, Appendix, para. 12.

²² GB.331/PV, paras 36–40.

²³ This proposal would give effect to Part II.C of the Social Justice Declaration.

28. This structure is aligned with the guidance laid out in the framework for recurrent discussions adopted by the Governing Body at its 331st Session in 2017 and resembles the structure of the conclusions of general discussions. Some Members have argued that this similarity would conceal the distinct purposes of recurrent and general discussions, the former being aimed at providing specific guidance for governance, programming and allocation and mobilization of resources, and the latter being discussions of a purely policy nature. The Governing Body may wish to discuss the desirability of slight adjustments to the outline of the conclusions of recurrent discussions and how they should be reflected in the structure of the points for discussion. The conclusions could be divided into two main parts: one that highlights trends, including policy-related trends, emerging issues, constituents' needs and challenges across regions in respect of the relevant strategic objective; and a second part that would identify priority areas for action by the Organization, including the Office. Priority areas would cover all of the ILO's means of action and could include proposals for both standard-setting and general discussion items for inclusion on the agenda of future Conference sessions, and suggestions regarding the development of strategic partnerships or institution-building efforts for ILO constituents to ensure, for example, more effective application of ratified international standards or a better-informed design of employment policies or labour and social protection policies.
29. To give effect to the resolution and conclusions of recurrent discussions, the Office develops a follow-up action plan that is presented to the Governing Body at the subsequent November session for guidance and endorsement. This plan is intended to inform the preparation of future programme and budget proposals. While there is limited time available to prepare the plan, it would be important to organize, shortly after the end of the Conference session, briefing sessions for ILO field offices and ILO constituents to encourage more in-depth discussions on the outcome document and on ways to integrate it in Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), where they exist, or in other relevant regional or country level initiatives, taking into account the distinct realities and constituents' needs and expectations.
30. Follow-up action plans are generally divided into two main parts: a summary of the action to be taken by the Office under each means of action, which is fully aligned with the conclusions adopted by the Conference, and an appendix that provides further details for each proposed high-level output.²⁴ While action plans have followed a similar approach in their development, some in the last cycle of recurrent discussions have had slight differences in the level of detail provided and the applicable time frames. For the sake of harmonization and succinctness, it is proposed that the action plan should comprise a brief "background and content" section, highlighting the main themes of the resolution and conclusions adopted by the Conference, followed by a table listing high-level outputs under each means of action – which correspond to the relevant points of the conclusions, programme and budget outputs and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets – and time frames.
31. Progress, or lack thereof, in the implementation of the action plan is reported to the Governing Body on an annual basis over a period of two consecutive years. The two-year reporting period is based on a decision by the Governing Body at its 323rd Session (March 2015) with a view to streamlining the Second Supplementary Report to the Report of the Director-General on the Follow-up to Governing Body Decisions.²⁵

²⁴ The appendix includes to which point(s) of the conclusions the output refers, the corresponding programme and budget output and SDG target, and the time frame.

²⁵ GB.323/PV, para. 178(b); see also GB.323/INS/10, para. 17(b); GB.323/WP/GBC/2, para. 8.

32. As indicated above, the areas for the ILO's priority action inform the ILO's programming and resource allocation for the subsequent four years. However, the alignment of the programme and budget with the priorities and actions agreed by the Conference is greater when recurrent discussions take place at the same time as programme and budget proposals are being developed. When these discussions are not synchronized, it becomes more challenging to accommodate activities that might be resource-demanding, such as tripartite expert meetings or tripartite technical meetings. As part of the ongoing reprioritization discussions, the Governing Body may wish to consider the need for a mechanism whereby some funds are reserved for follow-up to recurrent discussions.
33. In the ongoing discussions on reform of the ILO to enhance its capacity to fulfil its constitutional mandate in a period of profound transformation in the world of work and heightened expectations of multilateral institutions, recurrent discussions can play an important role in enhancing the ILO's overall impact.
34. Thus far, recurrent discussions have influenced the standard-setting agenda of the Conference (see section VI) and have sometimes dealt with the same issues but from distinct and complementary perspectives. This has resulted in the eventual inclusion of such themes on the agenda of the Conference for the development of a related ILO policy stance. For example, the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security) (2021) affirmed the importance of "invest[ing] in the care economy to facilitate access to affordable and quality childcare and long-term care services as an integral part of social protection systems".²⁶ In 2023, the second recurrent discussion on labour protection, which was informed by the General Survey on decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers²⁷ and the conclusions of the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) in 2022, stressed the importance of a balanced sharing of family responsibilities and increased investment in the care economy for a more equal representation of women and men in employment. The Conference subsequently held a general discussion on decent work in the care economy in 2024.
35. Recurrent discussions have also been instrumental in paving the way for the institutionalization of global programmes, such as the programme on estimating and operationalizing living wages within broader wage-setting processes. At the third recurrent discussion on employment, the Conference called on the ILO to play a leadership role with a focus on "contributing to a better understanding of living wages by undertaking peer-reviewed research on concepts and estimations in that respect, and by providing assistance to Member States, upon request".²⁸ This mandate was reinforced in the second recurrent discussion on labour protection, whose conclusions state that the ILO should intensify knowledge development and capacity-building activities, particularly in relation to "peer-reviewed research on concepts and estimations of living wages, as well as technical assistance to Member States, upon request, in line with the 2022 resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment, and on that basis a proposal to the Governing Body, for its consideration, for a tripartite follow-up discussion on wage policies, including living wages".²⁹ The Governing Body endorsed the Office's proposal to convene a meeting of experts on wage

²⁶ ILC.109/Resolution III, 2021, point 13(g) of the conclusions.

²⁷ ILC.110/Report III (Part B).

²⁸ ILC.110/Resolution IV, 2022, point 45(b) of the conclusions.

²⁹ ILC.111/Resolution IV, 2023, point 24(j) of the conclusions.

policies, including living wages, in February 2024,³⁰ which led to the historic tripartite agreement on wage policies, including living wages.³¹

36. It would be important to continue strengthening synergies among recurrent discussions, general discussions, standard-related initiatives and global programmes to prevent any dispersion or fragmentation of the ILO's action and to contribute to a strategic approach towards setting the agenda of the Conference.

► VI. Linkages with General Surveys and other standards-related items

37. During the preparatory discussions for the Social Justice Declaration, the synergies between the General Survey undertaken by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) in accordance with article 19 of the Constitution and the future recurrent discussions were discussed in great detail.³² The annex to the Social Justice Declaration itself acknowledges that the existing modalities for applying article 19 may need some adaptation.³³
38. Indeed, the General Surveys under article 19 of the Constitution are a key pillar of information for the recurrent discussions and are intended to facilitate better consideration and integration of standards-related aspects into the recurrent discussion. They identify good practices and legal and practical gaps in the implementation of the selected instruments, obstacles to ratification and needs for technical assistance. The linkage between General Surveys and recurrent discussions also increases the visibility and impact of the General Surveys.
39. At its 312th Session (November 2011), the Governing Body decided to establish, as a component of the ILO's standards policy, a standards review mechanism³⁴ to give effect to the requirement of the Social Justice Declaration that the Organization must "promote the ILO's standard-setting policy as a cornerstone of ILO activities by enhancing its relevance to the world of work, and ensure the role of standards as a useful means of achieving the constitutional objectives of the Organization". Since the first meeting of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group in February 2016, its work plan has been structured around the four strategic objectives.³⁵
40. The introduction of recurrent discussions called for synchronization with General Surveys, which should be discussed by the CAS at least a year prior to the recurrent discussion. While this has been the case over the years, there have been a few exceptions in which such a synchronization did not take place. The 2017 General Survey covering instruments concerning occupational safety and health was based on an ad hoc decision taken by the Governing Body in November 2014, since the decision on the next cycle of recurrent discussions starting in 2017 was pending the outcome of the evaluation of the impact of the Social Justice

³⁰ GB.349/PV(Rev.1), para. 148(b).

³¹ GB.350/POL/1.

³² ILC.97/Report VI, Appendix I; see also ILC.97, [Provisional Record No. 13](#).

³³ Social Justice Declaration, Annex, I.B.

³⁴ GB.312/PV, para. 577.

³⁵ GB.326/LILS/3/2.

Declaration.³⁶ The 2018 General Survey on working time was not linked to a recurrent discussion, since there was a break in recurrent discussions in 2019 due to the celebrations of the ILO Centenary. And the 2024 General Survey on labour administration in a changing world of work was chosen by the Governing Body at its 343rd Session (November 2021) to ensure alignment with the recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism, the first of a new cycle of recurrent discussions proposed to resume in 2026. As a result, for the latest General Survey there is a two-year gap between the discussion at the CAS, which took place in 2024, and the connected recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism, planned for this year.³⁷

41. Reliance on General Surveys to inform recurrent discussions also entailed a broadening of their scope to include families of instruments relevant to the strategic objective under review.³⁸ The link between General Surveys and recurrent discussions involved not only an alignment of the subjects of General Surveys with those of recurrent reports, but also a new design of article 19 questionnaires. The changes to the article 19 report form were discussed by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations at its session in 2007, and, at its 303rd Session (November 2008), the Governing Body proposed a new approach to the article 19 questionnaire prepared in relation to the General Survey on employment instruments (linked to the first recurrent discussion on employment) to ensure that the report was clearer, more concise, easier to understand and more user-friendly.³⁹
42. At its 355th Session (November 2025), the Governing Body discussed the potential role of the General Survey in helping to provide a common understanding, at the institutional level, of the various national circumstances influencing the ratification and effective implementation of selected up-to-date standards, particularly in countries where outdated instruments remain in force; the prospects of, and obstacles to, their ratification; and the technical assistance that may be required to overcome these obstacles.⁴⁰ The Governing Body took a decision⁴¹ regarding the 2027, 2028 and 2029 General Surveys, while maintaining the link between the recurrent discussions and the selected General Surveys, with each General Survey scheduled to be discussed by the CAS one year before each recurrent discussion. The Governing Body also discussed the content and form of the forthcoming General Surveys for 2027–29 and agreed to discuss the corresponding questionnaire at its 356th Session (March–April 2026).⁴²
43. While instruments for a General Survey are normally selected by subject (such as migrant workers, labour administration or occupational safety and health (OSH)), the 2027, 2028 and 2029 General Surveys each cover a range of up-to-date instruments across various subjects.⁴³

³⁶ GB.322/LILS/4.

³⁷ GB.343/LILS/2.

³⁸ ILC.97/Report VI, Appendix III, para. 8.

³⁹ GB.303/PV, para. 252(iii); GB.303/LILS/6.

⁴⁰ GB.355/LILS/3, para. 15.

⁴¹ GB.355/PV, para. 1120.

⁴² GB.356/LILS/3.

⁴³ The General Survey of 2027, to be discussed by the CAS in 2028, will cover maternity protection (Convention No. 183), in addition to work in fishing, dock work and indigenous and tribal peoples.

The General Survey of 2028, to be discussed by the CAS in 2029, will cover the fundamental OSH Conventions (the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)), as well as the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and certain technical OSH Conventions on construction, mining and occupational health services.

The General Survey of 2029, to be discussed by the CAS in 2030, will cover instruments relevant to three strategic objectives: **employment** (the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), and the Employment Service Convention, 1948

These instruments have been selected due to their link with an outdated instrument and have been the subject of a recommendation from the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group, endorsed by the Governing Body, for their ratification, targeted promotion and effective implementation.

44. Recurrent discussions have influenced the standard-setting agenda of the Conference. In the second recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work (2017), the Conference requested the ILO to “explore the relationship between the fundamental principles and rights at work as defined in the 1998 Declaration and safe and healthy working conditions”,⁴⁴ initiating the discussion that led to the recognition of a safe and healthy working environment as a fundamental principle and right at work in 2022 and the amendment of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).
45. After the second recurrent discussion on employment (2014), in which the Conference invited the Office to “[b]uild the knowledge base and provide advice on effective systems for lifelong learning and quality apprenticeship systems”,⁴⁵ the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group examined in February 2016 the follow-up to be undertaken on nine outdated instruments relating to the strategic objective of employment, and identified a regulatory gap on the topic of apprenticeships. In November 2018, the Governing Body decided to place a standard-setting item on this topic on the agenda of the 100th Session of the Conference, which led to the adoption of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208).
46. In addition, there may be some merit in exploring how to better use the information gathered by the Office through the annual reviews under the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration, in relation not only to the recurrent discussions on the fundamental principles and rights at work, but also to those on social dialogue and labour protection. In fact, the annual reviews contain valuable information from Governments that have not yet ratified the fundamental Conventions. They provide details on ratification, the reasons preventing ratification and the technical assistance that they would like to receive from the Office to address obstacles to ratification and to achieve the full realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work enshrined in the ten fundamental Conventions.
47. For a better-informed assessment of how recurrent discussions are advancing the ILO’s normative agenda, the Governing Body may wish to consider recommending the inclusion, in future recurrent discussion reports, of a section examining the interlinkages among the different strands of normative action, including development cooperation aimed at supporting standards-related work,⁴⁶ the follow-up to the Standards Review Mechanism and the conclusions of the CAS on General Surveys and corresponding outcomes.

(No. 88)); **social dialogue and tripartism** (the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160), the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)); and **social protection** (the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) (Part IV), the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118), and the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168)).

⁴⁴ [Conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work](#), point 7(k).

⁴⁵ [Conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment](#), point D(d).

⁴⁶ GB.356/POL/4.

► VII. Link to the Doha Political Declaration

- 48.** The Doha Political Declaration and the three-pronged approach endorsed by the Governing Body in November 2025⁴⁷ on the follow-up to the Second World Summit on Social Development represent a strategic opportunity for alignment between specific commitments of direct relevance to the ILO's mandate and recurrent discussions. The strategic approach comprises the following three components:⁴⁸
1. integrating relevant commitments into the ILO's work programme;
 2. contributing to the Summit's institutional follow-up;
 3. contributing to a strengthened and effective multilateralism centred on social development and social justice.
- 49.** The Conference resolution concerning the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025, entrusts the ILO, including its tripartite constituents, with playing a leading role in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit in areas pertaining to its mandate.⁴⁹
- 50.** As such, recurrent discussions provide an important opportunity to better understand the diverse needs and priorities of ILO Member States regarding the implementation of the Summit's outcomes, and to adapt the ILO's actions accordingly. At the same time, they also enable the Conference to assess how effective the ILO's action has been in supporting Member States in delivering on relevant commitments under the Doha Political Declaration pertaining to the ILO's strategic objectives.
- 51.** For the upcoming cycle of recurrent discussions (2026–30), the commitments under the Doha Political Declaration that are specifically linked to the four strategic objectives will be taken into account when assessing emerging needs and challenges of Member States and the relevant support and initiatives carried out by the Office, and in developing proposals for future priorities and activities. The insights of the recurrent discussions, the related resolutions and the follow-up action plans will constitute an important source for the preparation by the Office of biennial reports to be submitted to the Governing Body.

► VIII. Conclusions and way forward

- 52.** The discussion on the modalities of recurrent discussions is an opportunity for the ILO to enhance the Organization's impact in fulfilling its constitutional mandate in a period of profound transformations in the world of work and heightened expectations of multilateral institutions. Recurrent discussions are a tool for reinvigorating the Organization, including Office action to promote decent work in response to identified needs and priorities of constituents, through all of the ILO's means of action, from international labour standards and knowledge development to statistical work, institution-building, policy advice and development cooperation.

⁴⁷ GB.355/PV, para. 144.

⁴⁸ GB.355/INS/4(Rev.1).

⁴⁹ ILC.113/Resolution III, para. 3.

53. Over the years, the synergies among recurrent discussions and general discussions, standard-related initiatives and global programmes have increased, contributing to a strategic approach towards the setting of the agenda of the Conference. This has helped reduce the dispersion and fragmentation of the ILO's action. Reinforcing these synergies is even more important today, considering the ILO's ongoing efforts to maximize efficiency gains and enhance its relevance and impact, including within the multilateral system.
54. Overall, the framework for recurrent discussions adopted by the Governing Body in 2017 to guide the preparation of background reports, the organization of the recurrent discussions and the corresponding outcome documents and follow-up remains valid and relevant. There is, nonetheless, scope for improvement in a few areas on which guidance is sought from the Governing Body.
55. Regarding the preparation of background reports, it is suggested that they include sections on: (a) the interplay of the strategic objective under review with the other three strategic objectives and how to enhance these synergies; (b) the interrelations between the ILO's actions and those of other international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields; and (c) the interactions among the different strands of normative action, including development cooperation in support of standards-related work, the follow-up to the Standards Review Mechanism and the conclusions of the CAS on General Surveys and corresponding outcomes. In the case of recurrent discussions on the fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and labour protection, the information gathered through the annual reviews under the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration should also be reflected. Furthermore, whenever possible, both high-level evaluations and synthesis reviews should be made available and completed early enough to inform the background reports.
56. On the organization of recurrent discussions, there may be merit in envisaging, on an ad hoc basis and under conditions to be determined each time, high-level panels on synergies with other international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields. This would help avoid duplication and foster meaningful partnerships.
57. As for the outcome document and its follow-up, the Governing Body may wish to consider structuring the tripartite outcomes in two parts: one on trends, including policy trends, emerging issues, and constituents' needs and challenges across regions in respect of the relevant strategic objective; and a second part on priority areas for action by the Organization and the Office. As recurrent discussions are not aligned with the discussions concerning the Strategic Policy Framework or the programme and budget proposals, the Governing Body may also wish to consider the need for a mechanism whereby some funds are reserved for the follow-up to recurrent discussions.

► Draft decision

58. The Governing Body:

- (a) **reaffirmed the role of recurrent discussions in strengthening the capacity of the ILO to support Members in promoting decent work through the four strategic objectives and in contributing to a more strategic setting of the Conference agenda;**
- (b) **requested the Director-General to take the necessary steps to follow up on the guidance it provided during the discussion of document GB.356/INS/6 with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the recurrent discussions for the current cycle (2026–30).**