

306TH SESSION OF THE ILO GOVERNING BODY
WORKING PARTY ON FUNCTIONING OF GB & ILC
12 NOVEMBER 2009

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SINGAPORE
ON BEHALF OF ASEAN

Madam Chairperson,

1 I am speaking on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

2 First of all, we would like to thank the Office for producing the "non-paper", the agenda paper GB 306/WP/GBC/1, as well as for consulting the various groups before this first formal meeting of the Working Party. ASEAN aligns ourselves to the ASPAG statement, and strongly supports ASPAG's recommendations on the key objectives, roles and approach that the Working Party should undertake. We also echo the view that the scope of the Working Party should be comprehensive, and should include those of the CFA and PFAC.

3 We agree with ASPAG that enhancing the effective functioning of the GB and ILC would enable the ILO to identify future challenges more quickly, and respond to them more effectively. We must continue to draw on the unique strength of ILO's tripartite structure. The ILO's consensus-building approach and the ability to harness our collective wisdom would be critical as we work towards achieving the objectives of the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation.

4 The 2008 Declaration had called for the ILO to '*ensure coherence and collaboration in its approach*' and to '*adapt its institutional practices and governance to improve effectiveness and efficiency*'. The Working Party is first and foremost duty-bound to further this mandate. We should be thorough in our review, innovative and bold in our recommendations.

5 On the other hand, while the Working Party should focus on improving coherence, effectiveness and efficiency as required by the Declaration, we should not-re-invent the wheel if this is not needed. Indeed, many useful recommendations have been raised and implemented over the years, with differing degrees of success. These should be examined in the current context of whether they will enhance the governance of the GB and the ILC. In this regard, we also take the opportunity to seek clarifications from the Office on the status of the Working Group on the ILC, and would appreciate an update on the progress of recommendations that the Working Group had previously made.

6 Taking into consideration these guiding principles, we urge the Office to prepare proposals and options, and the Working Party to further explore, the following areas:

Review past recommendations and Monitor Implementation

7 Firstly, the Working Party should re-examine the effectiveness and relevance of past recommendations. We agree fully with the Office's assessment that most recommendations, if scrupulously observed, would go a long way in making the GB and ILC more efficient. The Working Party should review the merits and relevance of these recommendations, study the problems faced during actual implementation, and if need be, make modifications to them with a view to recommending their implementation.

8 The Working Party should also explore whether there is a need for a monitoring mechanism to be established to ensure that recommendations that are adopted will be implemented effectively and coherently, and if so, what form such a mechanism should take, while ensuring that this does not add on unnecessarily to the workload of the ILO and compromise the efficient use of resources.

Tighten Procedures and Processes

9 Secondly, the Working Party should look seriously into tightening the procedures and processes relating to the conduct of GB and ILC meetings. Some of the areas that would be worth reviewing include:

(i) Review the Process for Finalising Conference Agenda

10 We propose to streamline the procedures for finalising the ILC agenda. We could, for example, explore the establishment of a small interim committee after the November session of the GB each year to decide on the agenda items to be adopted, instead of re-opening the discussion again in the March GB. This interim committee could comprise the workers' and employers' representatives and the government regional coordinators who are expected to seek the views of the respective members. In this way, the inclusion of agenda items will only be discussed in one GB session instead of two.

(ii) Review Number of Agenda Items and Length of Documents

11 There is also a need to review the number of agenda items and the length of documents. The number of agenda items presented for each GB should be reduced. The Working Party may wish to assess the feasibility of re-distributing the committee meetings. It may not be necessary for all committees to convene at each session. A screening mechanism could be put in place to holistically assess the agenda items for GB and ILC. Limits on the number of agenda items could be set, with those not requiring immediate attention re-distributed to another session.

12 Documents should be concise, clear and succinct. The Working Party may wish to discuss the option of limiting the main body of the documents to a number of pages, depending on whether they are submitted for decision, information or debate and guidance. Suggestions on how to improve the quality of documentation have also been well-deliberated in the draft guidelines to improve the functioning of GB meetings released at the 303rd GB session. What we hope to see eventually is better quality of documents, effective sharing of views and good practices and learning from one another through meaningful debates. We welcome more proposals and options in this regard.

(iii) Review Mandate of Committees

Madam Chair,

13 During the review conducted in 1992-93, the working party on improvements in the functioning of GB agreed to reduce the committees to six and redistribute their functions. It is timely to again review the mandate of the different committees, their responsibilities and streamline their agenda further to ensure minimal overlap of work scope. We should also look into prioritising the agendas of the ILC, GB and the various committee agendas, and study how these can be done individually as well as collectively, so as to ensure that the agendas are better aligned and integrated with our strategic objectives.

(iv) Effective time-management

14 Last but not least, Madam Chairperson, as constituents of the ILO, we all share a responsibility to make the best use of time. Time waits for no man, even if it is the ILO. We note that detailed guidelines on time management are already available and were previously released at the 303rd session of the GB. Such recommendations to save cost and time, improve efficiency, thereby allowing more time for more meaningful discussions, should be vigorously pursued, taking into account that the voices of governments, workers and employers need to be clearly and sufficiently heard.

Conclusion

15 These are some of the areas that we hope the Working Party will review. We welcome further proposals and options, including in the areas we have outlined, and look forward to having more concrete discussions at the next meeting.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.