

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 6 May 2026

► Written information provided by the Government of Belarus on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry

The Government of Belarus has repeatedly presented the necessary counterarguments in relation to the unfounded, politically motivated accusations against it of non-compliance with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), failure to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and ILO bodies, and persecution of trade union activists for the allegedly peaceful exercise of lawful activities.

Taking into account that Belarus will once again be considered by the Committee on the Application of Standards during the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference, the Government is forced to reiterate its comments regarding the actual state of affairs on the issues raised.

The events of 2020 had nothing to do with processes of social dialogue in the labour sphere or the legitimate exercise of trade union or other civil rights and freedoms. The protest activities, artificially instigated by destructive forces, were not caused by economic or social reasons, were illegal in nature, and had the goal of seizing power through unconstitutional means.

Citizens who were brought to justice and are serving (or have served) sentences in places of imprisonment, and who appear on lists of opponents, committed specific criminal offences; many of them admitted their guilt. Their illegal actions had no connection with real trade union work to protect workers' rights and the peaceful exercise of guaranteed freedoms. No demands of an economic or social nature were made during the illegal actions.

The Government has repeatedly explained the grounds for holding these individuals accountable. In most cases, the charges concerned extremist or terrorism-related crimes. Some citizens were members of the foreign-funded extremist group "Rabochy Rukh" ("Labour Movement"), whose activities were aimed at destabilizing the situation in the country and causing damage to the economy (including the illegal shutdown of strategic enterprises, the collection and transmission of classified information about the activities of large industrial facilities to external actors, economic sabotage to destabilize workforces, the preparation of sabotage and extremist acts, and pressure on law enforcement officials).

Systematic attempts by Belarus's opponents to portray these individuals as victims of an anti-union campaign or political repression are driven by a desire to use ILO mechanisms to exert undue pressure on Belarus for geopolitical purposes.

Trade union status does not give citizens and organizations carte blanche to violate the law or engage in destructive activities detrimental to the interests of society and the State. Generally recognized international standards, including ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98, do not contain provisions that allow for violations of national law. By ensuring that those who committed the crimes were brought to justice, the Belarusian authorities did not violate any international obligations.

At the same time, no one is persecuted for trade union activity in Belarus. On the contrary, legitimate trade union work is encouraged.

Belarus has created all the necessary conditions to ensure that its citizens can freely exercise their right to freedom of association, and that trade unions can be freely established and carry out their lawful activities without external interference or discrimination. Guarantees of trade union rights are enshrined in legislation and implemented in practice. Unlawful restrictions on trade union rights and the creation of obstacles to the exercise of their powers are not permitted.

Citizens of the country freely and actively exercise their right to join trade unions. Today, the national trade union centre, represented by the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB), represents the interests of approximately 4 million citizens, a figure that speaks for itself.

In turn, trade unions, their leaders and activists freely carry out their activities aimed at protecting the labour and socio-economic rights and interests of workers, improving the standard of living and social security of citizens, including through interaction with government agencies and employers within the social partnership system.

Any claims that trade unions and citizens of Belarus are persecuted for trade union activities or for the lawful and peaceful exercise of civil rights and freedoms are absurd and unfounded.

Such claims are tools of information warfare employed by opponents of Belarus, as well as by politically motivated individuals and organizations that shamelessly exploit human rights issues and international platforms to discredit the country, strengthen sanctions, weaken its economy and social sphere, and destabilize public sentiment in order to change foreign policy priorities and the vector of integration.

In view of the above facts, calls addressed to the Belarusian authorities for the immediate reversal of court decisions, the release of citizens punished for allegedly lawful trade union activities, the removal of all charges against them, and the restoration of their rights, with the provision of compensation, have no objective basis and border on interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State.

At the same time, the Government of Belarus, for objective reasons, cannot fulfil the relevant requirements of the ILO supervisory bodies, since there are simply no citizens in the country who would be punished for the lawful and peaceful exercise of trade union or other civil rights and freedoms. Persons held in places of detention and positioned as "innocent victims of repression" are brought to legal responsibility for committing unlawful acts.

In response to the accusations levelled against the Government regarding its disregard for the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and ILO bodies, and its failure to provide any new information on their implementation, we note that detailed information and

comprehensive explanations have already been submitted to the International Labour Office on numerous occasions as well as during the consideration of the “Belarusian case”.

The national legislation and law enforcement practices do not contradict the country's obligations to comply with ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Trade unions have every right to hold mass events to protect the interests of their members. The procedures for organizing and conducting such events do not conflict with the principles of freedom of association and are fully consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Legislative norms that provide for punishment for violations of these procedures, which have serious negative consequences, are aimed at preventing socially dangerous unlawful acts that threaten the life and health of citizens. These norms are not a deterrent to the exercise of the right to freedom of lawful and peaceful assembly.

Amendments to legislation on mass events and to the Criminal Code, aimed at combating the organization, preparation and commission of actions that infringe upon the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the State, the foundations of the constitutional order and public safety, were a necessary step to bring the legal framework into line with the challenges Belarus faced in 2020 as a result of a planned attack on the State by unfriendly forces.

To defend the interests of workers and resolve any labour disputes that arise, trade unions are guaranteed the right to organize and conduct strikes. The ban on putting forward political demands during strikes is a justified international practice (that is, enterprises should not be turned into levers of pressure to achieve political goals).

Trade unions have the right to cooperate with trade unions of other countries and, at their discretion, to join international and other trade union associations and organizations.

The legislation on foreign gratuitous aid does not prohibit trade unions from receiving such aid for public benefit or socially significant purposes. The aid registration procedure is simple and can be completed quickly. The prohibition on receiving and using such aid for political and propaganda purposes applies to all organizations (not just trade unions). This prohibition is based on national security interests and is unjustifiably linked to Articles 5 and 6 of Convention No. 87.

In the context of the pressure exerted on Belarus, the implementation of demands, transmitted through ILO bodies, to loosen controls on funds coming from abroad, to relieve trade unions and citizens of responsibility for gross violations of the law during mass events, and to legalize political strikes will create conditions for an increased destructive influence on the situation in the country. These demands do not meet national interests, do not serve the purpose of ensuring the well-being of citizens, are aimed at destroying the foundations of state stability and constitute interference in the internal affairs of the country, which is contrary to the principles, goals and objectives of the ILO.

In view of the accusations that the Government is ignoring the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, we note that detailed information on their implementation, confirming the illegality of the anti-Belarusian campaign launched within the ILO and the application of article 33 of the ILO Constitution to Belarus, has been repeatedly sent to the International Labour Office for the attention of the bodies authorized to consider this matter.

The Government, in cooperation with social partners and the International Labour Office, carried out extensive work, as a result of which 10 of the 12 recommendations (Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11 and 12) were implemented. Recommendations 9 and 10 have been implemented

to the extent that they do not conflict with national interests. In implementing the recommendations, the Belarusian side strictly followed the agreements reached with the International Labour Office and jointly developed action plans. ILO bodies have repeatedly noted with interest the measures taken, stating that progress has been made.

In view of the ongoing attempts to “harm” Belarus by discrediting the FPB and depriving it of its right to represent workers’ interests within the ILO, we note the absence of any objective grounds to question the legitimacy, independence, and representative nature of the national trade union centre.

The FPB is the only trade union association that extends its activities throughout the country and is the largest public organization, uniting the absolute majority of workers in all sectors of the economy in all regions of Belarus.

The FPB includes 15 member organizations – sectoral trade unions at national level – with, as already noted, a total membership of approximately 4 million people.

At the regional level, the activities of the FPB member organizations are coordinated by organizational structures – six regional associations and the Minsk City Association of Trade Unions.

The organizational structure of FPB member organizations includes: 83 regional (Minsk City) organizations of sectoral trade unions; 5 united sectoral trade union organizations; 493 district and city organizations; 75 united trade union organizations; and 23,670 primary trade union organizations.

Thus, the FPB is the most representative association of workers in Belarus in terms of the number of trade union members whose interests it represents.

As for the question raised by opponents about the “authenticity” of the FPB as a genuine trade union centre, its independence from government bodies, political parties and other public associations and organizations is clearly stated in its Charter.

The FPB independently develops and approves its Charter, determines its structure, elects its governing and audit bodies, organizes its activities, and conducts its own personnel policy. The FPB cooperates with other public associations to protect the labour and socio-economic rights and legitimate interests of trade union members while respecting each other’s status and maintaining independence.

The independence of the FPB is confirmed by the basic principles of its organization and activities, including: voluntary membership and withdrawal; equal rights and obligations of all member organizations, as well as their organizational and financial independence; collegiality and transparency in the work of the elected bodies of the FPB and their regular reporting to member organizations and the FPB Congress; and the participation of all member organizations in the formation of the elected governing and audit bodies of the FPB through elections at the Congress and the FPB Council from among representatives recommended by trade unions and delegates to the Congress and the FPB Council.

The FPB governing bodies are the FPB Congress (the highest governing body), the FPB Council (the governing body between Congresses), and the FPB Council Presidium (the governing body between FPB Council meetings). The FPB Chairperson, his/her deputies, the FPB Council, its Presidium, and the FPB Audit Commission are elected at the FPB Congress.

In accordance with the Charter, the property (monetary funds) of the FPB is formed from entrance and membership fees, funds received from entrepreneurial, educational, publishing and other activities, voluntary donations, and other sources not prohibited by law.

The activities of the FPB are not controlled or financed by the Government of Belarus.

The inclusion of representatives of the FPB, as the most representative organization of workers in the country, in the tripartite delegations of Belarus to participate in sessions of the International Labour Conference is carried out in full compliance with the ILO Constitution.

Unfounded claims by opponents of Belarus about the alleged control of the FPB by government authorities, calls to limit the legitimate participation of the FPB in the work of the International Labour Conference, and the practice of blocking the participation of FPB representatives in meetings of the Workers' group, which contradicts ILO principles, are blatant attacks on the legitimate right of Belarusian workers to freedom of association, which require condemnation and the harshest assessments from the ILO tripartite constituents.

Belarus is an ILO member, pays membership fees in good faith, and has every right to ensure that its representative workers' and employers' organizations participate freely in the activities of the ILO and can freely, in a spirit of open dialogue, express their position on any issues concerning the situation in the country.

At the same time, the Government insists that it is illegal and unfounded to position structures unrelated to Belarus as representatives of the national trade union movement.

We would like to once again draw the attention of the ILO bodies and tripartite constituents to the fact that the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), as well as the organizations that were previously a part of it, no longer exist. A small group of former leaders and activists of the BKDP, who continue to discredit Belarus abroad, cannot objectively be considered a trade union association with the right to represent the interests of the country's workers.

The group of individuals calling themselves the BKDP does not carry out any activities in Belarus, is based abroad, and has no connection to the national trade union movement. It does not represent the interests of Belarusian workers, as the trade unions that were part of the BKDP have de facto and de jure ceased their work, have no members or primary organizations at enterprises in the country, and do not carry out activities to protect the labour and socio-economic rights and interests of workers. The group is financed by organizations and structures acting in the interests of foreign states that pursue unfriendly policies towards Belarus, that is, they do not meet the criteria of representativeness and independence.

In fact, today, a destructive cell operates under the guise of the BKDP, whose activities are limited to promoting an anti-Belarusian agenda using ILO instruments and procedures. In this regard, information provided by "the BKDP representatives" should be viewed critically, since it does not at all reflect the real situation in Belarus.

In view of the above circumstances, the International Labour Office, ILO bodies and constituents, the Workers' and Employers' groups, as well as international organizations and structures have no legal basis for interaction with "the BKDP representatives". At the same time, the Government of Belarus cannot be obligated to provide comments in response to appeals from illegitimate structures not associated with the country.

Statements by Belarus' opponents about the absence of "genuine" and "independent" trade unions in the country (due to the cessation of the BKDP's activities) and, as a consequence, social dialogue, demonstrate a complete misunderstanding of the situation.

In Belarus, a system of social partnership has been created and is functioning, within the framework of which government bodies, trade unions and employers successfully interact in the development and implementation of the state's socio-economic policy through

negotiations, consultations, and the rejection of confrontation and social conflicts. Such approaches make it possible to take into account the social and labour interests of various strata and groups of society as much as possible, as well as to support the stable economic and social development of the State.

Trade unions and employers actively participate in the development and updating of legislation, act as equal partners with government bodies in dialogue within the framework of advisory bodies – councils on labour and social issues – and initiate and participate in collective bargaining on the conclusion, amendment, and supplementation of tariff (sectoral) agreements and collective bargaining agreements at the enterprise level. National trade unions and employer associations are parties to the General Agreement for 2025–2025 signed with the Government, which regulates relations in the social and labour sphere at the national level and serves as the basis for tariff (sectoral) and local agreements, and collective bargaining agreements at the enterprise level.

Thus, based on the facts presented above, it can be concluded that there were and are no objective grounds for applying article 33 of the ILO Constitution to Belarus and for adopting a resolution during the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference (June 2023) calling for a review of relations with Belarus.

The “Belarusian case”, discussed several times a year at ILO forums, is built on distorted facts, false accusations against the Government, and the desire of the country’s opponents to use ILO instruments and mechanisms to put pressure on Belarus. Moreover, the subject matter of the claims brought against Belarus significantly exceeds the scope of the ILO mandate, which has been repeatedly noted by the Organization’s tripartite participants and is unacceptable.

All this points to a dead-end situation, the way out of which can and should be the rejection of unlawful pressure on Belarus, the prompt repeal of the 2023 anti-Belarusian resolution and all subsequent discriminatory decisions, the acceptance of the realities and sovereign interests of the country, the legal recognition of the FPB as a genuine workers’ association, and the resumption of full cooperation with the Government of Belarus.

If the necessary measures are not taken now, ILO budget funds will continue to be spent on fruitless meetings on the “Belarusian case”, reports, conclusions and recommendations from ILO bodies based on unreliable information, and the activities of the ILO Special Envoy, who is simply forced to repeat the politicized narratives of Belarus’s opponents.

In the current situation, the Government of Belarus does not see the political or practical expediency of interacting with the missions proposed to be sent to the country or with the appointed ILO Special Envoy, and opposes attempts to coordinate efforts with other UN agencies to exert pressure on the country.

At the same time, the Government of Belarus reaffirms its commitment to fundamental principles and rights at work and expresses its readiness for constructive dialogue with the International Labour Office and ILO bodies, subject to the condition that the realities and sovereign interests of the Republic of Belarus are duly taken into account.

In this regard, the Government of Belarus calls on all ILO tripartite constituents and the Committee on the Application of Standards to pay due attention to this information, which reflects the actual state of affairs on the issues raised by ILO bodies. This will help prevent further unfounded and politically motivated decisions regarding Belarus within the ILO.