

ASPAG thanks the Office for its papers and briefings on this issue and welcomes the establishment of the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference as part of the follow up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation, 2008. It is important to keep in mind two points of the resolution to establish this Working Party.

Firstly, the working party is established to consider the functioning of both the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference. We note the suggestion in paragraph 3 of the agenda paper that in the first instance the working party should focus on the Governing Body, however ASPAG submits that both bodies should be examined, with special reference to the recommendations of the Working Group if the ILC established in 2005. We would ask for some clarification of the ongoing role of that Working Group and its relationship to this new Working Party.

Secondly the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation requires the ILO to '*ensure coherence and collaboration in its approach*' and to '*adapt its institutional practices and governance to improve effectiveness and efficiency while fully respecting the existing constitutional framework and procedures*'.

Together these two points clearly describe the objective of this Working Party. There is an extraordinary level of interest in this working party and ASPAG members recognise the urgent need to reform and revitalise the practices, procedures, governance and operation of the organisation. Within the ILO these reforms must commence at the top, with the ILC and the GB, and then be led by the executive throughout the organisation. The reforms must start at the top, but not stop there. Reform is a shared responsibility between the ILO and its tripartite constituents.

ASPAG strongly believes that there needs to be greater scope for Government members to have early input into agenda setting, decision making and policy implementation. This includes Government members who are based far from Geneva, as many of us in Asia, the Arab States and the Pacific are.

The ILO is unique in its tripartite structure, and it is this tripartite structure that gives it its strength. It is this uniqueness and strength that will be required to enable the ILO meet its enormous challenges in the face of the Global economic crisis – but is the ILO making the most of its assets to succeed in meeting the challenges?

ASPAG members believe the ILO needs to look at how it can do better. The ILO has a proud record of achievement and must be congratulated on its response to the Global Economic Crisis. But now more than ever the ILO must be able to show the agility, responsiveness, and determination necessary for the important role it has to play.

ASPAG Statement on the GB/ILC working party

We need to ensure that through the effective functioning of the GB and ILC:

1. the ILO has policy and decision making processes appropriate to the challenges it faces.
2. its resources are being used to best effect.
3. its decision-making processes are sufficiently quick and effective to deal with a rapidly changing world.
4. its service and program delivery are aimed at the areas of most need and in a way that delivers most impact.
5. its tripartite structure is used to advance debate, and achieve effective decision making.

From the Office papers and briefings ASPAG particularly noted:

1. That over time there has been a number of effective changes made to the operation of the ILC and GB, but unfortunately several decisions for change had not been effectively implemented.
2. Agenda papers are generally initiated either by committees or the Office, and in both cases these are increasing, consume enormous resources, and in many cases result in more paper and information than the GB really requires.
3. While costs are an issue, the process should not only be about cost cutting but must be about improving effectiveness and efficiency. Similarly it is not only about reducing time of speeches and length of meetings.
4. It is important that any proposed changes are aimed at improving the operation of the ILO, and maximising the potential benefit of the tripartite nature of the ILO. This is important for both the governance and the operational arrangements of the ILO.

ASPAG urges the Working Party to

1. Recognise the roles of the ILC and GB are primarily governance and policy making roles, and consider a wide range of issues including modalities and framework of decision making, frequency and timing of meetings, development of agendas to ensure prioritisation of those issues which actually require GB or ILC consideration, and planning around the biennial budget process.
2. Promote the critical role of the GB to monitor, report and follow up on the implementation and outcomes of ILC decisions. Particularly the GB must ensure there is a link between implementation and outcomes which reflect ILO Program and Budget, and that is more critical analysis and discussion by the GB.
3. Give consideration to previous decisions which have not been implemented, and examine the reasons that have prevented action, as well as identifying future changes.
4. Undertake a study of the processes and costs associated with GB, ILC and committee proceedings including preparation and production of papers

etc. and compare these to other international organisations. The identification of costs and better practices will assist in identifying potential improvements.

5. Review administrative arrangements including options for electronic distribution of papers, and for information and advice papers to be distributed 'out of session' where appropriate.
6. Review the agenda setting process of the GB and Committees with the objective of achieving better integration and use of time.
7. Recognise the most effective operation of the ILC and GB is a shared concern and therefore requires a shared solution, that is, government, employer and worker representatives and the Office will all have a responsibility to improve our performance.
8. Prepare, for distribution prior to the next GB, a comprehensive issues paper outlining the significant issues identified (but not necessarily limited to those which are agreed), and proposals for addressing those issues. Members should then be given the opportunity to make written submissions, on both issues and solutions, for consideration by the Working Party

With regard to the two options outline in paragraphs 11 & 12 of the agenda paper, ASPAG submits that a combination of both options is appropriate for the approach of the Working Party. That is the Working Party should undertake a detailed examination of the present functioning of the Governing Body and the ILC, and propose such changes as considered necessary to ensure coherence with the Social Justice Declaration, and the effective and efficient performance of the organisations. ASPAG further submits that the scope of the Working Party should not exclude CFA and PFAC, as proposed in paragraph 11, and strongly urges further consideration of recommendations of the ILC Working Group on these matters..

ASPAG proposes the following time table for the working party:

- February 2010 – distribution of issues paper to all constituents
- March 2010 – special meeting of interested parties to discuss issues paper
- April 2010 – final acceptance of written submissions from constituents
- June 2010 – presentation and consideration of interim report.
- November 2010 – consideration of final report and recommendations.

ASPAG urges the GB to provide the necessary support to this working party to enable it to undertake its work effectively and without delay. We propose that the Working Party endeavour to complete its task within the next twelve months. This may mean additional out of session deliberations of the WP and additional secretariat support. But we believe this is necessary to ensure a quick identification and resolution of the issues confronting us.