



International
Labour
Organization

► Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution, 1986



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The Constitutional Amendment adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1986 was a visionary step toward making the ILO's governance more equitable, democratic, and fit for the future of work.

Reaffirmed by our 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, this reform has become even more essential to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world. This is also the wish of most of our Members.

I therefore call on all Member States who have not yet ratified the Amendment to make it a priority. In particular, I urge the remaining 'States of chief industrial importance.'

Only three more ratifications from the 'States of chief industrial importance' are needed for these reforms to enter into force. Let's not delay this any longer. The future of a truly representative and democratic ILO rests with you.



Gilbert F. Houngbo
Director-General

► What is the Amendment about and what would it do ?

In 1986 the International Labour Conference adopted an Instrument of Amendment which would change 11 of the 40 articles within the Constitution of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

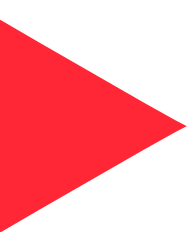
The 1986 Amendment addresses three main areas:

- the composition and governance of the Governing Body of the Office;
- the procedure for appointment of the Director-General; and
- rules governing how the Constitution may be amended.

► Governing Body composition

The principal aim of the 1986 Amendment is to make membership of the Governing Body more representative by providing a means of appointment of its members taking into account the various geographic, economic and social interests of its constituent groups.

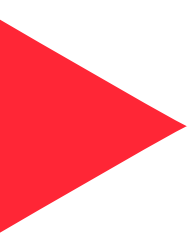
If the 1986 Amendment enters into force, the number of members of the Governing Body under the Constitution will increase from 56 to 112 – and the manner of their allocation will also be affected. Of the 112 seats, 56 would be allocated to government representatives and 28 each to employers' and workers' representatives. **There would no longer be non-elective seats reserved for the ten Member States of chief industrial importance.**



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Of the 56 seats reserved for governments, 54 would be distributed among four geographic regions – Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe – with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 15 seats for each region. Distribution of seats would be weighted by taking into account the number of Member States within the region, their total population and their economic activity assessed by appropriate criteria (gross national product or contributions to the budget of the Organization). The initial allocation provided for is 13 seats for Africa, 12 for the Americas, and alternately 15 and 14 seats for Asia and Europe. The two remaining seats would rotate, one between Africa and the Americas and the other between Asia and Europe.

Under the 1986 Amendment, government delegates representing the Member States from each of the four regions would form an electoral college to fill seats for each region. Each electoral college would need to ensure that a substantial number of Members appointed to fill the regional allocation of seats are chosen on the basis of population size and to take into account an equitable geographical distribution.



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Other factors, such as economic activity of the Members in accordance with the special characteristics of the region, should also be taken into consideration.

At the same time, the 1986 Amendment makes allowances for special characteristics within regions where subdivisions may be formed on a sub-regional basis to appoint Members separately to fill the seats assigned to the sub-region. It is important to note however that the four regions can be adjusted by mutual agreement among all governments concerned.

► Regional Protocols

The 1986 Amendment provides that the means of implementation of the above principles governing the regional allocation of seats shall be defined by protocols agreed upon by the governments of each regional electoral college.

These protocols enable each region to determine its internal arrangements for selecting Governing Body members, including rotation and subregional representation, while remaining consistent with the constitutional framework.

To date, three of the four regions—Africa, Asia, and Europe—have adopted protocols in anticipation of the Amendment's entry into force. Europe adopted a global protocol in 1981 on the allocation of seats between Western and Eastern Europe, together with two subregional protocols governing their respective arrangements. The Americas have not adopted a protocol, although agreement in principle on its basis was reached in 1983.

In light of the emergence of new Member States and other developments, Member States may wish to review and update these protocols to ensure that they remain relevant and fit for purpose.

► Appointment of the Director-General

Under the 1986 Amendment, the Director-General of the International Labour Office would continue to be appointed by the Governing Body but the appointment would be submitted to the International Labour Conference for approval.

► Rules governing how the Constitution may be amended

The 1986 Amendment would change article 36 of the Constitution covering future amendments and setting out voting and ratification requirements for amendments related to specific considerations.

Adoption of any amendment relating to the fundamental purposes of the Organization, the permanent establishment of the Organization, the composition and functions of its collegiate organs and the appointment and responsibilities of the Director-General, constitutional provisions relating to international labour Conventions and Recommendations and the provisions of the amendment article, would require three-fourths of the votes cast and would have to be ratified or accepted by three-quarters of the Members of the Organization in order to come into effect.

For any other amendment to the Constitution, two-thirds of the votes cast and ratification by two-thirds of the Members would be required to take effect.

► Relationship between the 1995 amendments to the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference and the 1986 Amendment to the Constitution

The adoption in 1995 of amendments to the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference by the International Labour Conference increased the number of deputy members to reflect as far as possible the 1986 Amendment as regards the composition of the Government group (see table below). However, the 1995 reform does not offer the full range of changes foreseen by the 1986 Amendment. In particular, it does not affect the distinction between elective seats and non-elective seats which are attributed to Members of chief industrial importance. It also does not alter the manner in which constitutional amendments are made, nor the process for the appointment of the Director-General.

► Regional distribution of Government seats in the Governing Body for June 2024 – June 2027

Regions	Regular members		Deputy members	Total elective seats	Total
	Non-elective**	Elective			
Africa*	0	6	7	13	13
Americas*	2	5	6	11	13
Asia and the Pacific	3	4	8	12	15
Europe	5	3	7	10	15
Total	10	18	28	46	56

* Africa and the Americas share a “floating” deputy member seat which alternates between the two groups for each Governing Body term of office. Since that seat was attributed to the Africa group for the 2021-2024 term, it is held by the Americas group for the 2024–2027 term.

**Held by States of chief industrial importance.

► Status of ratification of the Amendment

To enter into force, the 1986 Amendment must be ratified or accepted by two-thirds of ILO Member States, including at least five of the ten Members of chief industrial importance. As there are currently 187 Member States, the Amendment needs to be ratified by 125 of them.

As of May 2026, 129 ratifications or acceptances were registered, of which two were from Members of chief industrial importance (India and Italy).

A further three ratifications from Members of chief industrial importance are therefore required for the Amendment to enter into force (from among Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and United States). To date, 20 Member States from the Americas, 17 from Europe and 21 from Asia and the Pacific have not yet ratified the Amendment (see Annex 1).

► How can a Member State accept the 1986 Amendment to the Constitution?

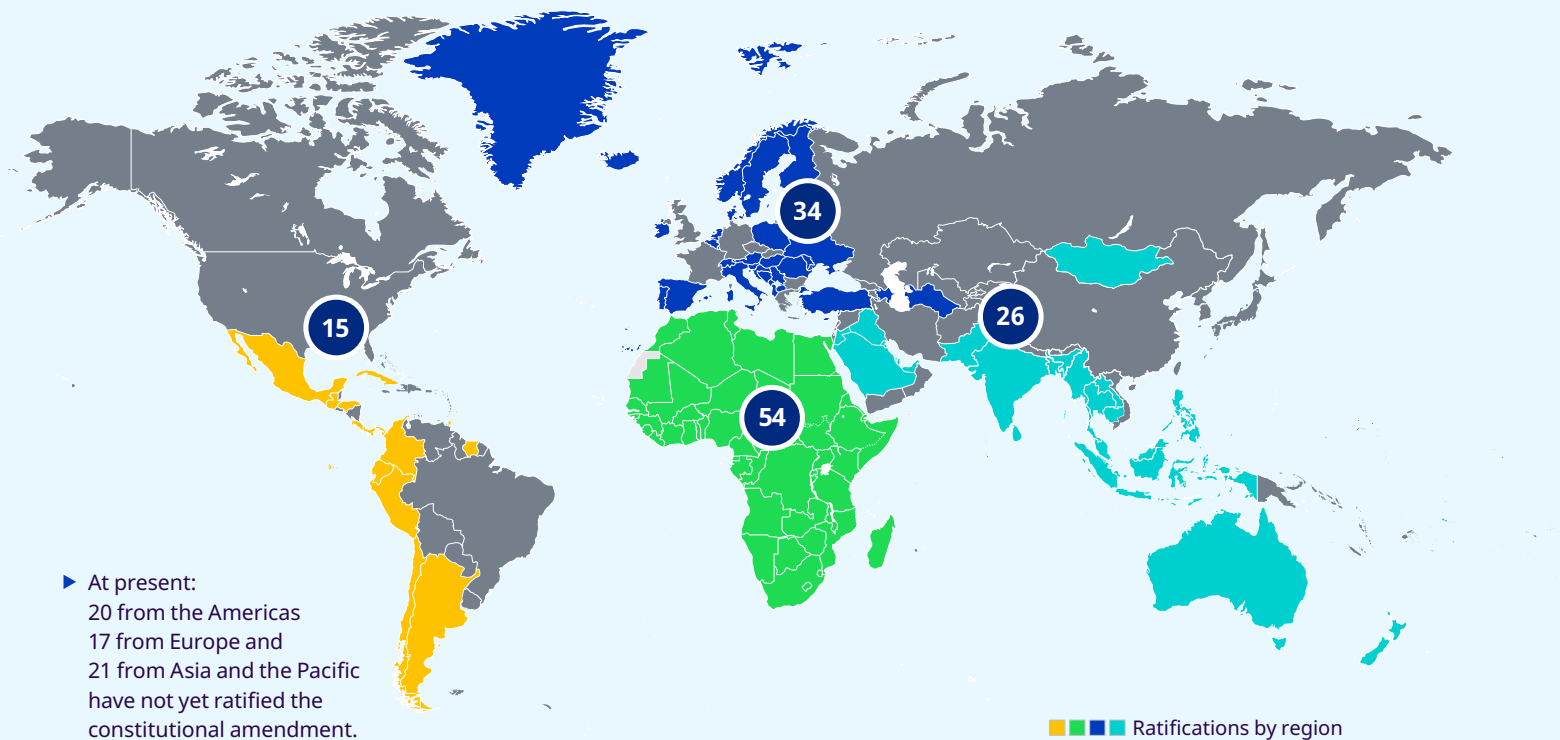
The consent of the Member State must be expressed by a representative having power to bind the State in external relations and done in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the national constitutional order. A sample instrument of ratification or acceptance is included in Annex 2.

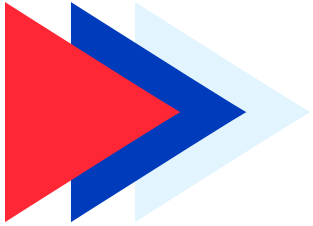
► For more information, please contact:

Office of the Legal Adviser (JUR)
jur@ilo.org
or visit ilo.org/jur

► Status of ratification per region

Status of ratification per region - As of May 2026, 129 ratifications registered



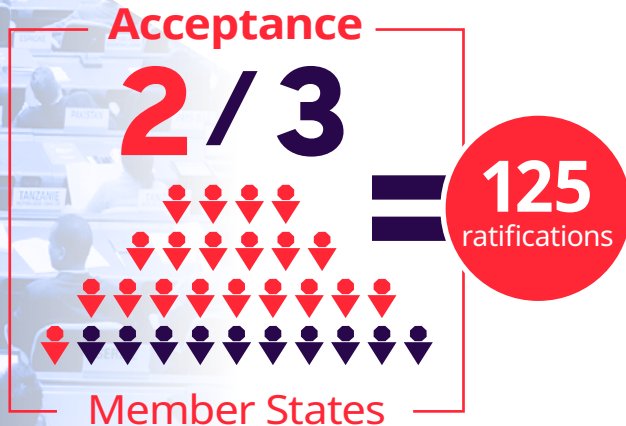


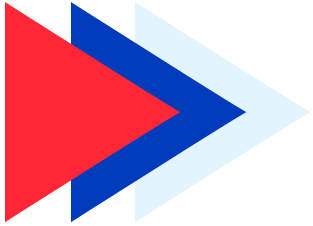
► What it needs

Entry into force requires acceptance by two-thirds of Members including at least five Members of chief industrial importance.

As many as 129 ratifications received so far, including two from Members of chief industrial importance.

Only three ratifications from Members of chief industrial importance still needed.





► What it brings

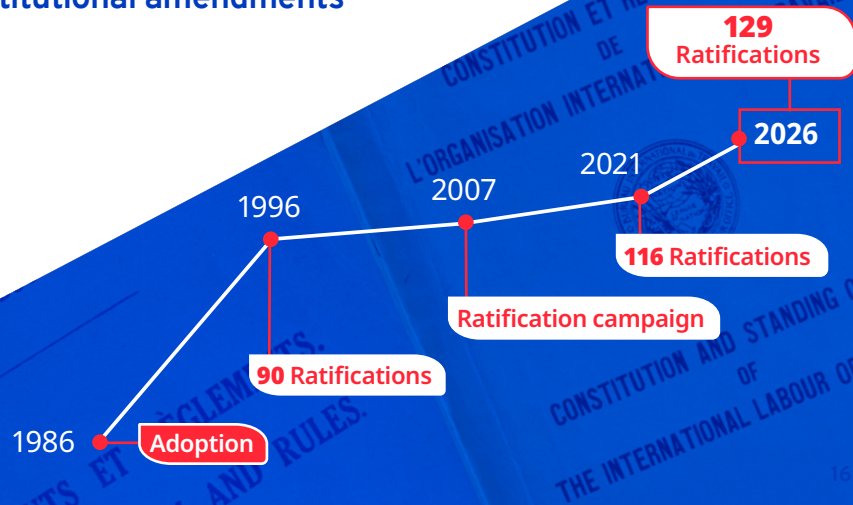
A more representative Governing Body membership

- No seats reserved for ten Members of chief industrial importance

Director-General appointment subject to Conference approval

Stricter majority requirements for constitutional amendments

- Three-fourths of the votes cast required for amendments to important provisions of the ILO Constitution



► Annexes

► Annex 1

► Status of ratification

As of May 2026, 129 ratifications registered

A. Member States which have ratified or accepted (by region)

Africa		
Algeria	Côte d'Ivoire	Guinea-Bissau
Angola	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Kenya
Benin	Djibouti	Lesotho
Botswana	Egypt	Liberia
Burkina Faso	Equatorial Guinea	Libya
Burundi	Eritrea	Madagascar
Cameroon	Eswatini	Malawi
Central African Republic	Ethiopia	Mali
Cabo Verde	Gabon	Mauritius
Chad	Gambia	Mauritania
Comoros	Ghana	Morocco
Congo	Guinea	Mozambique

Namibia	Seychelles	Togo
Niger	Sierra Leone	Tunisia
Nigeria	Somalia	Uganda
Rwanda	South Africa	United Republic of Tanzania
Sao Tome et Principe	South Sudan	Zambia
Senegal	Sudan	Zimbabwe

Americas

Argentina	Cuba	Mexico
Barbados	Ecuador	Panama
Chile	Grenada	Peru
Colombia	Guatemala	Suriname
Costa Rica	Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago

Asia and the Pacific

Australia	Cambodia	Iraq
Bahrain	Cook Islands	Jordan
Bangladesh	India	Kuwait
Brunei Darussalam	Indonesia	Lao People's Democratic Republic

Malaysia	Pakistan	Singapore
Maldives	Philippines	Sri Lanka
Mongolia	Qatar	Thailand
Myanmar	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
New Zealand	Samoa	

Europe

Albania	Iceland	Romania
Austria	Ireland	San Marino
Azerbaijan	Italy	Serbia
Belarus	Luxembourg	Slovenia
Belgium	Malta	Spain
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Sweden
Croatia	Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	Switzerland
Cyprus	North Macedonia	Türkiye
Denmark	Norway	Turkmenistan
Estonia	Poland	Ukraine
Finland	Portugal	
Hungary	Republic of Moldova	

B. Member States which have not yet ratified or accepted (by region)

Americas

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Bahamas	El Salvador	Saint Lucia
Belize	Guyana	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	Haiti	United States of America
Brazil	Jamaica	Uruguay
Canada	Nicaragua	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of
Dominica	Paraguay	

Asia and the Pacific

Afghanistan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic
China	Marshall Islands	Timor-Leste
Fiji	Nepal	Tonga
Iran, Islamic Republic of	Oman	Tuvalu
Japan	Palau	Vanuatu
Kiribati	Papua New Guinea	Viet Nam
Korea, Republic of	Solomon Islands	Yemen

Europe

Armenia	Greece	Russian Federation
Bulgaria	Israel	Slovakia
Czechia	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan
France	Kyrgyzstan	United Kingdom
Georgia	Latvia	Uzbekistan
Germany	Lithuania	

► Annex 2

► Instrument of ratification or acceptance of the 1986 constitutional amendment

Whereas the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation Instrument of Amendment, 1986, was adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 72nd Session, in Geneva, on 24 June 1986,

The Government of,
having considered the aforesaid Instrument of Amendment, hereby confirms
and ratifies/accepts the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have signed this instrument.

At on the day of 20.....

Head of State

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And/or

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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