



Governing Body

349th Session, Geneva, 30 October–9 November 2023

Policy Development Section

POL

Date: 13 October 2023

Original: English

Follow-up to the Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in Durban

Summary: This document provides an overview of the steps taken by Member States, the Office and other organizations in follow-up to the Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, which was held in May 2022, in particular to support the implementation of the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour.

Author unit: Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE).

Related documents: [GB.344/POL/3](#); [GB.341/POL/INF/1](#); [GB.340/POL/7\(Rev.1\)](#).

► 1. Introduction

1. The Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour (Fifth Global Conference) was hosted by the Government of South Africa and held in Durban in the week of 15 May 2022. It was included in the ILO's Programme and Budget for 2022–23 as a response to the Governing Body's decision that the ILO should pursue the preparations for it.¹ It built on the outcomes of previous global child labour conferences, namely: the Oslo International Conference on Child Labour, held in 1997; the Hague Global Child Labour Conference, held in 2010; the Third Global Conference on Child Labour, held in Brasilia in 2013; and the Fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, held in Buenos Aires in 2017. The Fifth Global Conference served to: take stock of progress achieved since the Fourth Global Conference; identify good practices, viable solutions and implementation gaps; reinforce the commitment of stakeholders to accelerate the fight against child labour in line with target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and coordinate local, national, regional and global efforts. It also provided an opportunity to highlight the links between the elimination of child labour, the other fundamental principles and rights at work, and the broader Decent Work Agenda of the ILO.
2. The Fifth Global Conference, which was organized as a hybrid online and in-person event, comprised 54 sessions and side events. The participants included representatives of the ILO constituents, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and Alliance 8.7 partners and, for the first time at a global child labour conference, children. Some 1,150 delegates participated in person, 2,750 people registered to participate online and 15,000 people watched the live stream of the event. A total of 43,800 users visited the Conference website and over 8,000 social media posts with the hashtag #RaiseYourHandforKids were created, including by global leaders and numerous celebrities.
3. The Fifth Global Conference took place against a backdrop of rising child labour figures and additional challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The global estimates on child labour for 2016–20, produced by the ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), showed a modest, but ongoing, reduction in child labour in Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean, but a substantial increase in Africa, resulting in a global increase from 152 to 160 million children. As in previous periods, hazardous work accounted for roughly half of all child labour. In total, 70 per cent of child labour was in agriculture, most of which took place within families.²
4. Five regional consultations, held in late 2021, and a survey sent to the ILO constituents were instrumental in identifying the thematic focus and priorities for the Fifth Global Conference.

¹ ILO, *Minutes of the meetings of the Screening Group held in preparation of decisions made by correspondence by the Governing Body between March and October 2020*, Minutes (Rev.5), 2020, para. 357.

² ILO and UNICEF, *Child labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, 2021.

► 2. Deliberations and outcomes of the Fifth Global Conference

Opening session and high-level panels

5. During the opening session, the President of South Africa emphasized the importance of tackling the root causes of child labour, especially poverty, and noted that the rights of children were enshrined in his country's Constitution.
6. The Director-General of the ILO noted that progress against child labour had stalled in recent years and that, despite the efforts made, child labour had increased, particularly among children aged 5–11 years in Africa. It was critical to seize opportunities to turn the tide, which included closing the digital divide and adopting a human-centred approach to the recovery from the pandemic.
7. Other distinguished speakers contributing to the opening session included the Vice President of Malawi, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, heads of other United Nations (UN) agencies, Nobel peace laureates, representatives of employers' and workers' organizations, the Chair of Alliance 8.7 and a survivor of child labour.

Thematic panels

8. Under the motto "Upscale, upskill and integrate", delegates participated in 12 thematic panel discussions and 28 side events.
9. Participants discussed the critical link between education and child labour. Countries such as Malawi, despite having met international targets in respect of the percentage of government expenditure devoted to education, still faced serious funding gaps, and an increase in international assistance was needed in the near term.
10. Experience from Chad, Kenya, Niger, Papua New Guinea and Somalia served to illustrate the importance of designing country- and context-specific strategies, including to tackle child labour against a backdrop of conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.
11. Speakers highlighted that the political will in Africa had been demonstrated by the adoption in 2020 of the African Union's Ten-Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. The Regional Initiative for a Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour was considered a vital forum for collaboration and learning in the Americas.
12. Universal, child-sensitive social protection covering the entire life cycle was vital. While only 26 per cent of children worldwide received social protection benefits, experience in countries such as Rwanda, where 7.3 per cent of gross domestic product was spent on social protection, showed that it was feasible to increase expenditure. Domestic financing was the main source of funding for tackling child labour. Official development assistance should play a catalytic role, including by attracting investment from other partners.
13. Promoting decent work for young people was a key part of the solution and examples of innovative partnerships between business and governments to promote apprenticeships were shared as potential models.
14. The need to strengthen capacity and engagement with agriculture stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, was emphasized. International financial institutions, for their part, had a particular responsibility to consider child labour risks in their investment decisions, but should also take a preventative approach and tackle the root causes of child labour.

15. Speakers considered that trade measures, due diligence legislation, strengthened collective bargaining and collective efforts in Alliance 8.7 could contribute effectively to the elimination of child labour in supply chains.
16. Speakers recalled that the right of children to participation was enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children shared their experiences of child labour and their conviction that such labour could be eliminated only if alternatives, such as quality education, were provided, and if their parents could earn adequate incomes.
17. Representatives of the Government of South Africa and of the hosts of all previous global child labour conferences traced the history and lasting effects of the work undertaken in that context.

Adoption of the Durban Call to Action

18. The Fifth Global Conference concluded with the adoption by acclamation of the [Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour](#), which identified six priority areas for action, namely action to:
 - (a) accelerate multi-stakeholder efforts to prevent and eliminate child labour, with priority given to its worst forms, by making decent work a reality for adults and young people above the minimum age for work;
 - (b) end child labour in agriculture;
 - (c) strengthen the prevention and elimination of child labour, including its worst forms, forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons, and the protection of survivors through data-driven and survivor-informed policy and programmatic responses;
 - (d) realize children's right to education and ensure universal access to free, compulsory, quality, equitable and inclusive education and training;
 - (e) achieve universal access to social protection; and
 - (f) increase financing and international cooperation for the elimination of child labour and forced labour.
19. Under each priority, the Durban Call to Action provides a series of tangible steps for implementation. It is the first outcome document of a global child labour conference to prioritize agriculture and finance, to highlight the role of adequate minimum wages, to involve children in its adoption and to include a follow-up mechanism.
20. At the closing ceremony, the Director-General elect of the ILO recalled the seriousness of the challenge, particularly in the agriculture sector, while noting that there was ample cause for hope, as the steps outlined in the Durban Call to Action had been proven to be effective in ending child labour. He reaffirmed the unrelenting commitment of the ILO in that regard.

► 3. Dissemination and implementation of the Durban Call to Action

21. The following set of examples, while not exhaustive, illustrates how Member States have taken measures to promote and implement the Durban Call to Action.

International and regional responses

22. In May 2022, the ministers of labour, employment and social affairs of the G7 met and issued a communiqué welcoming the Durban Call to Action and its emphasis on tackling the root causes of child labour and promoting transparency, due diligence and remediation in value chains.³
23. Also in May 2022, 20 independent UN experts issued a joint statement welcoming the Durban Call to Action, mentioning in particular the call for the adoption by governments of an action plan to eliminate obstacles to the establishment of organizations of rural workers and the need to protect children from exposure to hazardous pesticides. They stressed that poverty could never be a reason that children were not in schools.⁴
24. Since the Fifth Global Conference, Alliance 8.7 pathfinder countries such as Argentina and Germany have explicitly referred to the Durban Call to Action in their road maps, which are national plans to accelerate progress to end child labour and forced labour. Alliance 8.7 has reviewed all pathfinder country road maps to assess how they address the six priorities of the Durban Call to Action. The review will support Alliance 8.7 in taking stock of the efforts by the pathfinder countries to implement the Durban Call to Action, identify policy gaps and strategize on how best to address these gaps.
25. Alliance 8.7, with the support of the Office, created a working group on survivor engagement, with the aim of strengthening the role of survivors of forced labour, child labour and human trafficking in the Alliance. In addition, the Global Coordinating Group of Alliance 8.7 has provided guidance on the development of the Durban Call to Action information repository to ensure complementarity with existing databases (see section 4 below).
26. Civil society organizations, with input from children and representatives of the Government of South Africa and UN agencies, created a child-friendly version of the Durban Call to Action.⁵
27. In February 2023, ministers of labour and senior officials responsible for social security met in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic and adopted the Punta Cana Declaration, in which they agreed to accelerate progress in the elimination of child labour and forced labour, reiterating the commitments made in the Durban Call to Action, through the Regional Initiative for a Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour.⁶
28. Member States that have joined the Regional Initiative for a Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour are developing country acceleration plans, which serve to implement the

³ Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Germany, "[Just transition: Make it work, Towards decent and high quality work in a green economy](#)", 24 May 2022.

⁴ United Nations, "[UN experts urge action to address alarming increase of child labour in agriculture sector](#)", 30 May 2022.

⁵ Dialogue Works et al., [We are putting an end to child labour](#), 2023.

⁶ The full text of the Declaration is available in Spanish only at: [Declaracion-Trabajo-de-Punta-Cana-10-de-febrero-de-202376.pdf \(segib.org\)](#).

Durban Call to Action. The aim is to create 31 plans by the end of 2023, with at least 19 including earmarked funding allocations.

29. Also in February 2023, the African Union and the ILO organized a regional conference on the elimination of child labour in supply chains. The conference brought together stakeholders from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda. Its agenda mirrored the priorities of the Durban Call to Action, with sessions dealing with topics that included financing child labour elimination, improving working conditions for adults and children above the minimum age, social protection, education and training, and social dialogue. To inform the discussions, 14 good practices in the fight against child labour, corresponding to the priorities of the Durban Call to Action, were documented and published.⁷
30. A March 2023 meeting of ministers of employment and labour and the social partners of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) resulted in a call for enhanced cooperation among SADC members to support implementation of the Durban Call to Action, including a joint review of existing national action plans to ensure alignment with the Durban Call to Action.⁸
31. As an outcome of an April 2023 meeting, the East African Legislative Assembly urged the East African Community and partner States to develop regulatory and implementation frameworks aligning with the aims of the Durban Call to Action.

Country-specific responses

32. The Durban Call to Action has directly informed and guided reviews of policy frameworks in a number of countries, including Chile, Kenya, Mali and Uganda.
33. In Bangladesh, following the adoption in 2021 of a revised hazardous work list, a child labour survey is being carried out in the five new sectors deemed to be hazardous for children.
34. At the Fifth Global Conference, Brazil launched a child labour complaint system, which strengthens capacity to implement the Durban Call to Action by facilitating the reporting of child labour violations and carrying out expedited, more effective investigations and case management.
35. Following the Fifth Global Conference, Chile reaffirmed its commitment to the prevention and eradication of child labour. It has accelerated the actions outlined in its National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers (2015–25) and will present the results of a new Child and Adolescent Activity Survey by the end of 2023, to improve understanding of the reality of child labour in the country.
36. In Kenya, in September 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection held a symposium on social protection and child labour, as part of an ongoing process to identify gaps in the national policy framework and generate policy proposals to implement the Durban Call to Action. Kenya is also in the process of reviewing its National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labour in the light of the Durban Call to Action. Making decent work a reality for adults and young people, promoting universal access to free, compulsory, quality education and social protection and ending child labour in agriculture are among the priorities identified under the

⁷ ILO, "Good Practices: Knowledge Sharing for Partnerships on the Elimination of Child Labour in Supply Chains".

⁸ SADC, "SADC Ministers of Employment and Labour and Social Partners call for enhanced measures to create decent work in the region", 3 April 2023.

review. In addition, a number of county integrated development plans were created, with specific emphasis on increasing funding for child labour elimination and improving coordination among relevant departments. In February 2023, the County Assembly of Mombasa held a workshop on the implications of the Durban Call to Action. In May 2023, it adopted a child labour policy and has since developed a road map for ending child labour in Mombasa County using legislation, policies and programmes.

37. In Mali, a second National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour was adopted, which integrated key provisions of the Durban Call to Action. Various ministries, including those dealing with labour, education, financial inclusion, social protection and agriculture, assumed responsibility for relevant parts of the Plan.
38. In Nepal, steps to strengthen protection against hazardous child labour, part of the first priority of the Durban Call to Action, were taken, where the Government initiated a review of its hazardous child labour list. Furthermore, in 2022, the Government extended the coverage of its social security fund, including dependent family benefits, to migrant and self-employed workers. Nepal has responded to the need, identified by the Durban Call to Action, for immediate, intensified, gender-responsive, well-coordinated, multi-sectoral action by, inter alia, mobilizing the Ministry of Education and Sports in efforts to eliminate child labour, in particular by accelerating the implementation of free, compulsory quality education.
39. In Nigeria, in January 2023, child labour desk officers were appointed in all 36 states and child labour monitoring systems were established in communities with a high prevalence of child labour (in Ondo, Osun and Niger states). These monitoring systems have helped accelerate efforts to eliminate child labour at mining sites and farms, and have fostered positive changes in attitudes and practices in the targeted communities. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, with the support of the Office, trained agricultural extension officers to tackle child labour in agriculture, and conducted an awareness-raising campaign on the dangers of child labour and the importance of education in agricultural and mining communities.
40. In Uganda, the National Child Labour Policy is under review in the light of the Durban Call to Action, and the Government's child labour inspection checklist was revised to address child labour in agriculture. In December 2022, the Government organized a high-level symposium on child labour in agriculture. Representatives of various ministries, including the ministries of education and agriculture, local government leaders and representatives of employers' and workers' organizations, UN agencies and civil society used the Durban Call to Action as a reference to assess progress and identify priorities for action. As in many other countries, the Durban Call to Action has become an important reference point in advocacy efforts in Uganda, particularly for the World Day Against Child Labour in 2022 and 2023, when Ugandan children created a petition for increased efforts to end child labour and their own adaptation of the Durban Call to Action, which they submitted to policymakers.
41. In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Education and Training has begun drafting child labour prevention and reduction guidelines for managers, teachers and staff of preschool and general education institutions. In 2022, the Government carried out systematic monitoring in all regions on compliance with labour regulations, including with regard to forced and child labour.
42. A number of countries, including Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya and Viet Nam, are carrying out national surveys to estimate the prevalence and gain insight into the nature of child labour, in line with the third priority of the Durban Call to Action. Of particular note is the continuing trend of integrating child labour indicators into labour force surveys, which reduces

dependence on relatively expensive stand-alone surveys and facilitates more regular data gathering.

Action taken by the social partners

43. The social partners have contributed to the creation of all Alliance 8.7 road maps and country implementation plans supported by the Regional Initiative for a Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour, which are key policy vehicles for the implementation of the Durban Call to Action.
44. In Kenya, the Federation of Kenya Employers, the Central Organization of Trade Unions – Kenya and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, with the support of the ILO, implemented area-based approaches to tackling child labour, including through programmes targeting agriculture value chains in the tea, sugar cane, coffee and rice industries. In Bungoma County, the Central Organization of Trade Unions – Kenya, through its affiliate union in the sugar industry, worked with the Federation of Kenya Employers and the ILO as part of an initiative to convert the communities associated with the Nzoia Sugar Company value chain into a child labour-free zone.
45. In Malawi, in July 2022, a process to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement between the Tea Association of Malawi Limited and the Plantation Allied Workers Union was advanced with support of the ILO. This resulted in their fourth collective bargaining agreement, which provided for increased wage rates and expanded maternity leave. Furthermore, the Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi reviewed a guide for employers on the elimination of child labour and its code of conduct, aimed at ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and protecting children from exploitation. It also conducted orientation workshops for its members, who committed to adopting their own child labour policies.
46. In Mali, the National Union of Education and Culture (SNEC) is a member of the "Work: No Child's Business" alliance. Following the Fifth Global Conference, the alliance, through the SNEC, strengthened its contribution to the prevention and elimination of child labour in Mali. Some 240 teachers were trained in modern teaching techniques, the child labour-free zone approach and children's rights, and 95 girls and 115 boys were withdrawn from child labour and placed in accelerated education centres. In June 2022, a road map for the elimination of child labour in the Malian cotton sector was adopted by the National Union of Cotton Producers' Cooperatives. In addition, the decentralized financial sector, including microfinance institutions, has included child labour considerations in its loan-making procedures.
47. In Nigeria, in 2022, the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association developed and launched a code of conduct for businesses and a guidance tool to help them address child labour impacts in their own operations and supply chains. In February 2023, the Nigeria Labour Congress adopted a resolution promoting trade union campaigns for the elimination of child labour, acknowledging the importance of the Durban Call to Action and marking the renewal of action by the Congress towards the achievement of SDG target 8.7. The Congress agreed that, with its affiliates, it would establish child labour desks and liaise with national and state child labour steering committees to promote the elimination of child labour.

► 4. Action taken by the Office in line with the Durban Call to Action

At the global level

48. The Durban Call to Action provides that the ILO will assist in its implementation and in the communication of progress in that regard, in particular by creating and hosting a centralized information repository that collates the relevant policies, plans, efforts and achievements of Member States in meeting their commitments to achieve SDG target 8.7.
49. The information repository will fill a gap, as currently there is no “one-stop shop” for policies, legislation, national action plans and evidence of progress on child labour. The Office is currently developing the structure and gathering content for the information repository, which will be launched in the first half of 2024. It will be a web-based tool and will complement existing ILO databases such as the Forced Labour Observatory, Alliance 8.7 databases and the Evidence Gap Map on Child Labour.
50. The Office has begun the development of a renewed framework of action on child labour to inform the report to be prepared for the forthcoming recurrent discussion of the International Labour Conference on the strategic objective of fundamental principles and rights at work and subsequent follow-up. The purpose of the framework of action is to ensure that the ILO’s efforts to eliminate child labour are aligned with and support the implementation of the Durban Call to Action, using a “One ILO” approach, and to integrate learning from recent research, emerging good practice and other experience.
51. The Office has used the strategies outlined in the Durban Call to Action to inform its development cooperation projects, including those targeting child labour in cocoa, coffee, mining and other value chains. These projects support social dialogue and build multi-stakeholder coalitions to tackle child labour and forced labour, in line with the first priority of the Durban Call to Action. Since the Fifth Global Conference, the Office has placed renewed emphasis on decent work for parents, safe and healthy working environments, national and international financing for child labour elimination, universal social protection and education in its portfolio of development cooperation projects.
52. Since the Fifth Global Conference, the Office has supported extensive quantitative and qualitative research on child labour and forced labour, including by engaging with survivors, in line with the priority established by the Durban Call to Action to strengthen the prevention and elimination of child labour through data-driven and survivor-informed policy and programmatic responses.
53. In the context of the ILO’s Child Labour Platform, which is an initiative to promote information-sharing and collaboration among businesses in order to tackle child labour in supply chains, the Office has supported the discussion and analysis of the links between decent work, adequate minimum wages and the elimination of child labour in supply chains.

At the regional and country levels

54. In Bangladesh, since August 2022, the Office has been supporting the implementation of pilot community-based child labour monitoring systems.
55. In Kenya, the Office supported a child labour training programme for six cohorts of labour officers and employment officers drawn from all regions of the country, as well as stakeholder meetings on child protection in five counties.
56. In Malawi, in September 2022, the Office supported a workshop on strategic compliance planning for labour inspection with a focus on tea and coffee supply chains. The workshop was aimed at building the capacity of the labour inspectorate in the use of new tools for improving the detection and remediation of child labour.
57. In Myanmar, in 2022 and 2023, the Office provided training on occupational safety and health to young people above the minimum age for work in industries such as the garment, rubber and horticulture industries. A total of 55 adolescents, who had previously been engaged in the worst forms of child labour, and 150 community members learned about key prevention and risk mitigation measures. The Office is also supporting the establishment of a community-based child labour monitoring system in Myanmar by adapting the existing tools and developing a database.