International Labour Organization

The Committee on the Application of Standards
100 years of supervision

The evolution of the Committee on the Application of Standards

Created in 1926, the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) has played a central role in the ILO supervisory system for a century. Established by the International Labour Conference at the same time as the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), the CAS has become, together with the CEACR, the cornerstones of ILO supervision.

From the outset, the CAS and the CEACR were designed to work in close complementarity to improve the effective application of international labour standards. The Committee of Experts provides a technical, impartial and independent analysis of how the ratified Conventions are applied in law and practice by Member States, and the Committee on the Application of Standards carries forward the dialogue with governments within its tripartite setting, on the basis of the Committee of Experts' comments. Over time, this "double examination" became a defining feature of the regular supervisory system.

The Committee on the Application of Standards' working methods have continued to evolve in response to changing realities. In the 1930s, the CAS introduced the practice of allowing Governments in respect of which comments had been made by the Committee of Experts to provide additional information. After the Second World War, it contributed to the strengthening of supervision through the 1946 constitutional amendments, which expanded reporting obligations and reinforced the role of employers' and workers' organizations in the process. In the 1950s and 1960s, the CAS progressively adapted its working methods to the growing number of reports, introduced a selective approach to cases, and helped promote technical assistance as a mean to support governments in fulfilling the obligations deriving from ratified Conventions.

In the following decades, the CAS continued to adapt to major political, economic and institutional changes. During the Cold War, the importance of impartiality, tripartism and uniform standards was repeatedly reaffirmed. In 1976, the reporting cycle was extended from two to four years for most Conventions, while the role of employers' and workers' organizations in submitting observations became increasingly important. Their participation grew steadily and became a key element of the supervisory system.

> *"Absolute impartiality in the ILO's supervision of international labour standards is the key to their credibility, ensuring that freely undertaken obligations are implemented and remain the same for all countries, regardless of their size, economic and social system, or level of development."*
>
> International Labour Conference resolution, 1977

More recently, the CAS has continued to reflect on and improve its working methods through informal tripartite consultations, in order to foster effective participation of all constituents in the Committee's discussions. In 2012, the Committee was unable to adopt the list of individual cases, which triggered broader discussions within the ILO on the need to consolidate tripartite consensus on an authoritative supervisory system. To that end, the Standards Initiative was launched in the lead-up to the ILO Centenary in 2019, resulting in the development and implementation of a time-bound workplan to strengthen the supervisory system.

As part of this continuing process of modernization, the Governing Body adopted, in November 2025, the reform of the reporting system under article 22 of the ILO Constitution. Transitioning from Convention based reporting towards consolidated thematic reporting marks a significant evolution in the way reporting, supervision and tripartite engagement will take place within the ILO supervisory system.

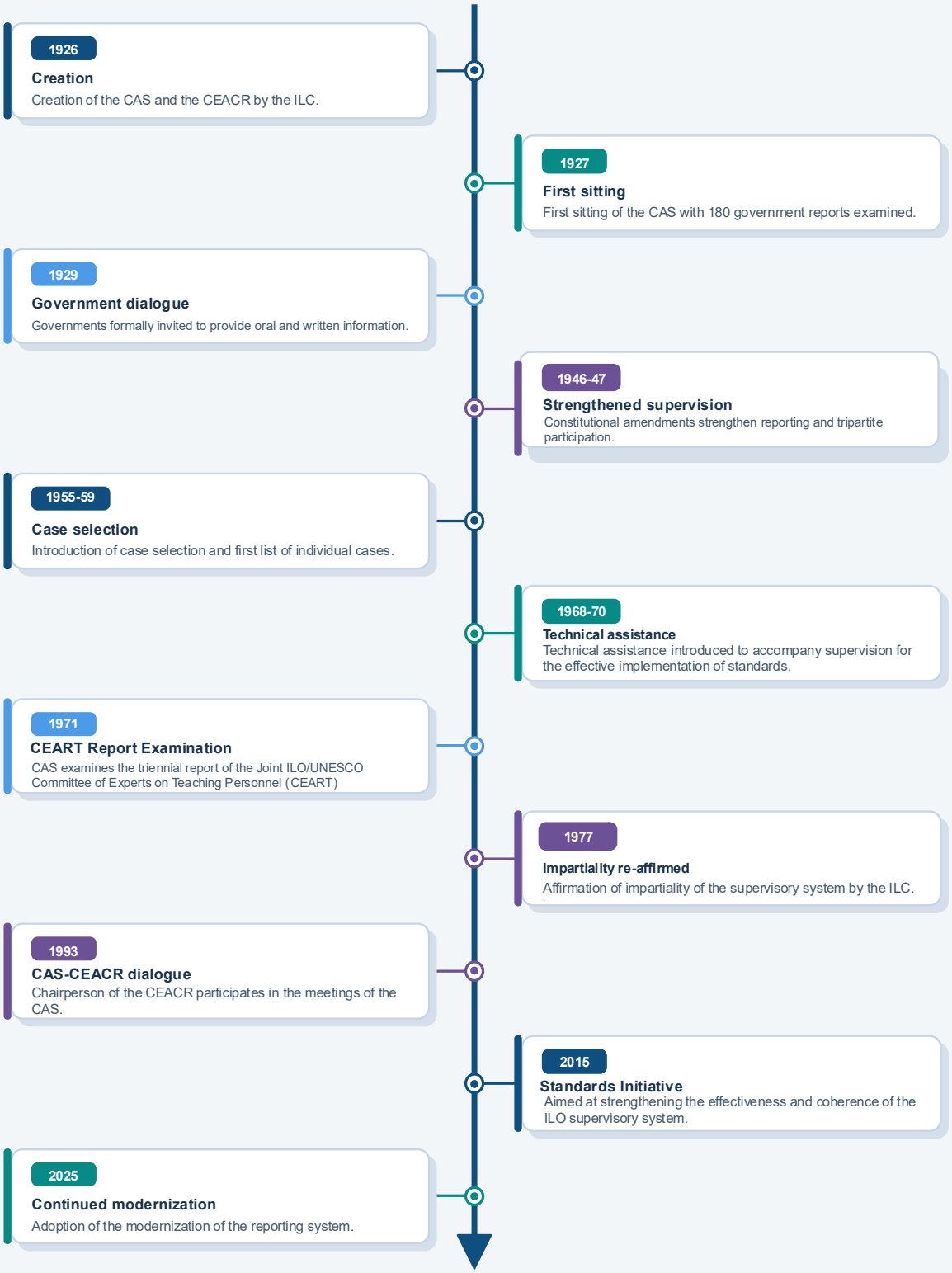
Today, the CAS remains an essential forum for tripartite dialogue in which all constituents have a role in the application of international labour standards in practice. In the centenary year, the Committee's history reflects not only institutional continuity, but also resilience, adaptation and a lasting commitment to social justice.

Did you know?

- The CAS had its first woman Chair in 1980.
- The first CAS meeting in 1927 examined 180 government reports.
- This year the CAS will examine 23 cases and will have two special sittings to discuss 2 additional cases referred to it under Article 33 resolutions adopted by the Conference.
- The Chair of the CEACR participated in the CAS for the first time in 1983.
- The working methods of the CAS are reviewed each year during informal tripartite consultations.
- Employers' and workers' observations submitted to the CEACR grew from 9 in 1972 to over 850 in 2025.

100 years of the CAS: key milestones

Evolution of tripartite supervision and dialogue in the ILO supervisory system



CAS = Committee on the Application of Standards | CEACR = Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Reco mmendations