



Governing Body

322nd Session, Geneva, 30 October–13 November 2014

GB.322/WP/GBC/1

**Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body
and the International Labour Conference**

WP/GBC

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FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Improving the functioning of the International Labour Conference

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I. Context

1. At its 320th Session (March 2014), the Governing Body, on the recommendation of the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference:

requested the Office to prepare for its 322nd Session (November 2014);

- (i) an analysis of the arrangements trialled at the 103rd Session of the Conference;
- (ii) a detailed programme and tentative plan of work for the two-week session of the Conference that will be trialled in 2015; and
- (iii) a consolidated summary of all proposals on which a tripartite agreement has been reached and of issues that require further consultations and discussion.

II. Analysis of the arrangements trialled at the 103rd Session (June 2014) of the Conference

2. In the light of the discussion held during the 319th Session (October 2013), a number of initiatives¹ were taken by the Office relating to:

- (1) the pre-Conference preparatory phase; and
- (2) the in-session processes.

Pre-Conference processes

3. Three measures were trialled in order to improve the pre-Conference preparatory process:

- (a) ***Distribution of pre-Conference information:*** The first Conference Guide, distributed in January 2014, focused on the Conference agenda, the mandates of the committees and the participation requirements (credentials, visas, registration procedures, accommodation, etc.). A second Conference Guide, distributed in May 2014, provided information on practical arrangements resulting from the Governing Body decisions in March 2014. These guides were acknowledged as an improvement in assisting constituents in their Conference preparations. Briefing sessions organized for Geneva-based missions prior to the Conference were also considered to have been of great benefit.
- (b) ***Early nomination of Committee Chairpersons:*** The early nomination of Committee Chairpersons by the Government group allowed the Office to brief them on the Conference procedures prior to the Conference session. The selection process should be initiated immediately after the November session and finalized by the March session of the Governing Body. The briefings should be further improved, and to take full advantage the Committee Chairpersons should be encouraged to be available for the briefings at least two working days before the opening of the Conference.

¹ As presented in GB.320/WP/GBC/1.

- (c) **Advance registration for committees:** Providing the opportunity for delegates to send their registration forms for committee membership in advance also produced good results for a first trial. The number of pre-registrations was 59 for Government delegates, 60 for Employers' delegates and 23 for Workers' delegates, which represents 25 to 30 per cent of the total number of registrations for committees. This first experience has however clearly demonstrated the need to further improve the pre-registration procedure and forms. Increased advance registrations will facilitate a better use of time for the commencement of the Conference session.

In-session processes

4. The key measures trialled during the 2014 session of the Conference concerned:

- **Side events:** While the total number of tripartite side events and information sessions was significantly reduced,² the scheduling of information sessions should be improved so as to avoid overlaps. Moreover, it is felt that the distinction between side events, as official events involving representatives of the tripartite constituents, and information sessions is still not very clear. However, some parallel events, such as the preparatory meeting on the Ouagadougou +10 Summit, attracted a large number of delegates and much interest.
- **Opening sitting of the plenary:** While the overall structure of the opening sitting improved in terms of political content and time management, its duration could be further reduced to 90 minutes (instead of two hours this year).

The time devoted to the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders could be reduced. Article 76 of the Standing Orders provides that suspensions are proposed by the Officers and cannot be adopted until the sitting following that at which they are proposed. This has obliged the President to explain each proposed suspension and its rationale and to briefly adjourn the opening sitting before their adoption. This adjournment inevitably leads to a break in proceedings of about ten minutes and disrupts the orderly conduct of the opening sitting. The suspensions of the Standing Orders, which are proposed as a consequence of decisions taken before the session of the Conference, in particular by the Governing Body, could be presented in a *Provisional Record* to be published before the opening of the Conference. This would permit the suspensions to be considered without an oral explanation by the President and without a break in proceedings.

The administrative part of the opening sitting could also be shortened by providing all information concerning the rules of conduct in the Conference Guide, rather than announcing them during proceedings. Some key rules, such as the respect of parliamentary language, should be periodically recalled by the President of the Conference and the Chairpersons of the various committees. The Conference Guide should refer to this rule in the section dealing with the key principles governing the discussions at the Conference and the constituent groups could be asked to reinforce this discipline among their members.

- **Programme implementation report:** As part of the 2014 trials, the Programme Implementation Report for 2012–13 was appended to the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body rather than submitted as a separate Report of the Director-General to the Conference. It was initially proposed to rescind the requirement in the Standing Orders for this to be submitted as a Report of the Director-General so that

² One official side event and three information sessions took place in June 2014.

the Report of the Director-General could instead “be devoted to a social policy theme of current interest”.³ However, it is now proposed that article 12 of the Standing Orders be amended to clarify that the Director-General will present the Programme Implementation Report to the Conference every second year, in addition to his report on a social theme.

- **World of Work Summit:** While the concept of the World of Work Summit is largely supported and the value of the interventions of the speakers and panellists highly regarded, further steps are needed to achieve a more interactive forum. Experiences with panel discussions in other international forums will be considered. The concentration of the visits of dignitaries on a single day provided an opportunity for high-level representation at the Conference.
- **Technical committees:** The trial of moving the adoption of the technical committees’ reports to plenary period IV, following their approval by the Officers of the committee, was well received. To further improve this in the context of a two-week session, it is proposed that any correction members of the committee wish to make to their individual statements will need to be submitted electronically before the closure of the Conference session, rather than the trialled 24-hour period. The reports of the technical committees would therefore be adopted, subject to the corrections received within that time.

The procedural part of the opening sitting of committees could be simplified through streamlining the election processes of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons; ensuring that the Office introductory remarks are kept to a reasonable duration (15 minutes as a maximum); and adopting the tentative plan of work as posted on the web, without need for further explanation from the Office.

The need to improve working methods, in particular for **general discussion and recurrent discussion committees**, has been emphasized as being critical to the success of a two-week session. Suggested improvements will be submitted to the Working Party, after consultation with the three groups, including proposals for more focused conclusions providing guidance rather than analysis, as it has been reiterated. In the case of **standard-setting discussions**, it has been suggested that the discussion of instruments could start with the provisions of the body of those instruments and not the preambular paragraphs which are non-binding. The experience of the last session of the Conference (June 2014) with two standard-setting activities running in parallel demonstrated that all extended or evening sittings of standard-setting committees took place during the second week.⁴ In the proposed plan of work including one weekend instead of two, the need for the Committee Drafting Committee to work in parallel with the committee, with the full text to be agreed at its final meeting, will have to be considered by the committee concerned. The operating details of the SAMM system could be further improved and better explained to optimize time efficiency and avoid misunderstandings as regards its exact role and limitations.

³ Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference, article 12.

⁴ The Committee on Supplementing the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), held five extended sittings during the second week (2–6 June), whereas the Committee on transitions from the informal to formal economy held only three extended sittings during the second week (3, 4 and 6 June).

- **Transparency, predictability and objectivity:** The early distribution of the tentative plans of work and the timely distribution of most of the reports submitted for discussion in the committees were welcomed by delegates and further improvements will be made.
- **Time management:** The time limit of five minutes for the speeches in plenary was largely enforced. Effective time management has been underlined as critical for a successful transition to a two-week Conference. Sufficient time needs to be allocated to group meetings and committee discussions and a strict time management and common discipline should help to reduce the need for night sittings. Meeting rooms should be vacated at the designated time for concluding meetings to prevent subsequent meetings from starting late. Agreed time limits should also be enforced for the presentation of the committees' reports in the plenary.
- **Provisional Record:** The new system put in place in June 2013 was continued with success in June 2014. The reduction of printed papers that resulted from the deferred production of the *Provisional Record* and the decision to print the committees' reports only in "PR" format for adoption in plenary have been a positive improvement towards a more "paper-smart" Conference.

III. Proposed arrangements for the 104th Session of the Conference

5. The Office was requested to prepare for the 322nd Session (November 2014) of the Governing Body a detailed programme and tentative plan of work for the two-week session of the Conference to be trialled in 2015.
6. The first tentative programme takes into account the following elements:
 - The duration of the Conference session of two calendar weeks (1–13 June 2015), would include **Saturday, 13 June** to give more time to the Conference committees.
 - The pre-Conference group meetings would be held on **Sunday, 31 May** to allow the opening ceremony to take place on **Monday, 1 June, morning**.
 - Further to the recommendations made by the Credentials Committee in June 2014, the deadline set for the deposit of credentials should be increased to **21 days** (instead of the 15 days currently in the Standing Orders of the Conference). This would advance the processing of credentials, permit the Conference to commence its work as early as possible, and resolve difficulties encountered by the Swiss authorities in processing visa applications in the present time frame.
 - The structure of the Conference would require the plenary to run in parallel with the committees' work during both weeks, with the second week of the plenary having a more political focus.
 - Based on the agenda for the 104th Session of the Conference,⁵ arrangements will be made for three technical committees, including a standard-setting, a recurrent discussion and a general discussion committee, and the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS). Arrangements will also be put in place for a record vote on a

⁵ See Appendix I.

possible instrument resulting from the second discussion on the “Facilitating transitions from the informal to the formal economy” item.

- The 104th Session will also be a budgetary session of the Conference, with Programme and Budget proposals for 2016–17 to be examined by the Finance Committee and submitted for adoption by the plenary with a record vote.
 - As the closing ceremony will take place at the end of the morning sitting on **Saturday, 13 June**, the post-Conference Governing Body session will take place that afternoon.
7. A tentative plan of work ⁶ has been established which takes into account the main components of the programme as follows:

Group meetings

The preparatory group meetings would be held on **Sunday, 31 May**. The tentative plans of work of all committees (technical committees and CAS) will ensure that sufficient time is allocated to group meetings. The current practice of having group meetings before every plenary sitting of Conference committees will be maintained.

Plenary

- Opening sitting: **Monday, 1 June, from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.** in the Assembly Hall of the *Palais des Nations*. To keep this sitting as short as possible, the election processes of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Conference will be simplified, administrative parts (such as suspensions of the Standing Orders’ provisions) will be presented in a *Provisional Record* and the procedural rules and principles, such as the respect of parliamentary language, governing the Conference meetings and discussions would be included in the Conference Guide. On the basis of the experience of the past two sessions of the Conference, the Director-General will make his introductory statement during this opening sitting and the Chairperson of the Governing Body will briefly introduce his report on key issues of the Governing Body during the past year. His statement would be followed by short opening addresses by the Vice-Chairpersons of the Employers’ and Workers’ groups.
- A short meeting of the Programme, Financial and Administrative Section of the Governing Body will be held in the afternoon of the opening day, i.e. on **Monday, 1 June** to allow the Finance Committee to discuss its report at a later stage during the first week.
- The discussion of the Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and the Director-General: **Thursday, 4 June to Wednesday, 10 June** (no plenary sittings during the weekend).
- The World of Work Summit will be scheduled for one day, following the work of the technical committees, on **Thursday, 11 June**. Further information about this Summit will be provided at a later stage.
- Adoption of committee reports: **Wednesday, 10 June, afternoon; Friday, 12 June and Saturday, 13 June**. Possible votes on **Friday, 12 June, in the morning**.

⁶ See Appendix II.

Committees

- **Selection Committee:** To allow the technical committees and the CAS to hold a short opening sitting on **Monday, 1 June from 12 noon**, the Selection Committee will meet immediately after the opening ceremony of the Conference at **11.30 a.m.** for 30 minutes to take decisions on the programme of the Conference.

As suggested by its Officers at the 2014 session of the Conference, after this first meeting, the Officers of the Committee could work by email on any issue related to the programme of the Conference, with the understanding that a face-to-face meeting of the Officers of the Committee would be convened as necessary.

- **Finance Committee:** According to the past experience of budgetary sessions of the Conference, the Finance Committee will hold three or four sittings during the first week of the Conference. These sittings have been tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, 4 June** and **Friday, 5 June**. The Committee will adopt its report on **Monday, 8 June**. This report would then be adopted in plenary on **Wednesday, 10 June, in the afternoon**. The vote on the Programme and Budget for 2016–17 will be scheduled for **Friday, 12 June, in the morning**.

As indicated in the tentative plan of work, the standard-setting committee and the recurrent discussion committee will have **nine working days (1–10 June)** to complete their work.

- **Committee on the Application of Standards:** Pending the outcome of the CAS follow-up and the consultation with the tripartite working group of the CAS, the Office is examining the options so as to ensure that the CAS can fulfil its mandate in accordance with its working methods, taking into account that: (1) there would be no reduction in the number of days⁷ (see tentative plan of work) or amount of time available for discussions; (2) the workplan, including the group meetings, would differ from those of other committees and would have to be closely examined by the CAS tripartite working group; and (3) the adoption of the report of the Committee by the Conference would be scheduled for the final **Saturday, 13 June**.
- **Credentials Committee:** In order for the Committee to have the time to examine all objections and complaints, they should be submitted as early as possible before the expiry of the time limits⁸ and contain all the necessary, supporting documentation.⁹ Proposals to amend the Standing Orders have been discussed by the Governing Body at its 320th Session (March 2014).¹⁰ It is proposed that such reduced time limits be trialled at the 104th Session on the basis of the suspension of the corresponding Standing Orders. To ensure delegates and their organizations are aware of this requirement, information on the proposed arrangements could be included in relevant pre-Conference documentation (Conference Guides, etc.).

⁷ The feasibility of a shorter duration will depend on a binding agreement on modalities for adoption of the list of cases at the beginning of the work of the CAS.

⁸ See articles 5(2) and 26bis to 26quater of the Standing Orders.

⁹ See *Provisional Record* No. 5C, 103rd Session of the Conference, 2014, paragraph 72.

¹⁰ GB.320/LILS/1, pp. 21–23 and GB.320/PV, paras 550–559. The proposal is to reduce the time limit for lodging objections from 72 to 48 hours from the opening of the Conference (and from 48 to 24 hours when based on a revised list of delegations) and the time limit for complaints from seven to five days.

- **Recurrent/general discussion committees:** The total number of working days would continue to be nine days, with the same sequence, number of sittings and group meetings as currently available. Revised working procedures would allow the committees to devote more time to their substantive work and avoid evening sittings. The committees would sit twice a day, with an option for extended/evening sittings if necessary. The proposed draft conclusions would be discussed and adopted paragraph by paragraph in the committee before being submitted to the plenary. The reports of the committees would be submitted directly to the plenary for adoption following their adoption by the Officers of the committee on behalf of the committee. Due to time constraints, the reports would be adopted by the plenary, subject to the corrections submitted electronically before the closure of the Conference.

Should the current practice, which consists in dividing the time devoted to the committee into four parts, be pursued, the workplan could be as follows:

First week:

- Opening: **Monday, 1 June, morning (12 noon).**
- General discussion: four to five plenary sittings (**Monday, 1 June, afternoon, Tuesday, 2 June** and **Wednesday, 3 June** (to the extent possible, morning only to allow the secretariat to finalize and translate the tentative conclusions by the end of **Thursday, 4 June**)).
- Drafting group: four to five meetings on **Friday, 5 June** and **Saturday, 6 June.**

Second week:

- Receipt of amendments: **Monday, 8 June, afternoon.**
 - Examination of amendments to the draft conclusions in plenary: four to five meetings on **Tuesday, 9 June** and **Wednesday, 10 June.**
 - Draft report posted on the web on **Thursday, 11 June, evening.**
 - Report, normally containing a resolution and conclusions, adopted on **Friday, 12 June**, subject to the corrections to statements summarized in the Report received before the closure of the Conference session.
- **Standard-setting committee, second discussion:** The total duration of the standard-setting committee would be of **nine days**, including the Committee Drafting Committee, with the same sequence, number of sittings and group meetings as currently available. The proposed instrument would be adopted paragraph by paragraph during its discussion in the committee before being reviewed by the Committee Drafting Committee and submitted to the plenary. The report of the committee would be submitted directly to the plenary for adoption following its adoption by the Officers of the committee on behalf of the committee. Due to time constraints, the report will therefore have to be adopted by the plenary subject to possible corrections which are received by the Secretariat before the closure of the Conference. The draft report and instrument will be submitted to the plenary on **Friday, 12 June**, first item in the morning. The meeting of the Conference Drafting Committee currently held after the adoption of the report and instrument by the Conference plenary, would need to be rescheduled. The vote would take place during the morning sitting, immediately after the vote on the Programme and Budget for 2016–17.

The workplan would be based on the following elements:

First and second weeks:

- Opening: **Monday, 1 June, morning (12 noon).**
- Four to five receipts of amendments starting on **Tuesday, 2 June.**
- End of discussion in the committee: **Tuesday, 9 June, or Wednesday, 10 June.**
- Committee Drafting Committee: The committee will have to determine the time and frequency of its meetings, taking into account that its work will have to be completed by **Wednesday, 10 June, night.** Should the Committee decide to have a permanent Committee Drafting Committee (following the model used in 2005) which would meet at regular intervals after the afternoon sittings of the committee, the workload of the Committee Drafting Committee, at its final meeting, would be considerably reduced.
- Draft report posted on the web: **Thursday, 11 June, end of afternoon.**
- Report adopted on **Friday, 12 June,** first item in the morning, subject to possible corrections to be received by the Secretariat before the closure of the Conference.
- Conference Drafting Committee: **Friday, 12 June, morning,** immediately after the adoption of the proposed instrument by the plenary.
- Vote on the instrument around **11:30 a.m., on Friday, 12 June.**

IV. Where do we stand?

8. The trials agreed for the 103rd Session (June 2014) of the Conference and the proposed trial of a two-week session in June 2015 are based on the tripartite consensus reached within the Working Party on the guiding principles and objectives of the reform process¹¹ as well as on a list of points regarding the overall structure, agenda, plenary sittings and committees.¹²
9. A number of issues have however been identified as requiring further consultations.¹³ While this list will certainly evolve over the next year, with the trial of a two-week scenario, the following points need to be further discussed:
 - **Agenda-setting process:** Mechanisms have been put in place to improve the consultation processes both internally among the technical departments of the ILO as well as with constituents. The document concerning the agenda of the Conference submitted to the present session of the Governing Body¹⁴ includes various proposals, and in particular a strategic and coherent approach to the Conference agenda,

¹¹ As described in GB.319/WP/GBC/1, paras 12 and 13.

¹² As described in GB.319/WP/GBC/1, para. 14.

¹³ See GB.319/WP/GBC/1, para. 15.

¹⁴ See GB.322/INS/2.

beginning with the 106th, 107th and 108th Sessions of the Conference. The decisions that may be taken by the Governing Body on this basis may pave the way for further improvements which could become an integral part of the overall reform package.

- **Technical committees:** The number of technical committees to be established to discuss technical items placed on the Conference agenda by the Governing Body will be directly linked to the results of the discussion on future Conference agendas. The evaluation of the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization at the 105th Session (2016) of the Conference, as well as its preparation,¹⁵ will have a major influence not only on future recurrent discussions but on the choice of items for standard-setting activities or other types of discussions.
- **Committee on the Application of Standards:** In the light of the issues submitted to the present session of the Governing Body, the reactivation of the Tripartite Working Group on the working methods of the CAS has been postponed. However, it was agreed that any future outcomes from that working group would be integrated into the work of the Working Party (WP/GBC).
- **Working methods of the technical committees:** As indicated above, the need to consider improved working methods and Office preparations has been emphasized as being critical to the success of the technical committees' work in the context of the two-week scenario. New proposals in that regard could be submitted to the Working Party in March 2015, after consultation with the three groups of constituents. Those proposals should address, in particular, the preparation and conduct of standard-setting activities as well as the ways to optimize the results of recurrent and general discussions.
- **Technology:** While the improved use of technology during the past sessions of the Conference is welcomed, some groups are of the view that a more generalized use of screens would better facilitate the amendment discussion process. The electronic version of amendment forms should be available on the web, as well as the workplans of all technical committees. Other technical issues would also need to be further discussed.
- **Conference participation:** Concerns have been expressed regarding the imbalances between the different categories of participants within the delegations. This issue, as well as the gender balance, require further discussion.
- **Conference reports:** There is a strong call for the adoption of a paper-smart policy at the Conference. Some regional groups are of the view that more documents should be posted on the Conference website or distributed to governments electronically through their regional coordinators. Recent measures put in place regarding the *Provisional Record* and committee reports have contributed to a significant reduction of printed copies but further measures need to be explored.
- **Future work of the Working Party (WP/GBC):** The Working Party will have to consider the best timing for its future discussion on the role, purpose and functioning of the Regional Meetings.

¹⁵ See GB.322/INS/3.

Appendix I

Agenda of the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference (2015)

Standing items

- I. Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General
- II. Programme and Budget proposals for 2016–17 and other questions
- III. Information and reports on the application of Conventions and Recommendations

Items placed on the agenda by the Conference or the Governing Body

- IV. Small and medium-sized enterprises and decent and productive employment creation (*general discussion*)
- V. Facilitating transitions from the informal to the formal economy (*standard setting, second discussion*)
- VI. A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (labour protection), under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008

Appendix II

Tentative plan of work – 104th Session (1–13 June 2015) of the International Labour Conference

	Su 31/05	M 1	T 2	W 3	Th 4	F 5	Sa 6	M 8	T 9	W 10	Th 11	F 12	Sa 13
Plenary sittings		I			■	■		■	■	■	■ ³	■	
Committee on the Application of Standards		■ ¹	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	A	PI
Committee on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (<i>general discussion</i>)		■ ¹	■	■	■	■ ^{**}	■ ^{**}	□ ^{***}	■	■		PI	
Committee on Transitions from the Informal to the Formal Economy (<i>standard setting, second discussion</i>) (CDC) *		■ ¹	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		PI/V	
Committee for the Recurrent Discussion on the Strategic Objective of Social Protection (<i>recurrent discussion</i>)		■ ¹	■	■	■	■ ^{**}	■ ^{**}	□ ^{***}	■	■			PI
Finance Committee					■	I		A		PI		V	
Selection Committee		■ ¹											
Group meetings	■						I						
Governing Body		■ ²											I

¹ As from 11.30 a.m. ² Programme, Financial and Administrative Section of the Governing Body. ³ World of Work Summit.

* The Committee will have to determine the time and frequency of the meetings of the Committee Drafting Committee (CDC). ** Drafting Group. *** Receipt of amendments.

