

The International Labour Conference: Motor of the ILO

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But the Conference not only adopts international labour standards, it also sets the broad policies of the ILO. A good example is the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the ILC 90 years after its first session in 1919. Following the global economic and financial crisis, the Global Jobs Pact proposes a wide range of response measures that countries can adapt to their specific needs and situation.

Today, the International Labour Conference meets once a year in June, in Geneva, Switzerland. Occasionally, the ILO prepares special Maritime Sessions of the International Labour Conference – since 1919, ten of these sessions have been held. This is why we are already heading for the 100th Session of the annual Conference this year – well ahead of the 100th anniversary of the Organization.

In this world parliament of labour, each ILO member State is represented by a delegation consisting of two government delegates, an employer delegate, a worker delegate, and their respective advisers. Many of the government representatives are cabinet ministers responsible for labour affairs in their own countries. Employer and worker delegates are nominated in agreement with the most representative national organizations of the social partners.

Worker and employer delegates to the Conference often challenge political convenience and the views of ministries, adding the perspectives of enterprises and workers' rights to government priorities. Every delegate has the same rights, and all can express themselves freely and vote as they wish. Worker and employer delegates may sometimes vote against their government's representatives or against each other. This diversity of viewpoints, however, does not prevent decisions being adopted by very large majorities or in some cases even unanimously.