



Governing Body

350th Session, Geneva, 4–14 March 2024

Institutional Section

INS

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Follow-up to the decision to report on the modalities of the Working Party on the New Social Contract for Our Common Agenda

Purpose of the document

This document contains the report requested by the Governing Body at its 349th Session (October–November 2023) on the modalities of the Working Party on the New Social Contract for Our Common Agenda, which was established by the Governing Body at that session to prepare a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit. It has been prepared following tripartite consultations held in January 2024.

The document contains proposals on the composition, mandate and road map of the Working Party. It further identifies five building blocks to inform the preparation of the tripartite input.

The Governing Body is invited to: decide on the modalities of the Working Party, including its composition, mandate and road map; decide to place an item on the agenda of the 113th Session (2025) of the International Labour Conference on a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit; and request the Director-General to make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of the road map and to take account of its views regarding the new social contract for Our Common Agenda (see the draft decision in paragraph 25).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Outcome 8 of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25: Integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice through decent work.

Policy implications: Yes.

Legal implications: No.

Financial implications: Yes.

Follow-up action required: Yes.

Author unit: Multilateral Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department (PARTNERSHIPS).

Related documents: [GB.349/PV](#), [GB.349/INS/5](#).

► Introduction

1. At its 349th Session (October–November 2023), the Governing Body decided to establish a Working Party on the New Social Contract for Our Common Agenda, to prepare a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit. ¹ It further requested the Director-General to organize, to that end, an informal tripartite consultation in January 2024 with a view to preparing a report to the 350th Session of the Governing Body on its modalities. ²
2. On 29 January 2024, the informal tripartite consultation took place, during which the participants shared their views on the modalities of the Working Party and on a list of questions regarding the content of the tripartite input. Participants highlighted the need to ensure that the tripartite input was ready on time to influence the outcome of the World Social Summit in September 2025. They also stressed the importance of an inclusive process for the preparation of the tripartite input. Regarding the format and modalities of the Working Party, participants expressed different views, with many stressing the need for a flexible approach.
3. Article 4.2 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body sets out the provisions applicable to the appointment by the Governing Body of a committee or working party to consider specific matters. Paragraph 4.2.1 provides that “the Governing Body shall determine the composition, mandate and duration of any such [...] working party”. Paragraph 4.2.2 provides that a working party shall elect officers comprising a Chairperson, an Employer Vice-Chairperson and a Worker Vice-Chairperson.
4. Based on the informal tripartite consultation of January 2024 and in line with the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, the Office submits to the Governing Body for its consideration the proposals set out below regarding the modalities of the Working Party.

► Proposed modalities of the Working Party

Composition

5. It is proposed that the Working Party be composed of 16 members, including eight members representing governments, four members representing employers and four members representing workers. A working party of 16 members enables inclusive regional representation, while allowing each member to take an active part in the preparation of written documents.
6. Members will be appointed by their respective groups, where possible, with due regard to gender and regional balance. To facilitate the in-person meetings of the Working Party, the constituents might wish to consider nominating Governing Body members, keeping in mind that, at its 112th Session (2024), the International Labour Conference will elect the members of the Governing Body for the period 2024–27.

¹ At the time of writing, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly is expected to adopt in the coming weeks a [resolution](#) concerning the convening of the World Social Summit in 2025, under the title “Second World Summit for Social Development”.

² GB.349/PV, para. 310.

Mandate

7. In its decision on the item taken at its 349th Session, the Governing Body refers to two aspects of the Working Party's mandate, which are:
 - (a) to prepare a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit; and
 - (b) to promote and ensure the engagement of the tripartite ILO constituents in preparations at the national and international levels.
8. Regarding the tripartite input to the World Social Summit, the following parameters are initially proposed, which could be further adjusted during the preparatory process:
 - the conceptual elements of the new social contract;
 - in addition to the social contract, other elements to be reflected in the tripartite input that could influence the outcome of the World Social Summit;
 - the modalities of the representation of the ILO and its tripartite constituents at the World Social Summit;
 - the role of the ILO and its tripartite constituents and other actors in shaping and implementing the new social contract; and
 - the potential role of the ILO and its tripartite constituents in the follow-up to the World Social Summit.
9. Regarding constituent engagement, the Office has taken note of the time constraints raised during the informal tripartite consultation regarding the organization of national and regional dialogues on this matter. Nonetheless, as indicated during the consultation, the Report of the Director-General to the Conference at its 112th Session (2024) will be dedicated to the social contract, therefore providing an opportunity for all the constituents to hold tripartite discussions on the subject at the national level and to express their views on the matter during the debate.

► Proposed meetings of the Governing Body as a Committee of the Whole

10. Following the discussions held during the informal tripartite consultation, in which participants emphasized the need to ensure that the preparation of a tripartite input to the World Social Summit was inclusive, the Office proposes that the Governing Body convene as a Committee of the Whole, as provided for in article 4.3 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body. A Committee of the Whole would allow for a broad exchange of views, including with governments not represented in the Governing Body, and would guide the work of the Working Party.
11. In line with the Standing Orders of the Governing Body, a Committee of the Whole reports to the Governing Body, which remains the only body with decision-making powers in that context. Observers, including experts and academia, could be invited on an ad hoc basis by the Governing Body to present their work to the Committee of the Whole and to provide advice on technical matters.

► Proposed road map

12. At the time of writing, the United Nations General Assembly is expected to adopt in the coming weeks a resolution concerning the convening of the World Social Summit under the title “Second World Summit for Social Development”. The proposed road map set out below might need to be adjusted as more clarity is obtained on the preparatory process of the Summit.

- **April 2024**

- 10 April: The members of the Working Party are nominated by the three groups.
- Date to be confirmed: At its first virtual meeting, the Working Party elects its Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons and agrees on a work plan.

- **June 2024**

- 15 June: At its 351st Session (June 2024), the Governing Body meets as a Committee of the Whole to exchange views on the broad orientation of the tripartite input to the World Social Summit. This exchange is informed by the Report of the Director-General to the Conference at its 112th Session (2024).

Following the conclusion of the work of the Committee of the Whole, the Chairperson of the Committee presents an oral report to the Governing Body on the exchange of views. The Governing Body may decide to instruct the Working Party to prepare the draft key messages of the tripartite input, based on the report provided by the Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole, for submission to the Governing Body at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024).

- Last week of June 2024 (date to be confirmed): The second meeting of the Working Party takes place virtually to prepare the draft key messages of the tripartite input, as instructed by the Governing Body at its 351st Session.

- **October–November 2024**

- First week of the 352nd Session: The Governing Body meets as a Committee of the Whole to exchange views on the draft key messages as presented in the report of the Working Party.
- Second week of the 352nd Session: The Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole presents his or her report to the Governing Body on the exchange of views. The Governing Body may wish to adopt the key messages of the tripartite input and to instruct the Director-General to transmit them to the co-facilitators³ and the secretariat leading the preparations of the World Social Summit. The Governing Body may wish to instruct the Working Party to prepare the draft tripartite input to the World Social Summit based on the key messages adopted by the Governing Body.

- **January 2025**

- The third meeting of the Working Party takes place virtually to prepare the draft tripartite input to the World Social Summit for adoption by the Governing Body at its 353rd Session (March 2025).

³ The co-facilitators, one from a developing country and one from a developed country, will be appointed by the President of the UN General Assembly to lead the preparatory process of the Summit.

- **March 2025**

- First week of the 353rd Session: The Governing Body meets as a Committee of the Whole to exchange views on the draft tripartite input as presented in the report of the Working Party.
- Second week of the 353rd Session: The Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole presents his or her report to the Governing Body on the exchange of views. The Governing Body may wish to adopt a draft resolution concerning the tripartite input to the World Social Summit for transmission to and adoption by the Conference at its 113th Session (2025).

- **June 2025**

- At its 113th Session, the Conference examines and possibly adopts a resolution concerning the tripartite input to the World Social Summit, subject to the decisions taken by the Governing Body at its 353rd Session.

- **October–November 2025**

- At its 355th Session (October–November 2025), the Governing Body discusses the follow-up to be given to the outcome of the World Social Summit.

► Initial discussion on the new social contract for Our Common Agenda

13. At its 349th Session, the Governing Body suggested that the constituents initiate the discussion on the content of the tripartite input at its 350th Session. For the purpose of this discussion, it is proposed that a social contract be understood to mean a set of principles, norms and institutions that shape the mutual expectations of governments and their peoples within societies, and that reflect the shared values and shared responsibilities among key actors to realize these expectations.
14. To inform the discussion, the Office has identified five building blocks that constituents might wish to consider, as set out below.

Building block 1. The foundation of the new social contract

15. The ILO's mandate for the promotion of decent work and the advancement of social justice is the tripartite expression of a social contract at the international level. The four dimensions of decent work (the promotion of full and productive employment; social protection; social dialogue and tripartism; and fundamental principles and rights at work), together with the application of social justice principles, form the core of any social contract. Social dialogue and tripartism are both a means by which to build and renew social contracts and an objective of such contracts.
16. Constituents might wish to discuss:

How have the strategic objectives of decent work been realized in national social contracts so far? How can they be better realized? Which key elements of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, 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) can inform the discussions on the new social contract?

Building block 2. Key functions of the new social contract

17. Most social contracts direct the level of inclusion, contribution and redistribution within each society. They contribute to enhancing social cohesion and social peace. Livelihood, access to essential public services such as justice, health, social protection and education, and an enabling environment for full employment, decent work and sustainable enterprises are among the key elements of a social contract. The current global trend of rising inequalities associated with higher levels of fragmentation and polarization in several countries point to some weaknesses in social contracts which, in turn, erode social cohesion and trust in institutions.

18. Constituents might wish to discuss:

Are today's social contracts meeting their objectives? Are they conducive to sustainable development? What are the key functions of renewed social contracts in the current context? What can be done to ensure that all groups in vulnerable situations are covered by the new social contract? How can new social contracts better promote gender equality and diversity inclusion within societies? How can the ILO constituents promote the creation of inclusive social contracts that ensure adequate social and labour protection for all workers and facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy? How can social contracts support entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises, in particular micro and small enterprises? How can social contracts contribute to unlocking the productive potential of individuals and economies for sustainable development?

Building block 3. New and emerging global risks and opportunities

19. Developments at the international level, such as globalization, climate change and technological progress, have profound implications for national social contracts. Labour markets, for example, are increasingly shaped by international trade, financial markets, the digitalization of work processes, migration flows and environmental degradation, among other things. Renewed social contracts should take account of the impact of the global interdependence that is inherent to an interconnected world.

20. Constituents might wish to discuss:

How can renewed social contracts effectively address the multifaceted challenges of climate change, demographic shifts, technological advancements and emerging forms of work, while fostering inclusive participation from all sectors of society? How can all people in society be covered by policies addressing these fundamental transitions? How can the ILO constituents promote the creation of broad social contracts that address the linkages between economic development, social justice and environmental protection in support of just transitions? How can renewed social contracts harness the fullest potential of technological progress and productivity growth to achieve decent work?

Building block 4. The actors and stakeholders of the new social contract

21. Depending on the national situation, not only governments and their institutions, and workers' and employers' organizations, but also non-state actors, including parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, international non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations, can have a role to play in defining social contracts.

22. Constituents might wish to discuss:

What is the role and contribution of the social partners in forging and delivering social contracts? How can fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to peaceful assembly and association, be promoted for inclusive social contracts? Should the ILO constituents work with other constituencies to forge inclusive social contracts beyond the world of work that cover all in society? If so, how? What role can the Global Coalition for Social Justice play in supporting this broader engagement? How can actors be held accountable? What can be said about their representativity?

Building block 5. An enabling framework for the new social contract

23. The realization of social contracts requires a sound governance system that relies on effective public policies, well-functioning institutions, including labour institutions, and a supportive global environment. Public trust in the rule of law and in governance systems, including in their institutions, is essential. At the global level, the ILO's engagement and cooperation with the multilateral system aims to promote policy coherence for social justice through decent work.

24. Constituents might wish to discuss:

What institutions and institutional capacities are needed to deliver social contracts? What are the other conditions needed to enable social contracts to deliver decent work and sustainable development outcomes at the national and global levels? How can the ILO's engagement in the multilateral system support the realization of renewed social contracts? What governance arrangements at the international level can support the renewal of social contracts at the national level? How can the new social contract be better integrated in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and vice-versa? What role can the Global Coalition for Social Justice play in supporting the renewal of social contracts?

► Draft decision

25. The Governing Body:

- (a) decided that the Working Party on the New Social Contract for Our Common Agenda, established to prepare a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit, be composed of eight members representing governments, four members representing employers and four members representing workers;**
- (b) approved the modalities of the Working Party, as set out in paragraphs 5–9 of document GB.350/INS/6;**
- (c) approved in principle the road map as set out in paragraph 12 of the document, including its meetings as a Committee of the Whole at its 351st (June 2024), 352nd (October–November 2024) and 353rd (March 2025) Sessions, with a view to providing guidance on the work of the Working Party;**
- (d) decided to place on the agenda of the 113th Session (2025) of the International Labour Conference an item on a tripartite input to the 2025 World Social Summit;**

- (e) requested the Director-General to:
- (i) prepare for the first virtual meeting of the Working Party, to be held by the end of April 2024 and after having received the nominations of members from each group no later than 10 April 2024;
 - (ii) make other necessary arrangements for the implementation of the road map as set out in paragraph 12 of document GB.350/INS/6;
 - (iii) take into account its views regarding the new social contract for Our Common Agenda.