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Policy Development Section

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Social Dialogue Segment

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ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining

Purpose of the document

This document proposes an ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining. The document outlines the context, general considerations and principles, and the key elements of the strategy. It is intended to offer the Governing Body an opportunity to provide guidance on the proposed strategy (see the draft decision in paragraph 57).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Outcome 1: Strong tripartite constituents and influential and inclusive social dialogue (2022–23).

Policy implications: Guiding the ILO interventions to promote and implement the right to collective bargaining.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Subject to the guidance of the Governing Body.

Author unit: Conditions of Work and Equality Department (WORKQUALITY).

Related documents: [Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, 2018; [GB.335/INS/3\(Rev.\)](#); [Programme and Budget for the biennium 2022–23](#); [Programme and Budget for the 2024–25 biennium](#).

► Background and purpose

1. In May 2022, the tripartite screening group decided to place an item on an ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining on the agenda of the Governing Body. Initially included in the agenda of the 348th Session of the Governing Body in March 2023, the item was moved to the subsequent session of the Governing Body. The strategy proposed by the Office builds, notably, upon the Revised plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism for the period 2019–23 to give effect to the conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2018¹ and the Programme and Budget for 2024–25.
2. Freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and tripartism are central to the Organization and its Constitution.² The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, enshrined freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining as fundamental rights, which Member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize by virtue of their membership of the Organization, even if they have not ratified the corresponding fundamental Conventions. The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), are recognized as fundamental Conventions that underpin these principles and rights. As enabling rights for all other rights at work, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining support progress towards social justice around the globe. This has been reconfirmed, *inter alia*, in the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008, as amended in 2022, and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019.
3. Numerous International Labour Conference discussions and decisions refer to the importance of collective bargaining and the ILO's unique role in its promotion. The conclusions of the second recurrent item discussion on social dialogue and tripartism in 2018 called on "Members, with the support of the Organization" to "promote voluntary collective bargaining at all appropriate levels in both the private and public sectors".³ The conclusions of the general discussion on inequalities and the world of work in 2021 stated that "[i]mplementation of collective bargaining systems and measures for equal pay for work of equal value and pay transparency, among other measures, including in supply chains, are key for fair distribution of the fruits of economic progress".⁴ The Director-General's Report to the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference stated that "[o]ne institution that continues to play a role in delivering outcomes that are fair, equitable and inclusive is collective bargaining. [...] There is a need to step up efforts to promote [it]".⁵ One of the recommendations of the independent

¹ Revised plan of action on social dialogue and tripartism for the period 2019–23 to give effect to the conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2018, GB.335/INS/3(Rev.).

² Preamble of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation; Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the International Labour Organisation (Declaration of Philadelphia), Articles I(b) and III(e).

³ ILO, [Resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, 2018.

⁴ ILO, [Resolution and conclusions concerning inequalities and the world of work](#), International Labour Conference, 109th Session, 2021.

⁵ ILO, [Advancing social justice](#), Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 111th Session, 2023.

high-level evaluation of the ILO's strategies and actions to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, 2018–23, presented to the 349th Session of the Governing Body, is for the ILO to expedite its ongoing efforts to strengthen its strategy and actions to promote freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

4. There is also growing support in the international community for the promotion of collective bargaining. For example, the Kurashiki Ministerial Declaration "Investing in Human Capital" adopted by the G7 Kurashiki Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting committed to enhance respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.⁶ Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union calls for action plans to promote collective bargaining in countries where coverage falls below 80 per cent.⁷ In July 2023, the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers agreed to "ensure effective protection of workers' rights including freedom of association and collective bargaining".⁸
5. Social dialogue, including collective bargaining, can contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). The ILO is custodian or co-custodian of several indicators linked to these Goals and is mandated within the United Nations system to deliver on these targets.
6. Against this background, it is timely for the ILO to adopt an integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining as a voluntary means of determining terms and conditions of employment and an important mechanism to foster more inclusive, sustainable and fair societies. The objective of the proposed strategy is twofold, namely, to enhance:
 - (a) the coherence and effectiveness of the ILO's approach towards collective bargaining, including within the Office; and
 - (b) the Organization's capacity to foster policy coherence on this subject within the multilateral system. The future establishment of the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the need for the ILO to contribute to the United Nations Common Agenda offer important opportunities.
7. The proposed strategy suggests priorities for action as well as the range of services and activities that the Office could carry out. It is presented in order to receive guidance from the Governing Body to further refine its content.

What is collective bargaining and what is its intrinsic link to freedom of association?

8. According to the ILO *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, "Collective bargaining is at once an enabling right, a voluntary negotiation process between autonomous representative parties, acting in

⁶ Kurashiki Ministerial Declaration "Investing in Human Capital", April 2023.

⁷ Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union.

⁸ G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting Outcome Document, 21 July 2023.

good faith, and – if consensus is reached – a substantive regulatory outcome in the form of a collective agreement.”⁹

9. Article 4 of Convention No. 98 calls upon ratifying States to take “measures appropriate to national conditions [...], where necessary, to encourage and promote the full development and utilisation of machinery for voluntary negotiation between employers or employers’ organisations and workers’ organisations, with a view to the regulation of terms and conditions of employment by means of collective agreements”. According to the *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, wages are the topic most frequently regulated by collective agreements, followed by working time. Other provisions commonly found in collective agreements are those related to sound labour relations, sick pay and health benefits, occupational safety and health, and skills.¹⁰
10. Article 2 of the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), provides the definition of collective bargaining as a term that “extends to all negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers’ organisations, on the one hand, and one or more workers’ organisations, on the other, for:
 - (a) determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or
 - (b) regulating relations between employers and workers; and/or
 - (c) regulating relations between employers or their organisations and a workers’ organisation or workers’ organisations”.
11. The provisions of Conventions Nos 98 and 154 mentioned above outline several key elements of collective bargaining, its parties and scope. In particular:
 - the importance of collective bargaining for the setting of working conditions and terms of employment as well as for regulating the relations between employers, workers and their respective organizations;
 - the role that both employers’ and workers’ organizations have as legitimate counterparts at the negotiating table – while an employer can engage in negotiations individually, together with other employers or through employers’ organizations, workers’ interests cannot be represented at the bargaining table by workers in their individual capacity, but only by workers’ organizations;¹¹
 - the nature of the bargaining process, consisting of good faith negotiations that should be possible at all appropriate levels which may result in a collective agreement aimed at determining working conditions, terms of employment and other issues agreed by the parties;
 - the voluntary nature of collective bargaining, underpinned by the autonomy of the bargaining partners rooted in the principles of freedom of association.¹²

⁹ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022: Collective bargaining for an inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery*, 2022, 14.

¹⁰ Provisions regulating wages were found in 95 per cent of the collective agreements analysed in the *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, followed by provisions on working time (84 per cent), sound labour relations (78 per cent), sick pay and health benefits (70 per cent), occupational safety and health (68 per cent), and skills (65 per cent), see ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, 18.

¹¹ Paragraph 2 of the Collective Agreements Recommendation, 1951 (No. 91), states that it is only in the absence of workers’ organizations and only for collective bargaining at the enterprise level that “the representatives of the workers duly elected ... by them in accordance with national laws and regulations” can bargain collectively. See also Article 3, paragraph 2 of Convention No. 154.

¹² See para. 1313 of the [Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association](#).

12. On many occasions, the Committee on Freedom of Association “has emphasized the importance of the principle affirmed in 1970 by the International Labour Conference in its resolution concerning trade union rights and their relation to civil liberties, which recognizes that “the rights conferred upon workers’ and employers’ organizations must be based on respect for those civil liberties which have been enunciated in particular in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that the absence of these civil liberties removes all meaning from the concept of trade union rights””.¹³
13. For the process and the outcome of collective bargaining to be meaningful, it is necessary that free, independent and representative organizations engage in negotiations, and therefore that workers and employers are free to form and join any organization of their own choosing. Workers’ and employers’ organizations should enjoy the freedom to set their own rules and procedures, elect their representatives, organize their administration and activities, and formulate their programmes.
14. Another essential element of freedom of association concerns the protection that both workers’ and employers’ organizations should enjoy from acts of interference by the public authorities. They should also be protected against interference from one another.¹⁴

Some opportunities and challenges

15. Preventing and reducing inequality has become a central policy objective in many countries and at the international level. There is robust evidence that collective bargaining reduces wage inequality – including the gender pay gap.¹⁵ It is also effective in addressing discrimination on multiple grounds. It helped to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employment and earnings.
16. Comments from the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and clear recommendations from the tripartite Conference Committee on the Application of Standards and the Committee on Freedom of Association highlight critical areas in the implementation of relevant Conventions, creating a window of opportunity for action at the national, regional and international levels.
17. The inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment within the framework of fundamental principles and rights at work is an opportunity to explore synergies and interrelationships with other fundamental principles and rights, including freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. This includes, inter alia, the role of collective agreements in the creation of occupational safety and health committees and a safe and healthy working environment.
18. At the multilateral level, the United Nations Secretary-General, in his report *Our Common Agenda*, calls for a renewed social contract. Social dialogue, including collective bargaining, is a key means to achieve this goal. The ILO has an important role to play in supporting these arrangements. The future Global Coalition for Social Justice provides a potential opportunity to open a space for promoting collective bargaining to a broader audience.

¹³ See para. 68 of the Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association.

¹⁴ Details concerning act of interference may be found here: ILO, “[Protection against acts of interference for employers’ and workers’ organizations: Evidence from the updated IRLex database](#)”, February 2023.

¹⁵ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022*, 15–16; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Negotiating Our Way Up: Collective Bargaining in a Changing World of Work*, 2019.

19. There remain serious challenges regarding the ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 98, including the follow-up to the comments of the supervisory bodies. In addition, several categories of workers often fall outside the scope of national legislative frameworks providing for collective bargaining. These may include domestic workers, migrant workers, agricultural workers and workers in the informal economy. Moreover, temporary or casual workers may face particular challenges when it comes to the effective recognition and implementation of this right. Other legislative, administrative and practical barriers also exist in some countries that prevent workers and employers from organizing and bargaining effectively. Given the low levels of collective bargaining coverage in many countries around the world, there is scope to increase the role of collective bargaining as a regulatory mechanism.
20. The Office's capacity to respond adequately to demands for technical assistance, capacity-building and comparative knowledge is constrained, notably by limited staff and non-staff-resources. This not only hinders the capacity to provide support at country level in some regions but has also led to underinvestment in knowledge development, including the sustainability of established databases.

► The proposed ILO integrated strategy: General considerations and priority areas for action

General considerations

21. The main actors and beneficiaries of the strategy are organizations of workers and employers who should enjoy the right to collective bargaining as defined in international labour standards, informed by guidance from the supervisory bodies. This includes vulnerable groups of workers for whom effectively exercising the right to collective bargaining is a challenge, such as migrant workers, informal economy workers and domestic workers. As governments play an essential role in providing the legal and institutional setting for collective bargaining to thrive, they are also key actors to benefit from and implement the strategy. The Office, through all its means of action, also has a key role to play in its implementation.
22. The strategy highlights the importance of collective bargaining as a means of determining terms and conditions of employment adapted to national circumstances, including in times of crisis. The ILO does not put forward a single model of bargaining; rather it promotes the progressive expansion of the scope and coverage of voluntary collective bargaining in line with national circumstances, as called for in Convention No. 154. The outcomes of negotiations in the form of binding agreements play an essential role in labour market governance. The strategy emphasizes the promotion of gender equality and the role collective bargaining can play in reducing gender pay gaps. The strategy should also help bring to the attention of the multilateral system the role collective bargaining, as part of social dialogue, can play in achieving the SDGs, including, but not limited to, Goal 8.
23. The strategy proposes key areas of work to enhance the capacity of constituents to promote and/or engage in more effective and inclusive bargaining. It suggests comprehensive and coordinated support to governments and employers' and workers' organizations in the implementation of ratified Conventions and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022. It supports a common understanding of the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining across the ILO. It also spurs efforts to mainstream collective bargaining across the Organization, including the activities of the Office.

The strategy suggests the range of services the Office could provide, the knowledge products to be produced, and provides links to the Programme and Budget for 2024–25.

24. The proposed strategy builds on a foundation of experience developed by the ILO over the past decades. It also reflects new lines of work the Office has developed in recent years, as a follow-up to International Labour Conference conclusions and Governing Body decisions, on the basis of which the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining could be more effective. There have been significant developments in statistical data collection and analysis, with the introduction of Industrial Relations Data (IRdata)¹⁶ and the development of the Legal Database on Industrial Relations (IRLex),¹⁷ a database that compiles labour relations national regulatory frameworks from around the world. Knowledge products on inclusiveness have been produced, covering informal economy workers and economic units, domestic and migrant workers, and those in some specific forms of employment. There have been systematic reviews of the content of collective agreements, including in respect of wages, working time and just transitions. The first edition of the flagship report on social dialogue undertook an extensive analysis of collective bargaining practices and outcomes. Capacity-building tools for constituents have been strengthened with the introduction and expansion of the IRtoolkit.¹⁸ While activities have been ongoing in all these areas, there is a need for more in-depth, continued and systematic action in particular areas in order to attain the intended objectives of the strategy.

Promoting the ratification and implementation of international labour standards relevant to the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

25. The setting, promotion, ratification and supervision of international labour standards is of paramount importance to the Organization. This concerns the relevant fundamental Conventions, namely Conventions Nos 87 and 98, which will be the subject of ratification campaigns under the Programme and Budget for 2024–25. The ratification and effective implementation of other international labour standards relevant to freedom of association and to the right to collective bargaining in both the private and public sectors, notably Convention No. 154 and the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), should also be encouraged. Building ILO advice on comparative law and practice has been proven to facilitate the effective operationalization of international labour standards.
26. Additional efforts are needed to ensure that the comments of the supervisory bodies are systematically brought to the attention of governments and the social partners in the context of national consultations on legal frameworks and policies, including through national tripartite committees and the Office's engagement in other related areas of work.
27. The Office will continue to carry out gap analyses and provide technical assistance and cooperation to countries interested in ratification. In addition, the Office will seek to secure integration into country-level activities associated with requests for assistance arising from the

¹⁶ ILOSTAT database on labour relations indicators.

¹⁷ The ILO's [Legal Database on Industrial Relations](#) (IRLex) is a database of national laws and regulations concerning industrial relations topics.

¹⁸ The ILO Industrial Relations Global Toolkit (IRtoolkit) is a comprehensive training package on key topics of labour relations hosted by the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) e-Campus.

annual review under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as well as with other requests from constituents for technical assistance.

Setting an enabling environment for collective bargaining

28. While collective bargaining is a voluntary process of negotiation between two autonomous parties, governments play a key role in ensuring an enabling environment allowing for its full development at all appropriate levels. Such an enabling legal and regulatory framework at the national level is also a condition for the effective implementation of international labour standards.
29. Depending on the system of labour relations and the degree to which specific aspects of the collective bargaining process are left to the autonomy of the parties to decide or are regulated by law, the legal framework can have a varying degree of importance in the process of collective bargaining and its outcome, namely a collective agreement regulating working conditions and terms of employment. Nonetheless, it is important that an enabling regulatory framework is in place and, in particular, that:
 - the right to bargain collectively is recognized for all employers and workers covered by the relevant ILO Conventions;
 - no legal limitation is placed on the level at which collective bargaining takes place, and that the level of collective bargaining is left to the decision of the parties;
 - no legal limitation exists on the subject matter for bargaining or on the content of collective agreements.
30. In parallel with the creation of an enabling regulatory framework, the public authorities also have several other functions, namely:
 - to take measures, if necessary, to ensure the parties have access to the information required for meaningful negotiations;
 - to give effect to collective agreements, including through a system of registration;
 - to strengthen the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations to negotiate effectively, at their request.¹⁹
31. Furthermore, a number of measures could be taken, depending on the system of labour relations in question, either on the basis of statutory provisions subject to meaningful tripartite consultations or by way of agreement between the parties, in particular:
 - the establishment of mechanisms for the extension of collective agreements (or certain stipulations within them) beyond the signatory parties in order to apply to all the employers or workers included within the industrial and territorial scope of the agreement;²⁰
 - the establishment of representativeness criteria for the purpose of collective bargaining, either through the signing of a recognition agreement or through the establishment of statutory provisions for recognition;

¹⁹ The Collective Bargaining Recommendation, 1981 (No. 163), Paragraph 7.

²⁰ See Paragraph 5 of Recommendation No. 91.

- the extension of the status of the content of collective agreements beyond their expiration or termination date until a new agreement has been negotiated.
32. Because the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining is a fundamental principle and right, Member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize it in good faith. The supervisory system has provided important detailed guidance on how governments can promote voluntary collective bargaining while still respecting the autonomy of the parties.
 33. The Office will continue to support legal reforms through social dialogue processes, and by providing technical advice based on international labour standards, the comments from the ILO supervisory bodies and comparative legal analysis. This will help to ensure that barriers to the full development of collective bargaining machinery that might exist in law and practice are addressed.
 34. The Office will lend support to the development of effective procedures for the recognition and registration of employers' and workers' organizations that enable parties to be recognized as bargaining agents.
 35. The Office will also help Member States to ensure that laws allow those in the informal economy and other vulnerable workers, women and men, to form and join organizations of their own choosing and to exercise their right to collective bargaining.

Strengthening public authorities and institutions to promote collective bargaining

36. Governments are responsible for establishing sufficiently staffed and resourced systems of labour administration, with adequately trained personnel, including ensuring that the provisions of collective agreements are effectively implemented in practice and cases of non-compliance are promptly addressed. They should also ensure that dispute resolution and adjudication mechanisms are in place to deal with disputes that might arise during the process of bargaining or in connection with the interpretation and application of the agreements, and they should grant access to justice to remedy violations of the rights enshrined in collective agreements. Such remedies include procedures and institutions of conciliation, mediation and voluntary arbitration established in line with relevant international labour standards.²¹
37. The Office will provide capacity-building and training to labour inspectorates to strengthen their role in ensuring compliance with collective agreements. It will continue to support the development and capacity of the labour dispute prevention and resolution systems that provide effective access to labour justice. It will do so including through the training of judges, arbitrators and conciliators, by improving case management systems, and through the use of the diagnostic tool for self-assessment of labour dispute prevention and resolution.
38. The Office will assist governments in gathering data and information for evidence-based bargaining and making it available to the social partners. Such data may include, for example, GDP growth (including sectoral composition), changes in productivity, inflation, employment and unemployment, income and wage distribution, and trends in compensation, disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics, as applicable.

²¹ Recommendation No. 91; the Voluntary Conciliation and Arbitration Recommendation, 1951 (No. 92); Convention No. 154; Convention No. 151.

39. The Office also proposes to develop and disseminate evidence-based promotional and capacity-building products to demonstrate how collective bargaining can be used as a complementary measure in labour market governance and as a regulatory response to emerging challenges and opportunities, such as technological and environmental transitions. This will include, inter alia, gathering and making available clauses in collective agreements that address these challenges and opportunities, and providing capacity-building as to how they can be applied.

Strengthening the capacity of the social partners

40. The role of employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) and trade unions in collective bargaining is central to sound industrial relations and well-coordinated bargaining. Their role varies according to national contexts. In some cases, they participate directly in multi-employer, sectoral or interprofessional bargaining. In addition, they may provide relevant information to their members, participate in policy discussions on collective bargaining, and provide legal advice and relevant training.
41. It is proposed that the Office should increase its efforts to strengthen the capacity of the social partners. The Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) at headquarters and in the field will ensure that capacity-building is based on the priorities expressed by workers' organizations and EBMOs.²² Topics could include: (a) collective bargaining policies and comparative models; (b) how to bargain effectively and in good faith; (c) the content of collective agreements; and (d) how best to service current and new members.
42. In delivering the capacity development initiatives, both the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) and local training providers, including EBMOs and trade unions, will be involved to help strengthen local institutional capacity for training and to ensure sustainability. The capacity-building activities will be largely based on the use of the IRtoolkit, a modular and adaptive training package covering crucial labour relations topics. The various modules of the IRtoolkit,²³ developed for both self-guided and guided training, have been adapted to various national contexts and translated into a number of languages. Possible new modules may include, among others, collective bargaining and environmental and technological transitions, and collective bargaining, inclusiveness and inequality. In addition to the Turin Centre, other means of capacity-building will be used, including peer-to-peer learning, South-to-South learning, international and national expertise, and training of trainers.
43. Building on international and national experiences and training materials, the Office will strengthen the capacity of workers' organizations and EBMOs to service both their current and new members in order to enhance representation, inclusiveness and diversity; diversity in bargaining teams will also be promoted. For employers' organizations, capacity-building could include ways of attracting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and new forms of businesses.²⁴ For workers' organizations, capacity-building could be focused on tackling

²² As expressed in the Programme and Budget for 2024–25 under output 2.1 and 2.2. See GB.347/PFA/1, para. 98.

²³ The IRtoolkit is comprised of several modules which cover the following topics: (i) collective bargaining policy; (ii) collective bargaining practice; (iii) negotiation skills; (iv) workplace cooperation; (v) grievance handling; (vi) conflict dynamic; (vii) soft skills development; (viii) gender, non-discrimination, violence and harassment; (ix) labour relations in times of crisis; (x) improving the collection of data on labour relations for evidence-based policymaking; and (xi) collective bargaining of wages.

²⁴ GB.347/PFA/1, para. 96.

decent work deficits as a priority, particularly those faced by workers in the informal economy, in the rural economy and in supply chains, with a focus on women and young people.²⁵

Knowledge development and advocacy

Research products on outcomes and the process of collective bargaining

44. The Office proposes to build a new, authoritative evidence-based body of research – including through partnerships with other international organizations and academic institutions – to promote the benefits associated with the implementation of the right to collective bargaining. This will include developing a research agenda that can feed into ILO periodic publications such as the flagship report on social dialogue as well as other knowledge and advocacy products. This could include:
 - (a) researching the role that freedom of association and collective bargaining play in economic development, including trade and investment; reducing inequalities of opportunities and outcomes; helping governments and social partners to navigate transitions and crises; enhancing compliance with legislation; researching how collective bargaining can contribute to productivity growth; researching the role of collective bargaining in environmental and technological transitions; and collective bargaining and skills development;
 - (b) leveraging networks of employers' organizations and trade unions to collect examples of collective agreements, or carrying out relevant surveys;
 - (c) expanding knowledge by collecting good practices that can contribute to making freedom of association and collective bargaining more inclusive;
 - (d) developing knowledge on collective bargaining at all levels, building on existing ILO partnerships;
 - (e) researching the manner in which freedom of association and collective bargaining have fostered labour protection in different socio-economic contexts.
45. Together with ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, the Office also suggests building upon existing knowledge products and developing new ones to help the social partners enhance their inclusiveness and representativeness. This may include extending services by EBMOs and workers' organizations to economic units and women and men in the informal economy or building alliances with them to allow them to engage in and benefit from collective bargaining. The knowledge products should also benefit other groups of workers in vulnerable situations, such as migrant and domestic workers.

Maintain and expand quantitative (IRdata) and qualitative (IRLex) databases and related knowledge products

46. It is vital to ensure the availability of data for constituents as a source of information to strengthen their capacity and the design of appropriate laws and policies. Data is also urgently required for the development of research and knowledge products. The ILO should ensure the continuous and sustainable updating and expansion of its databases concerning labour relations. This requires the regular collection and dissemination of data: (i) on labour relations, trade union density and collective bargaining coverage, including in ILO Member States where

²⁵ GB.347/PFA/1, para. 98.

that information is scarce; and (ii) on labour relations regulatory frameworks. Collective agreements and sample clauses contained in them will be periodically collected in order to share existing practices in bargaining outcomes.

Knowledge products regarding topics covered in collective agreements and trends and innovations in collective bargaining

47. The Office will expand knowledge on: (i) innovative practices that illustrate how collective bargaining is addressing emerging changes and transformations in the world of work; (ii) key topics in collective agreements, including wages, working time and links with productivity; and how clauses in collective agreements address gender inequality; (iii) emerging topics such as technological transitions (including artificial intelligence, algorithmic management, data protection, as well as telework and hybrid work), just transition and work in the platform economy; (iv) the recognition of skills and education in collective agreements; and (v) relationships between statutory minimum wage systems and collective wage bargaining.

Advocacy

48. It is essential to continue to build the evidence base for advocacy around the benefits of collective bargaining. This will help to create a new narrative on this topic, to make the case that it is not only a fundamental principle and right, but also contributes to inclusive and sustainable development. Resources should be dedicated to converting the knowledge developed into concrete tools for advocacy and change – both within the ILO and among policymakers and other external actors. The ILO's impact can be greatly enhanced by tailoring and making these knowledge products and tools available to a wide audience in an accessible format. The development of a communications strategy will help to ensure the broadest possible reach.

Promoting the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining within the multilateral system

49. The promotion of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining can contribute directly to the attainment of the SDGs, in particular Goals 8, 10 and 16. Several SDG indicators under ILO custodianship will monitor the contribution towards these Goals, with particular attention to Goal 8 through indicator 8.8.2, which assesses compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining rights.
50. It is proposed that the Office increase its efforts to foster the integration of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining into policies and activities within the multilateral system, with a view to contributing to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and within the framework of the future Global Coalition for Social Justice. This will be pursued by enhanced cooperation between the ILO and its tripartite constituents and the wider United Nations and multilateral system, while considering priorities set out in *Our Common Agenda*. This will include, inter alia, efforts to incorporate the comments of the ILO supervisory bodies into cooperation frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and Common Country Analyses (CCAs), and outreach to United Nations Resident Coordinators to raise awareness of the relevance of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining in specific country contexts. The Office will also leverage opportunities to promote the fundamental principles and rights at work in regional and global forums, and in trade and investment agreements.

Means of action, including strengthening capacity within the Office

51. The Office will mobilize all means of action to support the proposed strategy. The coordinated use of knowledge products and their dissemination, advocacy tools and ratification campaigns, technical advisory services, including on legal and regulatory reform, and capacity development for labour administrations and dispute settlement bodies, together with increasing the capacity of the social partners, will enable the Office to implement this strategy. This will require close coordination across headquarters and in the field, including ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, and a strong development cooperation portfolio.
52. The Office will endeavour to mainstream the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining into Decent Work Country Programmes, taking into consideration the guidance of the ILO supervisory bodies. Links will also be established with other relevant strategies, such as occupational safety and health, supply chains, and fundamental principles and rights at work, to ensure collective bargaining is integrated. The Office will also strengthen the role of country and regional offices regarding the promotion of the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining with a view to ensuring a more coherent ILO voice.
53. The Office will expand partnerships with dispute resolution agencies, universities and research organizations, and proposes exploring the use of public-private partnerships to help promote collective bargaining more broadly, in line with existing procedures.
54. Implementing the strategy, particularly the capacity-building and knowledge development components, will require outreach to donors and substantial resource mobilization. The Office will seek to develop integrated development cooperation projects that cover multiple fundamental principles and rights at work, including the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. It will also require strong coordination across headquarters and in the field in order to include elements of the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining in existing strategies and future development cooperation projects.

Monitoring and reporting

55. The strategy is aligned with the current programme and budget and the results reported under the indicator on collective bargaining of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25, namely the “number of Member States in which there are newly developed or strengthened policies or practices to promote: (a) collective bargaining ...” (indicator 2.3.2), will contribute to monitoring progress. SDG indicator 8.8.2 will also be used to monitor changes at the country level. In addition, the Office proposes to report on the advancement of the strategy to the Governing Body on an annual basis.
56. The next recurrent discussion on social dialogue in 2026 will provide further guidance on this strategy.

► Draft decision

57. **The Governing Body endorsed the proposed ILO integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance in implementing the strategy and to submit a progress report at its 352nd Session (November 2024).**