

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 29 May 2026

- **Director-General's report on the latest developments regarding the situation of freedom of association and forced labour in Myanmar and compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry established to examine the observance by Myanmar of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)**

Introduction

At its 356th Session (March–April 2026), the Governing Body took note with utmost concern that isolated measures taken by the military authorities to release some unionists fell short of demonstrating genuine engagement or credible progress towards full implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Commission of Inquiry in its [2023 report](#); called on the military authorities to provide all information on the measures taken to implement these recommendations by 24 April 2026 for transmission to the Committee on the Application of Standards; and requested the Director-General to prepare a report on the latest developments in the country to inform the Committee on the Application of Standards at the 114th Session (2026) of the International Labour Conference ([GB.356/INS/13\(Rev.2\)](#)). The Governing Body once again called on the military authorities to end immediately all acts of violence and all violations identified by the Commission of Inquiry regarding freedom of association and forced labour and to provide the necessary guarantees and assurances at the highest level that would allow an ILO mission to visit the country and carry out its mandate in full independence. The Governing Body further took note of the Office's plan of action to implement the [resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on the subject of Myanmar](#), adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 113th Session (2025). Pursuant to the plan of action, the Office was to: (i) continue supporting Myanmar employers, workers and their organizations and strengthen collaboration across the United Nations system, ensuring coordinated action on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the 2025 resolution; (ii) participate in high-level round-tables with interested and relevant stakeholders with the aim of exchanging information on matters relevant to the situation of freedom of association and prohibition of forced labour in the country, as well as reflecting on possible

action to facilitate and encourage the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the 2025 Conference resolution; and (iii) continue monitoring the situation in Myanmar with regard to the exercise of freedom of association and the prohibition of forced or compulsory labour, including through the operationalization of a monitoring mechanism for the confidential and credible documentation of ongoing violations.

Information provided by Myanmar

In a communication dated 21 April 2024, the military authorities transmitted information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry which has been made available in full on the Committee on the Application of Standards website.¹ The military authorities once again reiterated that Myanmar has been implementing labour-related recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry in accordance with existing domestic laws, rules, notifications and directives. They also indicated that Myanmar has been regularly providing updated information to the Director-General and has been cooperating with the Office.

Latest developments

Situation in the country

The human rights situation in Myanmar remains deeply concerning, with widespread reports of ongoing violations across civil, political, economic and social rights in the context of prolonged conflict, political repression and institutional breakdown. The labour rights situation reflects these broader dynamics, with reports of serious restrictions on freedom of association and persistent labour abuses. The overall environment is characterized by restrictions on fundamental freedoms, large-scale displacement, economic hardship and pervasive protection risks, contributing to a situation in which many communities face heightened vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and insecurity. A severe economic downturn – driven by conflict, sanctions, mass displacement and an escalating energy crisis – has pushed households into acute hardship marked by shortages of food, consumer goods and essential medicines. Prolonged economic contraction, soaring inflation, regime-imposed controls on trade and remittances, and skills shortages exacerbated by the conflict, displacement and forced conscription are constraining the formal economy, disrupting supply chains and driving sharp increases in the prices of basic goods.

The international trade union movement reports an intensifying assault on Myanmar's independent labour movement following the general elections, which are widely considered to have fallen short of being free and fair, and the subsequent installation of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing as President of Myanmar. This includes a rise in regime-backed unions, which are nominated by the military to attend various meetings, as well as continued arrests and surveillance that have forced genuine unions underground. Despite such repression, independent unions continue to support workers in recovering unpaid wages and document widespread labour abuses, especially in the garment sector. Other sectors are also severely impacted, including healthcare, education, municipality and railways, with the Office having received recent submissions alleging human and labour rights violations, including violations of basic civil liberties, military repression of workers, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, discrimination at work, coercion through threat of conscription and restrictions on freedom of

¹ CAN/D/Special sitting Myanmar-C.29-C.87.

association. The Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM) and other independent unions reportedly continue to face passport revocations, loss of citizenship and systematic persecution.

Forced labour practices in Myanmar are widely reported to continue, with indications of persistent military practices, such as forced portering and compulsory support for military operations. Myanmar's recruitment system for migrant workers is becoming more dangerous as forced conscription, tighter travel controls and soaring agency fees push people into debt and irregular migration routes. Fraudulent recruiters and deceptive contracts are proliferating, while new travel approvals for persons with Overseas Worker Identification Cards are further contributing to the shrinking of formal channels, exposing workers to trafficking and forced labour across the migration cycle, particularly in a context where displacement and economic hardship appear to heighten vulnerability to exploitation.

The Office also received a communication from the National Unity Government (NUG) tripartite delegation reporting continued violations of fundamental labour and human rights, including arbitrary arrests and detention of trade unionists, continued suppression of freedom of association and freedom of expression, imposition of forced labour, coercive recruitment practices and recurring patterns of factory-level labour rights violations, including forced overtime, combined with barriers to effective worker representation and access to remedy.

International community

In April 2026, the Spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General took note ² of the announcement of amnesty in Myanmar, including the release of prisoners, reductions of sentences and commuting death penalties to life imprisonment, and of the news about the release of President Win Myint. He underscored the need for meaningful efforts to ensure the swift release of all those arbitrarily detained and highlighted that a viable political solution must be founded on an immediate cessation of violence and a genuine commitment to inclusive dialogue, where the people of Myanmar can freely and peacefully exercise their political rights. In May 2026, the Secretary-General noted the transfer of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to a designated residence and reiterated his call for the swift and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained as a necessary step towards enabling a credible political process in Myanmar. ³

At the 48th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in May 2026, ASEAN leaders reiterated that the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) remained the primary framework for addressing the situation in Myanmar, calling for an immediate cessation of violence, inclusive dialogue among all parties and continued engagement by the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy. They noted recent developments on the release of prisoners and the transfer of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to house detention but stressed that these steps were insufficient without broader political progress. ⁴

² United Nations, "Note to Correspondents: In response to questions on Myanmar", 17 April 2026.

³ United Nations, "Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on Myanmar", 1 May 2026.

⁴ ASEAN Secretariat, "Chair's Statement of the 48th ASEAN Summit: 8 May 2026 Cebu, Philippines", May 2026

Implementation of the Office plan of action

The implementation of the plan of action is guided by a pragmatic and phased approach centred on continued support to employers, workers and their organizations, enhanced coordination across the UN system, inclusive dialogue and monitoring.

The Office has continued implementing measures aimed at providing direct support to employers, workers and their organizations, including the “Enhanced Livelihood Recovery and Community Resilience Project” in earthquake-affected areas. By the end of May 2026, across 22 villages in Mandalay Region and Shan State, 27,733 workdays were created for 3,014 workers, with women representing 52 per cent of participants. In parallel, 393 individuals, 79 per cent of whom are women, completed skills training in areas such as masonry, sewing, weaving, computer literacy and entrepreneurship, strengthening their employability and access to income opportunities. The programme also restored 32 community infrastructure assets, including roads, water systems, sanitation facilities and training centres, improving access to essential community services. These efforts translated into improved livelihoods, increased income opportunities and safer living conditions for communities.

In May 2026, the Office continued its engagement with the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Myanmar and has reached out to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to strengthen informal channels of communication and exchanges of information within the respective mandates. Such engagement will continue and will be extended to other relevant UN mandate holders, as appropriate. In parallel, the Office will be exploring the organization of a high-level round-table at a suitable time before the November 2026 Governing Body session, bringing together key actors to share updated information on the situation of freedom of association and forced labour in the country and to reflect on how best to achieve implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the 2025 Conference resolution.

Furthermore, the Office is engaging in consultations with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to obtain concrete feedback and suggestions on the modalities of the monitoring mechanism with a view to finalizing the preparatory phase. These consultations are expected to continue over the course of the summer and to be held regularly.

The implementation of the Office’s plan of action is expected to result in enhanced engagement with key stakeholders which in turn will contribute to a better informed and aligned approach to promoting freedom of association and the elimination of forced labour. This should also lead to improved coherence in international efforts aimed at addressing the situation in Myanmar. In parallel, progress in the development and operationalization of a confidential and credible monitoring mechanism, in consultation with the ILO Bureau for Employers’ Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV), as well as with employers’ and workers’ organizations, is anticipated to ensure a regular flow of verifiable information and improve the systematic documentation and assessment of violations related to freedom of association and forced labour. Collectively, these efforts are expected to support more effective follow-up to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the 2025 Conference resolution, thereby reinforcing the conditions for Myanmar’s compliance with the relevant international labour standards. In line with the decision of the Governing Body, the Office will provide further updated information with regard to the implementation of its plan of action and other developments to the Governing Body at its 358th Session (November 2026).