



Governing Body

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Institutional Section

INS

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Seventeenth item on the agenda

Report of the Director-General

First Supplementary Report: Report of the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 11–20 October 2023)

Purpose of the document

The Governing Body is invited to take note of the reports of the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS); to request the Director-General to take into account the recommendations and approved resolutions of the 21st ICLS in the future programme of work of the Office and to authorize the promotion of the report of the proceedings of the 21st ICLS; and to request the Office to take into account its views on the significance of the ICLS for the future sessions of the Conference (see the draft decision in paragraph 10).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome A: Improved knowledge and influence for promoting decent work.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: See paragraphs 9 and 10(b).

Follow-up action required: None.

Author unit: Department of Statistics (STATISTICS)

Related documents: [GB.348/INS/5/1](#); [ICLS/21/2023/I](#); [ICLS/21/2023/II](#); [ICLS/21/2023/III](#).

1. In preparation for the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), a Tripartite Meeting of Experts in Labour Statistics on the Revision of the Standards for Statistics on Informality,¹ held in Geneva from 7 to 10 February 2023, discussed and examined the revision of the statistical standards on measuring informality adopted by the 15th ICLS in 1993. The conclusions of the Meeting of Experts were taken into account by the Office in refining a proposal for new and revised international statistical standards to be presented for discussion and adoption by the 21st ICLS. Regular meetings of a Tripartite Technical Working Group were held between 2020 and 2023 on the proposed revision of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). Updates were reported to the ICLS to set the direction for future work towards a revised classification. Tripartite consultations were also held in 2023 to prepare updates to existing standards on work-related income for discussion and adoption by the 21st ICLS.
2. As approved by the Governing Body at its 345th Session (June 2022),² the 21st ICLS was convened in Geneva from 11 to 20 October 2023. The Conference was attended by delegates from 134 Member States, by 5 Employer and 6 Worker experts, and by 61 representatives of United Nations agencies and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. In total, there were 534 participants (388 of whom attended in person and 146 virtually), of which 37 per cent were women.³ The 21st ICLS was a special occasion, as it celebrated the centenary of the Conference, which was first held in 1923. The report of the proceedings (Report III) accompanies this document.⁴
3. The Conference elected Mr Anil Arora, Chief Statistician of Canada, as Chairperson; Ms Grace Bediako, Chair of the Ghana Statistical Service Governing Board, as Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Boon Heng Ang, Director of the Ministry of Manpower of Singapore, as Reporter.
4. The Conference examined the following agenda items:
 - (a) The General report (Report I)⁵ providing: an overview of the ILO's statistical activities since the 20th ICLS in 2018; the relationship between decent work and the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the main developments in the methods employed for specific topics of labour statistics (such as labour migration, child labour, forced labour, skills mismatches, informality, cooperatives, the social and solidarity economy, social protection, social dialogue, work-related violence and harassment, unpaid care and domestic work, volunteer work, digital platform work and the ISCO); implementation of the resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization; new developments in data collection and dissemination, including the expansion of analytical outputs generated on a wide range of topics including the ILO Monitor; the development of labour market information systems; the potential of using administrative sources in labour statistics; and regional aspects of technical assistance and capacity-building in relation to labour statistics. The information in Report I was supplemented with 27 room documents⁶ on corresponding topics presented to the ICLS for discussion.

¹ GB.348/INS/5/1.

² GB.345/PV, para. 196(d); and GB.345/INS/7.

³ ICLS/21/2023/LoP.

⁴ ICLS/21/2023/III.

⁵ ICLS/21/2023/I.

⁶ All documents for the 21st ICLS are available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/about/standards/icls/icls-documents/>.

- (b) The revision of the international statistical standards on measuring informality, with a proposal for a draft resolution to be adopted by the 21st ICLS that included a conceptual framework, data sources and guidelines for data collection, indicators and measurement guidelines (Report II).⁷ The Conference set up a separate committee to deal with this item, which elected Ms Graciela Márquez Colín, President of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico, as its Chairperson.
5. The Conference adopted the following four resolutions:
- (a) resolution I: resolution concerning statistics on the informal economy;
 - (b) resolution II: resolution to amend the 19th ICLS resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization;
 - (c) resolution III: resolution to amend the 16th ICLS resolution concerning the measurement of employment-related income;
 - (d) resolution IV: resolution to amend the 17th ICLS resolution concerning household income and expenditure statistics.
6. Resolution I contains new statistical standards on the informal economy, which will enable countries to collect more comprehensive and accurate data and develop improved policies for workers employed in the informal economy, as well as to support efforts to formalize the informal economy in line with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204). The new standards will provide an extensive range of definitions of key concepts and generate high-quality information, while allowing some flexibility to reflect differing realities in systems and laws across countries. The standards will measure working conditions and other characteristics of work required to understand the extent of decent work deficits. They will also be relevant to unpaid working activities, such as volunteer work and subsistence farming, creating visibility for the efforts countries can make to extend formal recognition and social protection beyond employment. The three other resolutions endorsed during the Conference brought existing ICLS standards in line with recent developments in the world of work. These cover statistics on work, employment and labour underutilization; the measurement of employment-related income; and statistics on household income and expenditure. The adopted texts of all the resolutions are annexed to the report of the proceedings of the 21st ICLS.
7. In addition to the plenary and committee sessions, daily side events were held to discuss a range of topics, including historical perspectives on and the main achievements of 100 years of the ICLS; communication challenges in implementing new statistical standards; informality and gender; updating occupational classifications using machine learning; and South–South and triangular cooperation on labour statistics in lusophone countries. A special panel discussion was held on how to enhance the measurement of social justice in the world of work. It concluded that disaggregated data was essential to highlight inequalities in the world of work, as was the need to use existing frameworks to measure social justice, combining them with qualitative data, rather than using composite indices. A special panel discussion was also held on digital platform employment.
8. The Conference provided an ambitious road map for the Office’s future work on crucial labour statistics issues and for reporting on progress at the 22nd ICLS. This will entail developing or refining statistical definitions, methodologies and guidelines together with the constituents

⁷ ICLS/21/2023/II.

through technical working groups, and assisting Member States in improving or applying statistical standards or collecting more and better data on various topics. It will involve, among others:

- (a) revising and modernizing ISCO-08;
 - (b) revising guidelines on measuring international labour migration;
 - (c) developing a statistical standard on digital platform employment and work;
 - (d) developing a methodology and a new statistical standard on industrial relations indicators;
 - (e) developing statistical definitions of care work and the care economy;
 - (f) developing updated guidance on measuring work-related income;
 - (g) developing a statistical standard on work-related violence and harassment;
 - (h) developing a manual to support the measurement of statistics on cooperatives;
 - (i) developing guidelines on work-based learning and conducting further work on skills anticipation;
 - (j) developing methodologies for measuring the social and solidarity economy;
 - (k) collecting more data and conducting further methodological work on occupational safety and health;
 - (l) promoting ratification of the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160);
 - (m) providing guidance on using administrative sources in labour statistics;
 - (n) providing assistance to Member States in implementing labour market information systems.
9. Depending on the availability of adequate human and financial resources and prioritization, the Office will work on the above-mentioned items in addition to its other ongoing statistical work. In view of the 100 years of the ICLS, it is important for the Office to obtain feedback from Governing Body members on the significance of the ICLS and the future direction it should take.

► Draft decision

10. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the reports of the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS);**
- (b) **Endorsed the recommendations and approved resolutions of the 21st ICLS and requested the Director-General to take them into account in the future programme and budget proposals;**
- (c) **expressed its views on the significance of the ICLS and requested the Office to take them into account for the future sessions of the ICLS;**
- (d) **authorized the Director-General to promote the report of the proceedings of the 21st ICLS among all constituents.**