



Governing Body

358th Session, Geneva, 9–19 November 2026

Institutional Section

INS

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Eleventh item on the agenda

Gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in all international labour standards

Draft resolution

Purpose of the document

In accordance with the decision taken by the Governing Body at its 355th Session (November 2025), this document contains a draft resolution concerning gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards for consideration by the Governing Body and possible transmission to the 115th Session (2027) of the International Labour Conference (see the draft decision in paragraph 6).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Policy outcome 1: Strong, modernized normative action for social justice.

Policy implications: Implications concerning international labour standards containing gendered and other inappropriate language and for future standard-setting exercises.

Legal implications: Possible adoption by the International Labour Conference of a resolution concerning gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Subject to the decision of the Governing Body, transmission of the draft resolution to the 115th Session (2027) of the International Labour Conference.

Author unit: International Labour Standards Department (NORMES).

Related documents: [GB.343/LILS/1](#); [GB.346/LILS/1](#); [GB.352/LILS/5](#); [GB.352/LILS/5/Decision](#); [GB.355/INS/2](#); [GB.355/INS/2/Decision](#); [resolution concerning gender equality and the use of language in legal texts of the ILO](#).

► Background and scope of the draft resolution

1. At its 352nd Session (October–November 2024), the Governing Body considered an Office audit of the body of international labour standards to identify obsolete and inappropriate terms and references. The audit identified obsolete language that is inappropriately gendered, carries colonial connotations or is otherwise offensive or discriminatory in 193 international labour standards, 101 of which are currently classified as up to date.¹ The Governing Body requested the Office to implement follow-up actions, including: proposing the placement of an item concerning the adoption of a resolution on outmoded and inappropriate language in international labour standards on the agenda of a future session of the International Labour Conference; transmitting to the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group its request to continue to consider the impact of outmoded and inappropriate language when reviewing the standards and to keep it informed in this regard at regular intervals; following good practices in relation to the evolution of normative language in standard-setting exercises; and continuing to offer technical assistance to Member States on the gender-responsive application of the social security instruments.²
2. It may be recalled that the Governing Body opted for the adoption of a resolution by the Conference building on the 2011 Conference resolution concerning gender equality and the use of language in legal texts of the ILO with the aim of the ILO adopting a high-level statement of principle, stating unambiguously that outmoded and inappropriate language was objectionable, which would accompany international labour standards. While the language identified in the audit had become obsolete and inappropriate, in most cases the core objectives and approaches taken in the relevant provisions remained as valid as they were at the time of their adoption. Most instances of obsolete language identified in the Office's audit could be addressed without any legal consequences for the entitlement provided by the provision concerned. Considerations of timeliness and feasibility were also taken into account.³
3. Accordingly, at its 355th Session (November 2025), the Governing Body decided to place on the agenda of the 115th Session (2027) of the International Labour Conference an item concerning gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in all international labour standards, with a view to the adoption of a resolution. It requested the Director-General to prepare for its 358th Session (November 2026) a draft resolution for consideration by the International Labour Conference.⁴
4. The draft resolution in the appendix gives effect to the Governing Body's decision and builds on the resolution concerning gender equality and the use of language in legal texts of the ILO (2011). In brief, the draft resolution sets out an unambiguous statement of principle that inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards are objectionable. It also provides guidance on how such terms and references should be construed, establishes a process for considering their impact, and provides for measures to ensure that good practices

¹ GB.352/LILS/5, para. 5.

² GB.352/PV, para. 1194(b).

³ GB.352/LILS/5 and GB.352/PV, para. 1178.

⁴ GB.355/PV(Rev.1), para. 86.

concerning the evolution of normative language are followed in the preparation of standard-setting exercises.

5. It is proposed that the Governing Body transmit the draft resolution to the International Labour Conference for possible adoption at its 115th Session (2027) and that the Conference refer the matter to the General Affairs Committee in accordance with article 7 of its Standing Orders.

► Draft decision

6. **The Governing Body decided to transmit the draft resolution concerning gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards, contained in the appendix to document GB.358/INS/11, to the 115th Session (2027) of the International Labour Conference for possible adoption.**

► Appendix

Draft resolution concerning gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization, meeting in Geneva at its 115th Session, 2027,

Affirming that equality, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity are fundamental values of the Organization,

Recognizing that international labour standards, together with the other means of action available to the Organization, play a key role in achieving its constitutional objectives,

Reaffirming that the setting, promotion, ratification and supervision of international labour standards are of fundamental importance to the ILO, and that the Organization must have and promote a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards,

Recalling its resolution concerning gender equality and the use of language in legal texts of the ILO, adopted at its 100th Session (2011),

Recalling the consideration by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024) of gendered and other inappropriate terms and references in international labour standards and its request that the Office implement follow-up actions, including proposing the placement of an item concerning the adoption of a resolution on outmoded and inappropriate language in international labour standards on the agenda of a future session of the International Labour Conference,

Noting that certain international labour standards, particularly older instruments, contain outmoded terms and references that are inappropriately gendered, carry colonial connotations or are otherwise offensive or discriminatory,

Noting that such language does not reflect the contemporary understanding of the principles of equality among persons and among States that are accepted by ILO Member States, and at times appears inconsistent with international law, including international human rights law,

Recognizing that despite such language having become outmoded and inappropriate, in most cases the core objectives and normative approaches of the international labour standards remain as valid as they were at the time of their adoption,

Mindful that as language evolves over time, any inappropriate language identified in the future should, in order to ensure the authoritativeness and impact of international labour standards, be construed as in line with the values of the Organization and the principles on which it is based, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise,

Recognizing the importance of ensuring that future international labour standards contain language that reflects at all times the values of the Organization and its constitutional principles,

1. Declares that terms and references in international labour standards that are inappropriately gendered, carry colonial connotations or are otherwise offensive or discriminatory are

objectionable and can no longer be considered as a true expression of the ILO constitutional principles;

2. Affirms that, in accordance with applicable rules of interpretation, such terms and references should be construed consistently with fundamental principles and rights at work and with contemporary understanding of the principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity, without prejudice to the levels of protection afforded by the standards concerned;
3. Invites the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to consider at appropriate intervals information on the use and impact of inappropriate language in international labour standards and possible actions to be taken;
4. Invites the Director-General to ensure that, in preparing standard-setting discussions by the Conference, the Office follows good practices in relation to the evolution of normative language.