

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION  
Sectoral Activities Programme

**Report of the Meeting of Experts  
on Labour Statistics**

**Part I. Child labour statistics**

**Part II. Measurement of working time**

Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics  
Geneva, 1–10 April 2008

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ISBN: 978-92-2-121150-1 (print)  
978-92-2-121151-8 (web pdf)

*First edition 2008*

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Printed by the International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland

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## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Report.....	1
Agenda of the Meeting.....	1
Participants.....	1
<b>Part I. Child labour statistics</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1. Opening of the Meeting.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2. Opening remarks and election of the Chairperson.....	2
2. Technical discussions.....	3
2.1. General discussion.....	3
2.2. Discussion by specific topics.....	4
2.2.1. Objectives and scope of national child labour statistics.....	4
2.2.2. Definitions and measurement approaches.....	5
2.2.3. Data collection methods and programmes.....	11
2.2.4. Global estimation processes.....	11
2.2.5. Supplementary sources of child labour data.....	12
2.2.6. Items of data collection.....	13
2.2.7. Further action.....	13
2.3. Any other matters.....	13
<b>Part II. Measurement of working time</b> .....	<b>13</b>
1. Opening remarks and election of the Chairperson.....	14
2. Technical discussions.....	14
2.1. General discussion.....	14
2.2. Proposed working-time framework.....	15
2.3. Discussion of working hours concepts.....	16
2.3.1. Hours actually worked.....	17
2.3.2. Hours paid for.....	18
2.3.3. Normal hours.....	18
2.3.4. Contractual hours.....	20
2.3.5. Hours usually worked.....	20
2.3.6. Overtime.....	21
2.3.7. Absence from work.....	22
2.3.8. Working-time arrangements.....	23

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3.	Compiled measures .....	24
3.1.	Total hours actually worked.....	25
3.2.	Annual hours actually worked .....	27
3.3.	Average weekly hours actually worked.....	27
4.	Measurement methods .....	28
4.1.	Household-based surveys.....	28
4.2.	Time-use surveys .....	30
4.3.	Establishment surveys.....	30
4.4.	Administrative registers.....	31
5.	Tabulation and international reporting.....	31
	List of participants.....	33

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## Report

1. At its 300th Session (November 2007), the Governing Body of the International Labour Office (ILO) decided to convene a Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics. The Meeting was held in Geneva from 1 to 10 April 2008.

## Agenda of the Meeting

2. The agenda of the Meeting was the following:
  - I. Child labour statistics
  - II. Measurement of working time
3. The first item on the agenda was discussed from 1 to 4 April 2008 and the second from 7 to 10 April 2008.

## Participants

4. Twenty-eight experts were invited to the Meeting, 14 following consultations with Governments, seven nominated by the Employers' group and seven nominated by the Workers' group of the Governing Body. Two observers and nine representatives of intergovernmental organizations also attended the Meeting. The list of participants is annexed to the report.

## Part I. Child labour statistics (1–4 April 2008)

### 1. Opening of the Meeting

#### 1.1. Background

5. Part I of the agenda was devoted to providing guidance on international standards for child labour statistics.
6. Participating in Part I of the Meeting of Experts at the invitation of the Governing Body were experts from 13 of the 14 Governments (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Turkey and United States); as well as five experts nominated after consultation with the Employers' group and five experts nominated after consultation with the Workers' group of the Governing Body. The delegations of the Philippines and the United States each included an adviser. Present at the Meeting as observers were representatives of national statistical offices (France and the Republic of Korea) and of intergovernmental organizations (AFRISTAT, ECOWAS, UN-ECA, UN-ECE and UNICEF). Côte d'Ivoire was unable to participate.

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7. The deliberations at Part I of the Meeting were based on a report<sup>1</sup> prepared by the ILO in its working languages – English, French and Spanish. The report outlined the desired measurement objectives, elaborated on the legal and statistical concepts of child labour and their complex interrelationship, and addressed, as well, a range of concerned subjects, such as building a statistical programme on child labour, global estimation processes, child labour measurement issues, the main child labour indicators in use, and child labour data collection instruments and approaches. The report contained a draft resolution concerning statistics of child labour as an annex.

## 1.2. Opening remarks and election of the Chairperson

8. In his opening address, Mr A. Sylvester Young, Director, ILO Bureau of Statistics, explained the nature and the mandate of the Tripartite Meeting of Experts. He indicated that it was an integral part of the consultation process of establishing international standards in labour statistics with experts from governments and the social partners, and the discussions would be taken into account in making proposals to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). In that context, he outlined the role of the ICLS as a unique system for guiding the development of labour statistics. He explained that no decision-making was required at the Meeting, but the discussions would be noted and would feed into the preparation of the draft resolution on child labour statistics to be submitted to the 18th ICLS. Mr Young also stressed that the participants were asked to serve as experts and not necessarily as representatives of their governments or any particular group or institution, in order that the report submitted to the ICLS would reflect the best practices but not necessarily the ones used in each of the experts' countries. He also availed himself of the opportunity to thank all those governments, institutions and individuals for their contribution to the work leading up to the Meeting of Experts.
9. Ms Michele Jankanish, Director, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), presented a brief overview of IPEC which was supporting member States in the application of ILO standards on child labour, namely Conventions Nos 138 and 182, and their respective supplementing Recommendations Nos 146 and 190. Particular reference was made to Recommendation No. 190, which included some specific recommendations for the collection of child labour statistics. She expanded briefly on the activities of the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), which was the statistical unit of IPEC, and emphasized the importance of reliable child labour data for policy formulation and programme interventions to combat child labour. She noted that the preparation process of the report for the Meeting, containing a draft of a resolution to be eventually submitted to the 18th ICLS, had been intensive, and included background reports, national consultations and tripartite Regional Meetings. She thanked the experts for their participation and looked forward to their valuable comments and suggestions on the report.
10. Mr P.K. Ray (India) was elected to chair Part I of the Meeting. He thanked experts from the governments and social partners for the responsibility and confidence placed upon him, and urged them to contribute intensively to the deliberations based on their various experiences. He noted that the Meeting had been mandated to advise the ILO secretariat on the treatment of issues contained in the report, and not to make decisions on its text or contents. The objective would thus be to consolidate the various expert views and country practices.

<sup>1</sup> ILO: *Report I: Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics: Child Labour Statistics*, Geneva, 2008 (MELS/2008/1).

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11. The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda that had been proposed by the ILO secretariat.

## 2. Technical discussions

### 2.1. General discussion

12. A brief introduction on the work by SIMPOC was made by Mr Frank Hagemann, SIMPOC Coordinator, with emphasis on its diverse experience in the area of child labour data collection for which the household-based national child labour survey had been the key instrument. The importance of child labour statistics was stressed for discerning trends, assisting in informed policy-making, and raising awareness of the need to eliminate child labour. The consultation process underlying the development of the report and draft resolution that had been submitted to the Meeting of Experts was explained, along with an overview of the structure of the report. The lack of a common understanding on child labour across countries was highlighted, and to overcome this knowledge gap, the need to set up international guidance on the statistical measurement of child labour was reiterated. The country and regional consultations that had taken place, and the present Meeting of Experts formed a continuing series of interaction with governments and social partners in the search to obtain consensus on the proposed statistical measurement standards on child labour. From that perspective, concrete feedback on the report and draft resolution was being sought from the participating experts in order to develop a better text for submission to the ICLS later this year.
13. Among the several topics discussed in the report, two issues in particular were identified for the experts' attention in the general discussion: first, the relation between laws and statistics in the matter of measuring child labour; and second, whether child labour should be a subset of economic activities within the System of National Accounts boundary by children (or if a larger choice set would be more appropriate). The first issue was that child labour data collection should be guided by international and national legislation, but also the collected data should contribute to the formulation of laws: thus, not all work carried out by children under 18 years of age was child labour to be eliminated, and the countries had much discretion to fix many parameters on child labour such as the minimum age for work and the list of hazardous work to be prohibited for those under 18 years. The second point was the issue of whether for purposes of statistically defining child labour one should take into account non-economic activities such as household chores in the child's own home. So far, the position of the ILO had been to recommend the collection of data on household chores but not to include them in the calculation of child labour.
14. In the discussion that followed on the nexus between laws and statistics, the experts exchanged views concerning the definitional issues of child labour: given the flexibilities provided in international labour standards on the definition of child labour, the same should apply for the draft resolution on child labour statistics. Several experts stressed that even though the current title of the document was "child labour statistics", it was necessary to gather data on a wider set of activities carried out by children including on acceptable work carried out by children and the time used by children more generally. Thereafter, by an analysis of the data it would be possible to arrive at an estimate of child labour to be eliminated. One should not mix up data collection with data analysis.
15. Attention was drawn to the need to consider the resolution in the context of ILO Conventions Nos 138 and 182.

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16. Concerning non-economic activities by children (mainly household chores in their own household), the experts agreed on the utility of collecting data on this topic in terms of time spent and the tasks performed, but diverse views were expressed as to their inclusion in the concept of child labour in the data analysis.
  17. Those who argued for the inclusion of non-economic activities in a measure of child labour stressed the importance of gender aspects and the possible negative effects of such activities on the children, either causing direct harm to safety and health, or by hindering their education, especially in the context of Africa where the HIV/AIDS pandemic was causing many social difficulties. The issue was excessive hours spent on household chores; accepting that some time spent on household chores may be neutral or beneficial to a child's education and development. Some argued that non-economic activities by children could be taken as a proxy for the economic activities where they liberate time of other members of the family to engage in economic activities. It was also stressed that child labour should be regarded as a set of activities that are harmful to children and exploitative in form, whether these be economic activities or non-economic activities. The Meeting noted that an international organization (UNICEF) was using 28 hours per week as the cut-off to start considering non-economic activities as constituting child labour because of the likely consequence on education, but the underlying justification could not be provided. It was clarified that only household chores were included in data collection to reflect non-economic activities.
  18. Those opposing the inclusion of non-economic activities in the measure of child labour argued that the minimum should be to define child labour for elimination based on the SNA, and suggested that countries if they so wish, should treat separately the data on non-economic activities. In this view, non-economic activities by children were a natural part of the child's development process, and practised in most countries. The Office brought to the experts' attention the complexity of combining into a single measure all economic and non-economic activities by children that was essential in the child labour identification exercise, and reflected by the difficulty in finding the equivalence between hours spent in one activity against those spent in the other.

## **2.2. Discussion by specific topics**

19. The Meeting of Experts discussed specific topics on the basis of the report prepared for the Meeting and its annexed draft resolution. Most of the interventions referred to the text provided in the draft resolution.

### **2.2.1. Objectives and scope of national child labour statistics**

20. The Office explained that the respective sections of the report and draft resolution were of an overview nature, and the issue of whether or not to expand the framework of child labour to also include household chores in addition to economic activities had already been discussed at length in the previous session and was not repeated.
21. It was noted that paragraph 4 of the draft resolution stated that "the national programme of child labour data collection should, in principle, cover all productive activities that children engage in, and measure those in terms of the time spent in each", and paragraph 12 (and subsequently through the resolution) restricted the scope of child labour to working children in the sense of "economically active children".



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22. Attention was drawn to what seemed a difference between the corresponding texts of the report and the draft resolution in regard to the main objective. The Office informed that the report was more specific than the draft resolution.

23. A suggestion to apply the term “disengaged” children in place of “idle” children was noted.

### **2.2.2. Definitions and measurement approaches**

24. Discussion took place regarding wording and definitions of the terms “child labour”, “working children” and “economically active children”, and the Office agreed to address the wording to improve clarification.

#### **2.2.2.1. Child**

25. There was general agreement on the application of the concept of a child as a person below 18 years of age. Concerning data collection, some divergent views were expressed on the choice of reference age for child labour and working children. Some suggested that while the maximum age may be specified, the lower limit may be associated with the age of entry to compulsory education. It was noted that perhaps paragraph 10 of the draft resolution was trying to capture two concepts, and some redrafting would be needed. The Office clarified again that the definitions of child and child labour were set by existing legislation, and the purpose of the resolution was to only provide guidelines for measuring the phenomenon in accordance with the legislation.

#### **2.2.2.2. Child labour measurement framework**

26. The experts recognized the critical importance of having an unambiguous conceptual framework. However, once again the issue of whether or not to include non-economic activities in the overall framework of child labour was deliberated upon, and the views expressed in the previous session were broadly repeated. Thus, some experts suggested that if countries considered it appropriate, data on children’s engagement in household chores should also be collected, and the countries may decide on the measure of child labour accordingly.

27. Attention was drawn to the fact that data on non-economic activities could at best be presented as an aggregate number, and might not be subject to further analysis due to lack of appropriate classification systems, particularly in terms of industrial and occupational classifications that were used in determining whether or not the activity was hazardous in nature: this was a limitation in its utility as an indicator of child labour.

28. Some experts stated that in respect of working children, restricting the scope to children’s engagement in economic activities was appropriate. However, in the context of child labour (namely, work that may not be done by children), should a wider concept of work include also non-economic activities, then engagement in household chores might become related to child labour (but not to working children).

29. It was recognized that while legislation existed in some countries to prohibit or restrict engagement of children in specified occupations and industries, no such legislation to prevent children’s engagement in household chores was in force in any country. Some experts suggested that it would be problematic to include non-economic activities within the statistical measurement framework for child labour; furthermore, since adults’ engagement in household chores was not reflected under the SNA boundary, any proposal to include household chores by children could be deemed objectionable at other official statistical standards setting forums.

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### 2.2.2.3. Working children

30. The Office requested the experts from French- and Spanish-speaking countries to advise on the appropriate terms to be applied for distinguishing “working children” (of whom some may be in permissible work) from “child labour” (slated for abolition).

### 2.2.2.4. Minimum age for work

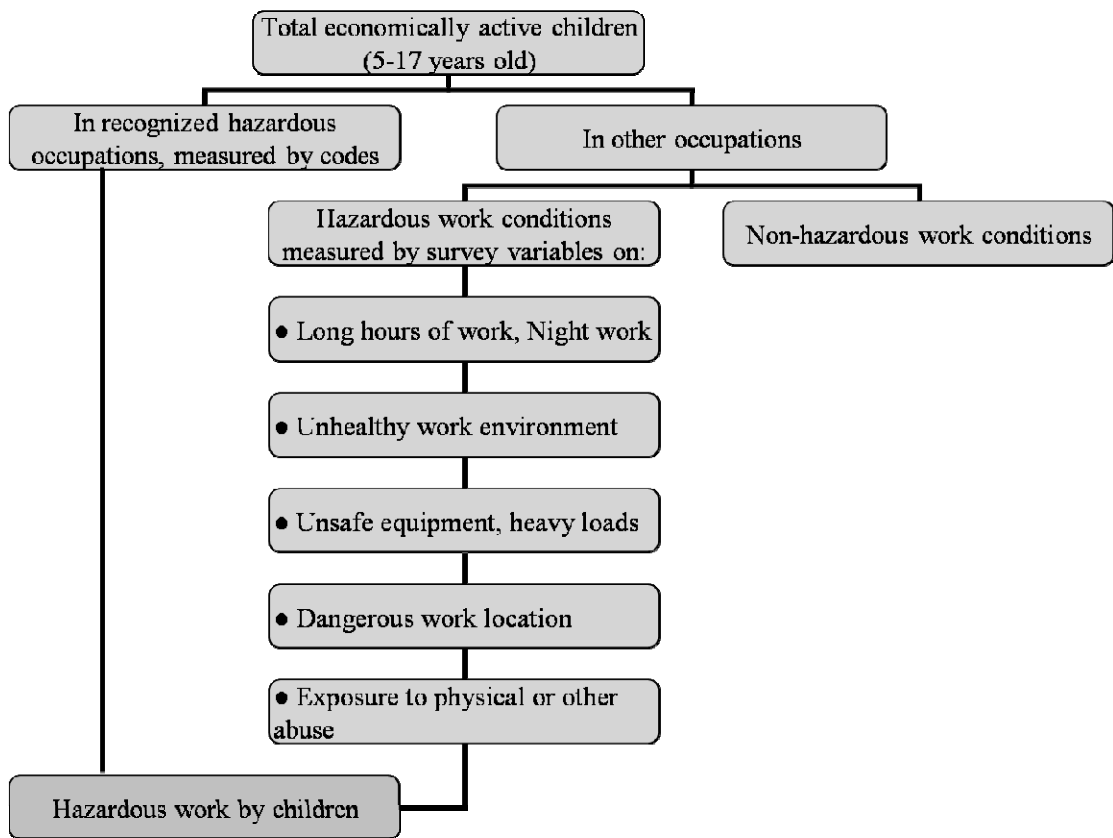
31. Some experts suggested that paragraph 10 of the draft resolution providing the definition of “child” and paragraph 14 on “minimum age for work” should follow each other as both were dealing with the age of the child.
32. The experts expressed concern on the draft resolution containing guidelines on age limits which should be a country prerogative, and noted also the possibility of confusion arising from the term “minimum age” being used in the context of a number of different concepts in the report such as for light work, employment or work, etc. Further elaboration was suggested in order to avoid confusion. Although no consensus was reached to include a lower age limit for data collection, it was agreed that, even if the two paragraphs were consolidated, there should be some flexibility for the countries to implement the minimum age as each country had its own specific conditions. It was highlighted again that the minimum age should not be lower than the compulsory schooling age.
33. The Office explained that the paragraph on minimum age in the draft resolution was intended to address two issues. First, it had a bearing on the scope and coverage of child labour data collection and was linked to identification of child labour slated for abolition. Second, it was connected to Conventions Nos 138 and 182 where the minimum age for work was defined, and was meant to help in the statistical measurement of child labour by explaining the implications of ILO Conventions for the purpose of setting age limits. It was clarified that the “statistical” minimum age was to be determined by the countries themselves according to the prevailing legislation.

### 2.2.2.5. Hazardous work and other worst forms of child labour

34. The experts were informed that this was a category of child labour that was universally accepted as slated for elimination, but was very difficult to deal with statistically. It was agreed that the terms “unconditional” and “potential” in the context of worst forms of child labour be removed from the report and draft resolution. Hazardous work by children under the clauses of Convention No. 182 was to be identified at the national level. Therefore, the definition of hazardous work should be left flexible for countries to determine, and may vary country by country. Two important concerns were discerned. First, no industry could perhaps be labelled as hazardous per se as some children working in that industry may carry out tasks which may not be hazardous due to the nature and conditions under which they were carried out (for instance, the case of a messenger in a mining company). Second, to base the identification of hazardous occupations only on existing legislation would not make effective enough use of other available evidence (for instance, survey results and study findings) and would potentially hamper the comparability of data over time since national lists of hazardous work for children were prone to change.
35. The experts were also informed of an alternative/complementary approach that was evolved at a Technical Consultation on the Measurement of Hazardous Work of Children, organized in Geneva on 22 February 2008. In this approach, the proposed alternative operational definition of hazardous work, all children below the age of 18 years who were “at work” during the reference period and engaged in tasks and duties of a hazardous nature even for one hour during the reference period (designated hazardous occupations) or worked under hazardous conditions, for example, long hours of work in tasks and duties

which by themselves may or may not have been of a hazardous nature (hazardous work condition) were to be considered for measurement.

36. The schematic presentation of the proposed definition was as follows:



37. The Office informed the Meeting that a more appropriate term was being sought for the group of activities so far classified as “unconditional worst forms of child labour”. Also, the term “non-hazardous industries” and “non-hazardous occupations”, used in the draft resolution, would be replaced by “non-designated industries” and “non-designated occupations”.

38. There was support for the proposal to enlarge the basis for the identification of hazardous work of children beyond the industry and occupation classification. Some experts noted in this context that Recommendation No. 190, which accompanies Convention No. 182, steered ratifying member States towards the collection of data on “work” rather than towards industries or occupations. Only the nature of specific activities undertaken within an occupation or industry could be given the appellation “hazardous”. Data collection needed to be undertaken with this in mind. Consideration also needed to be given to the fact that the process of classifying work as hazardous relied on two factors, neither of which required the designation of industries or occupations as hazardous: (i) the extent to which hazards inherent in the work or its environment had been identified and action taken to isolate a person from the hazard(s), or to minimize or eliminate the hazard(s); and (ii) the nature of the work itself. Taken together these factors defined the relative “hazardicity” of work and could be objectively applied to identification and analysis of child labour.

39. The experts expressed concern on the difficulty in obtaining information through the alternative approach because of the perceived challenges to objective classification (for example, unhealthy work environment, unsafe equipment, etc.). Concerns on defining excessive hours of work, night work, were also noted. In that context, several experts

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highlighted the critical importance of establishing an objective definition or criteria that would be required for collecting statistics on hazardous work by children.

40. The experts agreed that hazardous work was universally recognized as child labour, but the criteria varied across countries due to the national level identification processes. Nonetheless, it was suggested to elaborate further in the report on the need for appropriate parameters in translating legislation on or lists of hazardous work into occupational codes. For accurately identifying hazardous activity, both the relevant industry and occupational codes would be required.
41. As the impact of the number of hours worked on different age groups was not the same, it was suggested to perhaps use different hour thresholds for different age groups in defining hazardous work.
42. Since “hazardous work” was a subset of “worst forms of child labour”, it was suggested that they should be grouped/explained under the same heading.
43. Some experts mentioned that risk and degree of hazard are linked and, in turn, risk can be managed, but others noted that a subjective approach was not very useful in practice for developing statistically objective measurement and definitions.
44. A suggestion to interact with the ILO’s SafeWork Programme when developing the revised draft resolution was noted.
45. Apart from the class of child beggars in the category of forced child workers (and therefore a worst form of child labour) concern was expressed on the exclusion of begging per se from child labour. It was noted that although begging by free choice as an activity itself was outside the SNA boundary, it impacted negatively on child development and therefore it should be included in the definition of child labour.
46. The Office drew the attention of the experts to the urgency of data collection on hazardous work by children, as that was by far the largest component in the worst forms of child labour. For this purpose, a constructive, realistic and practical approach to develop the statistical measurement standards for hazardous work by children was required, although, at best, the collected data would perhaps not provide more than an approximation of the phenomenon.

#### 2.2.2.6. Measuring “light work”

47. The Office made a brief introduction to the issue of “light work”. It was explained that the concept of light work was derived from Convention No. 138 and that the aim of the section was not to redefine the concept but to provide guidance for its statistical measurement. Most countries had legislation indicating permissible work by children below the minimum age for work, and such light work was allowed from the ages of 12 or 13 years, varying in accordance with the minimum age for admission to employment or work established at the national level. The difficulties of translating the light work provisions included in Convention No. 138 into statistical measurement was highlighted; especially establishment of the precise thresholds of hours beyond which school attendance and learning performance would be adversely affected. The ILO global estimates had proposed a specific and clear hour threshold of 14 hours per week to statistically define light work. However, as global IPEC research had not revealed any robust evidence on the link between work hours and school performance, the Office agreed that at the national level the 14-hour threshold could be contentious and that further investigation was required.
48. Some experts confirmed that governments looked forward to ILO instruments for guidance in practical data collection applications, and supported that the resolution should indicate a

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specific weekly hours time limit also for light work that may be applied should national legislation and guidelines be lacking.

49. Some experts argued that there should be sufficient flexibility in terms of hour thresholds and other definitional criteria to allow countries to comply with their national standards. It was also pointed out that working hours by itself may be an inadequate variable to statistically define light work and that the degree of hazardousness as well as other relevant variables should be taken into consideration.
50. It was also noted that additional account needed to be taken of the fact that some countries derived their definition of light work from the process of rehabilitating employees returning to work from injury or illness. This was because such countries had only low exposure to the worst forms of child labour. Light work definitions derived from this source may create different data gathering parameters than a definition of light work derived directly from issues of child labour. Care therefore needed to be taken when comparing light work data between nations.
51. The experts suggested a clearer specification of the “other” (additional) criteria that might be used to measure light work, referring specifically to the first sentence in paragraph 27 of the draft resolution. While some proposed the deletion of this notion to avoid ambiguities in the light work definition due to the unspecified “other” criteria above, others appreciated the importance of its flexible character that would permit each country to establish their own definition on light work specifying selected criteria relevant to the country.
52. The experts requested clarification on whether vocational training might also be considered as a part of light work. The Office explained that exceptions for light work should be considered separately from exceptions to undertake vocational training, since light work was a very specific category as per Convention No. 138 should be defined at the country level after tripartite consultations in compliance with international standards. Some experts suggested inclusion of a clearer definition of light work at the very beginning of the section, making reference to the specific age range that the definition covered.
53. Some experts suggested that the section on light work should be placed after the section on child labour in the resolution. It was also recognized that great caution should be exerted when defining light work so that it was not applied as an opportunity to lower the minimum age for admission to employment or work.

#### 2.2.2.7. Child labour

54. In introducing the issue, the Office explained that the aim was to distinguish between all working children under 18 years, and those engaged in contravention of Conventions Nos 138 and 182. Child labour was thus determined as comprising (a) working children below the minimum age for the type of work they engage in, (b) children in hazardous work, and (c) children in the unconditional worst forms of child labour. Child labour was also the total of (i) a subset of economic activities performed by children (that may be measured through surveys, including fetching water and carrying firewood), and (ii) those worst forms of child labour that cannot be measured with existing methods (principally, the unconditional forms of child labour).
55. Several experts highlighted that it was difficult to distinguish between “child labour” and the broader category of “children’s work” or “working children” in languages other than in English, and a solution had to be found. It was suggested that clear terms be developed for use in the French and Spanish languages.
56. Some experts noted that the contents of paragraph 28(a) of the draft resolution required to be reworded to make clearer that it encompassed two groups of children, namely, those in

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the age group 5–11 years who engaged in even one hour of economic activity in the reference week, and children in the age group 12–13/13–14 years who performed more than the permissible weekly hours of light work, if the exception for light work was provided for by national legislation. In addition, a detailed proposal was made by some experts to (i) reverse the order of the existing subparagraphs 28(a)–(c) and start with the presentation of the worst forms of child labour as one category, in the order of clauses (a)–(d) of Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182; and (ii) alter the first line of paragraph 28 to indicate that child labour reflected “a child’s engagement in economic and non-economic production that impedes the child’s development and education”.

57. It was suggested that paragraph 29 of the draft resolution be substantially revised and restructured. Some experts proposed to present child labour as a total of (i) those worst forms that cannot be measured with existing methods; and (ii) a subset of productive activities performed by children, the latter benefiting from well-established measurement practices.
58. The experts supported deletion of paragraph 30 of the draft resolution since its message was contained in paragraph 28(a).
59. The experts were informed that a previous regional tripartite meeting had suggested that within the draft resolution, the “measuring light work” paragraphs be placed after the section on child labour but no decision had been taken on it, since the rationale of the existing structure reflected a step-wise procedure of developing building blocks to explain finally how child labour was to be determined.

#### 2.2.2.8. Household chores

60. Further to the general discussion on the topic at the beginning of the Meeting, the experts discussed again the subject of non-economic activities by children, in particular household chores in their own family, in the specific context of the definition and measurement issues for child labour statistics. In introducing the subject, the Office noted that diverse views had been expressed during the Meeting, and no consensus had emerged. Therefore, the Office may consider to propose a flexible approach to the ICLS, whereby those countries wishing to expand the scope of child labour to include household chores may be permitted to do so, and likewise for those who wished to restrict it to economic activities only. There was no consensus regarding this proposal.
61. Several experts supported the view that the statistical concept of child labour for abolition should comprise not only economic activities by children but also their non-economic productive activities, where such activities had negative effects on the education, health or well-being of children. It was argued that whether or not the child activity in question produced economic value falling within the calculation of GDP should not be a relevant factor to be taken into account. The data on time spent by children in various activities were important indicators to assess their effect on children: be it economic activities within the SNA boundary, household chores or other non-economic productive activities.
62. Some experts emphasized, however, that the SNA framework offered basic guidance to the national statistical offices for critical responsibilities, such as the conduct of labour force surveys and GDP calculation, and therefore cautioned against combining the data on non-economic productive activities with those on economic activities. It was suggested that the SNA framework be applied, but additional data be collected on non-economic productive activities of children which should be tabulated separately. It was stated that including non-economic activities in labour statistics was a very new approach and ideally the same consideration should be given not only to the case of children’s work but equally to non-economic productive activities carried out by adults, especially women.

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63. The Office informed the experts that domestic work carried out by children in a third party's household was covered as economic activities in the scope of child labour statistics. However, determining whether or not the child was working in his/her own home was difficult when the notion of the extended family was applied. Also, in the field of legislative and other action against child labour in the context of international labour standards, the inclusion of household chores in the child's own family would be a completely new domain, and perhaps controversial.
  64. Given the importance of household chores, the experts agreed that countries should be encouraged to collect data on time spent by children in household chores within their own family, in addition to the data on economic activities they engaged in.

### **2.2.3. Data collection methods and programmes**

65. The Office presented methodologies for child labour data collection through various types of surveys. The experts were informed that the experience of ILO/IPEC had revealed the household-based national child labour survey as the most favoured child labour data collection methodology since the household was the most appropriate unit for identifying children and their families, measuring their socio-economic and demographic characteristics, obtaining information on the child's educational and work status, and collecting data on the determinants and consequences of children's work. It was pointed out that methodologies for robust estimates in some specific worst forms of child labour were, however, not currently available.
66. The experts appreciated the work being undertaken by the Office towards the development of new instruments to collect reliable data on specific worst forms of child labour, where further research was needed. Due to the heterogeneity of child labour forms, the importance of complementarities between different survey types was emphasized. It was recognized that the choice of which method(s) to apply depended on the objectives and purpose of the inquiry, type of child labour to be investigated, levels of accuracy desired and the availability of time, technical and financial resources.
67. Regarding the sampling design of a child labour survey, the experts reported that the sample frame should be appropriate to collect child labour data. In this regard, a conventional two-stage sampling design for household-based surveys should be adapted in order to reflect the fact that child labour was usually not uniformly distributed in the country.
68. Several experts stressed the need to use a time-use survey when collecting child labour data in order to better gather information both on economic activities, household chores, and other activities. To take into account seasonality variations of children's activities, application of specific methodologies for data collection, such as rotating samples over the year, retrospective surveys, and time-use surveys were suggested. However, implementing these methodologies could be difficult on cost considerations. It was also recognized that data collection would become heavier, more complex and difficult if the questionnaires were to be administered to children. A proposal to link a child labour module to different types of censuses, in particular population censuses, was noted.

### **2.2.4. Global estimation processes**

69. The Office introduced the importance of the global estimates and the rationale for including it in the report. The ILO was mandated to analyse and present global child labour trends at a regular interval (usually every four years). In ratifying Convention No. 182, members States had committed themselves to immediate action against the worst forms of child labour and by way of adopting the Global Action Plan in 2006, they had also agreed

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on a target date of 2016 for their effective elimination. Global trend monitoring was thus of particular importance.

70. In the ensuing discussion, some experts suggested to remove the “global estimate” section from the draft resolution, on the grounds that its rather conservative measuring approach may be repeated at the national level and then lead to an underestimate of the magnitude and incidence of child labour. In addition, concerns were raised that the inclusion of the method which represented a minimum estimate of child labour may be used to inform legislation which would result in minimum protection for children. Furthermore, inclusion of the estimates in a resolution would bind the Office to use the method until the resolution was revisited. This may be problematic particularly given its relatively new development.
71. However, several other experts supported retention of the global estimation process in the resolution. It was acknowledged that it provided an essential basis for international monitoring efforts and that for statistical offices with little or no prior experience in child labour statistics, the global estimate process had much utility as it was very useful for understanding in a structured manner how to filter out child labour from the data collection through a household survey. In addition, it was noted that the method allowed flexibility to the national statistical offices to adjust the different age and working hour thresholds and criteria according to their legislation and national requirements. Some experts raised the concern over the absence in the draft resolution of non-economic production activities and proposed to include them in the global estimates of child labour by identifying a third category of “children doing household chores” and making consequential amendments.
72. While recognizing the importance of explaining the global estimation procedures in the report and resolution, the experts suggested that the methodology be presented in a more reader-friendly format. In this regard, a proposal to introduce the method in a diagram format so that it would be readily understood was noted. For facilitating the work by national statistical offices, it was mentioned that the list of designated hazardous occupations or processes used in the global estimate process could be annexed to the resolution as guidance for those statistical offices without any list of such activities.

#### **2.2.5. Supplementary sources of child labour data**

73. The Office made a brief introduction to supplementary sources of information on child labour, items of data collection and further action referring to the update of child labour manuals and standard questionnaires.
74. Some experts pointed out discrepancies and inconsistencies in the text and suggested that these should be corrected.
75. Experts suggested expansion of that section of the report and resolution addressing child labour data collection through administrative records in order to consider additional data sources available at the country level which could provide useful information on the work performed by children. In that context, the importance of data records on relevant social programmes, such as specific conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes which have proved to reduce child labour, was noted.
76. It was pointed out that statistics on education could not substitute child labour statistics, and that the relation between these two dimensions was not always straightforward.
77. The experts highlighted the fact that in some specific contexts child labour constituted a relatively rare phenomenon that traditional sampling methods were unable to adequately capture. Therefore, the report should recognize this limitation and propose other methods such as network or snowball sampling.



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### **2.2.6. Items of data collection**

78. The experts considered the inclusion of area of residence (urban/rural) within the items of data collection as crucial. Some inconsistencies in terminology were also noted. It was stressed that other educational variables such as the attendance schedule of children (morning/afternoon/night) might provide important information to understand better the interaction between work and school. There was also a suggestion to highlight child labour seasonality issues as well as best practices on the frequency of data collection.
79. Some experts suggested that the section “items of data collection” be placed before the section “methods of data collection”. This would improve the structure since what needed to be measured would be first presented and followed by how to measure it.
80. It was also suggested that the resolution should identify key elements from within the list of child labour indicators provided in its appendix.

### **2.2.7. Further action**

81. It was noted that this matter would be relevant in the event the draft resolution was adopted by the 18th ICLS.

## **2.3. Any other matters**

82. No other matter was discussed.

## **Part II. Measurement of working time (7–10 April 2008)**

83. Part II of the agenda discussed and provided guidance on the definition and measurement of working time with a view to adopting international statistical guidelines at the forthcoming International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS).
84. Participating in Part II of the Meeting of Experts at the invitation of the Governing Body were experts from 12 of the 14 Governments (Armenia, Australia, Canada, Chile, Ethiopia, Italy, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Poland and Turkey (Fiji and the Islamic Republic of Iran were unable to participate)), as well as seven experts nominated after consultation with the Employers’ group and six experts nominated after consultation with the Workers’ group of the Governing Body. Present also at the Meeting as observers were representatives of member States (France and Republic of Korea) of international non-governmental organizations (AFRISTAT, ECOWAS, IOE and ITUC) and of the United Nations and other international organizations (UNECA, UNECE and OECD). A list of participants is attached to this report.
85. The deliberations at Part II of the Meeting were based on a report<sup>2</sup> prepared by the ILO in the three working languages (English, French and Spanish). This Part II presented the objectives and uses of working-time statistics, the existing international standard and its limitations; it outlined the main proposals which included a conceptual framework,

<sup>2</sup> ILO: *Report II: Meeting of Experts on Labour Statistics: Measurement of Working Time*, Geneva, 2008 (MELS/2008/II).

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definitions for the various working-time concepts as well as for compiled measures; and it discussed measurements methods, tabulation approaches and minima for international reporting. The report contained a draft resolution concerning the measurement of working time in its appendix.

## **1. Opening remarks and election of the Chairperson**

- 86.** In his opening address, Mr A. Sylvester Young, Director of the ILO Bureau of Statistics, explained the nature and the mandate of the tripartite Meeting of Experts. He indicated that it was an integral part of the consultation process of establishing international standards in labour statistics with experts from governments and the social partners and an opportunity for the Office to benefit from the knowledge and experience of experts from governments and the social partners, in preparing proposals for the ICLS. In that context, he outlined the role of the ICLS as a unique system for guiding the development of labour statistics. He explained that no decision-making was required at the Meeting, but the discussions would be noted and would feed into the preparation of the draft resolution on the measurement of working time to be submitted to the 18th ICLS. Mr Young also stressed that the participants were invited in their capacity as experts and not necessarily as representatives of their governments or any particular group or institution, in order that the resulting draft resolution to be submitted to the ICLS would reflect best practices but not necessarily those used in each of the experts' countries. He mentioned that the Meeting was not being asked to amend the draft resolution attached to the report as it would be the job of the ICLS to amend a revised draft resolution. Rather, all views and advice would be noted and reflected in the report of the Meeting. Finally, he availed himself of the opportunity to thank all those governments, institutions and persons for their contribution to the work leading up to the Meeting of Experts. In particular, he mentioned the work of the Paris City Group on Labour and Compensation which was essential in preparing the proposals in the report and Statistics Norway who seconded a staff member to participate actively in this process.
- 87.** Ms Antonella Baldassarini (Italy) was elected to chair Part II of the Meeting. She thanked the experts from the governments and social partners for participating in the process of adopting guidelines on a subject so relevant for working life. She mentioned her work in the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) to produce estimates of hours actually worked that are relevant for national accounts, as well as for the various economic, social and political uses. In particular, she referred to the need to have valid estimates of annual hours worked, which were available in only a few OECD countries and whose quality varied between them, adding uncertainties in productivity series. She remarked that making estimates of hours worked in unpaid non-market services was an important challenge to be recognized. The proposals to this Meeting were a good step towards achieving these goals.
- 88.** The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda that had been proposed by the ILO secretariat.

## **2. Technical discussions**

### **2.1. General discussion**

- 89.** The Office, represented by Ms Sophia Lawrence of the Bureau of Statistics, made a brief introduction to the items for discussion. She presented the importance and applications of

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working-time statistics in social, economic and political areas. She also presented the current international statistical standards and the reasons why they needed to be revised. These date back to 1962 when the Tenth ICLS defined the concepts of “normal hours of work” and of “hours actually worked”. The 1962 resolution mentioned the concept of “hours paid for” but did not adopt an international definition because of important variations in establishment practices in countries. The standards covered only workers in paid employment, but self-employment is becoming increasingly important. In addition, the concept of hours actually worked leaves out important activities, such as work at home, travelling time and training, for which no guidance exists as to their inclusion or exclusion. Also, the reference period to define these concepts is short (i.e., a day or a week) but increasingly, working time is defined for longer reference periods, such as a year. Finally, new concepts are already being measured in countries, for example on “hours usually worked” and “absence from work”, and international definitions are required for them. Against this background, she explained that the proposals being made included: (a) a revised consistent definition of hours actually worked; (b) definitions for new working-time concepts; (c) guidelines on how to measure them in practice; and (d) compiled measures, such as labour input or volume of work and annual hours of work.

90. In this context, the importance was stressed of distinguishing between “legal” or “administrative” definitions (linked to payment practices in a country or establishment) and “statistical” definitions of working time (linked to activities, independently of their payment and location). There may be activities which are paid by establishments which should not be included in the statistical definition, and vice versa. Examples of the first relate to the lunch break, examples of the second include work at home when it is unpaid. The proposals being made to the Meeting tried to define working-time concepts with independence from reference periods, administrative concepts or sources of data collection.
91. Among the discussions that followed, the need to allow countries to adapt international definitions to national realities of the international concepts was mentioned, especially where these did not apply (directly). Indeed, it is very difficult for international guidelines to take into account all national concepts, but it should be possible for countries to map national measures to a common international concept. Also, among the many applications of working-time statistics, its role for labour–management negotiations was clarified. It is not the role of international statistical guidelines to impose a level of working hours nor to modify national legal documents that define them. What is important for statistics is to contrast hours actually worked with the legal normal hours. While international standards are intended to guide the collection and management of working-time statistics, the resolution would also be read and interpreted by the end users of statistics, e.g., employers and workers. Care therefore also needed to be taken in defining concepts and methods so that they avoided ambiguity, particularly between legal and statistical concepts.

## 2.2. Proposed working-time framework

92. In describing the concepts “working hours” and “working-time arrangements” embedded in the concept of “working time”, it was explained that the measurement units could be short, such as minutes, hours, or long, such as days, weeks or months, but for ease of language, the concepts used the term “hours”. These hours could be observed over short or long reference periods, such as a day, a week, a season or a year. The basic observation unit for measuring working time was the job, as defined by the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), that is, as “a set of tasks and duties performed, or meant to be performed, by one person, including for an employer or in self-employment”. It was also explained that the scope for the measurement of working time was based on the production boundary of the System of National Accounts (SNA); and distinguished between the SNA general production boundary and the production boundary used for

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measuring the gross domestic product (GDP). The latter was more restricted and gave rise to estimates of working hours for the employed population, while the former included, in addition, volunteer non-market services and unpaid services in households for own final consumption that gave rise to an “enlarged” concept of working hours. The importance of each of these boundaries when producing statistics on working time was pointed out. The general boundary was useful for a broader understanding of the total work burden in a country in the context of its economic and social programmes, as well as an input for satellite accounts. The production boundary was useful to produce working-time estimates that corresponded to estimates of GDP and employment.

93. In the discussion that followed, experts agreed with the need for flexibility in time units and reference periods to be used. In particular, some participants considered that the reference period should be allowed to go beyond a year to cover a whole lifespan, in order to measure working time during the whole life of a person. Such information would take into account the worker’s age of entry and exit (or retirement age) to the labour market, seniority, as well as interruptions in active life for whatever reasons (education, maternity). This measure could be seen as an extension of the concept of hours actually worked when different units and reference periods are used.
94. The scope of working time stimulated much debate. The experts recognized in general that it was important and useful to measure the enlarged concept of working hours, including unpaid household work and volunteer non-market services. However, some also considered that enlarging the scope to all productive activities would be problematic for a number of reasons. First, the practical measurement in an enlarged scope was more difficult, especially as there was not enough understanding or experience in measuring the enlarged concept with existing methods and in applying existing classifications to their specific situation. In particular, the validity of estimates for these categories from labour force surveys was raised, when proxy responses are used. Second, producing estimates within an enlarged scope of working time could disrupt existing series of working hours and make it difficult to maintain coherence with existing production statistics. Third, recognizing the enlarged working hours concept in official statistics could have political implications, particularly concerning the non-payment of household work.
95. The idea was shared that perhaps the resolution could contain two schemes, one that provided very precise definitions for working time within the SNA production boundary for measuring GDP and another for working time in its enlarged scope. There were two reasons for that. The first was that not all concepts proposed could be applied to the enlarged scope. The second was that for the former it would be possible to adopt very precise and detailed guidelines which were urgently needed, while the latter could accept general guidelines, and be treated as a topic for further development that would rightly stimulate countries to do more in this area. The two schemes would be complementary as they have different although not contradictory objectives.

### **2.3. Discussion of working hours concepts**

96. The Meeting discussed the various working hours concepts on the basis of the report prepared for the Meeting and its annexed draft resolution. In response to a query concerning the order in which the concepts were being proposed in the draft resolution and which did not seem to follow the intuitive order of starting with normative concepts, the Office explained that hours actually worked was the first concept proposed because it is considered the key concept in this framework that applies to all workers, that defines what work is for statistical purposes, and that is not linked to administrative or legal concepts.

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### **2.3.1. Hours actually worked**

97. The proposed definition of hours actually worked was linked to time spent on activities contributing to the production of goods and services. The proposed concept is independent of the normative or legal status of the activity. With respect to the 1962 definition, the proposal expanded the coverage to all workers (including the self-employed) and work situations (for example, performed in any location, independently of payment and moment in time) and clarified the content of each of its four components, namely direct hours, related hours, in-between time and rest periods whose terminology might be improved. Hours actually worked was to be seen as the aggregate time spent in each of these components. Commuting time, regardless of how long it is or how long workers have to wait for transportation, is always excluded from hours actually worked (unless persons performed work activities during the commute ride). Also excluded are lunch breaks, as well as all time not worked, even if paid.
98. In general, the experts considered that hours actually worked should include periods of work carried out in any location. The difficulty in delineating the boundary between the various components was mentioned. Some experts proposed to merge direct hours with related hours into a new component such as “hours directly or indirectly spent”, as sometimes what are related hours in some jobs are the direct hours in others (e.g., repair, preparation, etc.); others proposed to merge related hours with in-between hours. With respect to the measurement of the extended scope of working hours, it was also proposed to limit the concept of hours actually worked to only direct hours, given the difficulty of measuring the other components. Indeed, many of the activities in these components are more straightforward for workers in paid employment than for other workers, within either boundary.
99. The content of the related hours and in-between hours was discussed at some length. The related hours include activities such as transporting goods from one place to another, awaiting customers and, particularly, on-call duty or training activities. The in-between hours is time when no work is done but where workers are available to work. On-call work received considerable attention. There was agreement that on-call work started when the worker was called to go to work, not when she arrived at the place of work. However, it was mentioned that it would be dangerous to include only those on-call hours that are paid, as on-call work may be part of a global payment system. Other activities were not specifically mentioned, but new activities were proposed, for example, washing-up time after the work day is finished. It could be argued that activities of this nature should not be part of hours actually worked as they do not facilitate the production process, unless without them workers might be hindered from working the following day.
100. Regarding the length of short rest periods that could be allowed for inclusion in hours actually worked, the arguments were linked to establishment practices, as rest periods depended on the collective agreements or employment contracts covering workers.
101. The application of the hours actually worked concept in countries where agriculture is predominant was questioned, however. In these countries it may not be practical to measure work in terms of hours but rather of days or half days of work during seasons. Also, there were workers on call 24 hours a day, for example guards, shopkeepers or domestic workers who could be called to work at any moment of the 24-hour period. Applying “equivalent” hours for certain occupations (such as guards) with less intensive workloads, as was done in certain countries, did not seem a good solution because it would mean applying different criteria for different workers. It was proposed to examine the possibility of applying the same treatment to these workers as is applied for seafarers in maritime Conventions, who may also find themselves continuously at the disposal of an employer.

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### **2.3.2. Hours paid for**

- 102.** This concept was mentioned in the 1962 resolution but not defined. The new proposal includes all hours for which the worker received payment directly from the employer, including for time not worked if paid directly by the employer (as compared to those hours paid by social security schemes, for example for sickness or maternity leave). It excludes all hours worked but not paid (for example, unpaid overtime). By its administrative nature, this concept cannot be defined in terms of a list of activities.
- 103.** In the discussion that followed, the notion of payment was clarified to include payments in cash, kind or services. The Meeting pointed out that it will probably be difficult to measure hours paid for when they are paid in kind or with services. The issue was raised and it was felt that overtime hours paid at premium rates should count equally as hours paid at normal rates. There was also some discussion as to how to determine the hours paid for of workers whose overtime is compensated with time off in a later period. In this situation their hours paid for would not be altered, although their hours actually worked would, when and if the time was taken off.
- 104.** In discussing the worker coverage of this concept, most experts had difficulty with the application of hours paid for to the self-employed; even to those who were paid for hours worked or hours planned, e.g., artisans, lawyers, etc. The remuneration of self-employed workers is in the form of mixed income, linked not only to work done but also to capital returns and economic risk. Sometimes, self-employed persons may work and not receive pay at all (e.g. contributing family workers). In addition, the notion of receiving payment during leave entitlements does not strictly apply to them, nor does having unpaid overtime. The solution proposed was that for self-employed workers, the hours paid for were considered to be equivalent to the hours actually worked, more often than not.

### **2.3.3. Normal hours**

- 105.** The proposed concept of normal hours of work revises the current international definition of normal hours of work adopted in 1962, which is itself inspired by the Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation (No. 116) adopted by the International Labour Conference, also in 1962. The current definition of normal hours relates to the hours that workers are expected to work as set in regulatory instruments or as defined by establishments' practices. Since hours defined by regulatory instruments may differ from practice in establishments, the proposal is to limit the concept of normal hours to hours fixed by laws and other regulatory instruments and to define a new concept of contractual hours, to reflect establishments' practices. Normal hours can be defined for different reference periods of one day, one week or one year. In some countries it is a national concept while in others it is defined by collective agreements or arbitral awards for groups of workers. The level of normal hours may, therefore, vary between groups of workers and the content of those hours may also vary. Some agreements may include or exclude different activities, on the basis of whether they are paid or not. Normal hours are useful as a benchmark of what a society considers should be the number of hours to be worked, to monitor whether these regulations are implemented in practice and how normal hours and the hours actually worked compare with each other. This is an administrative and collective concept that could be used as a reference to define "full-time work". While the 1962 concept was limited to workers in paid employment covered by laws and regulations, it is being proposed to extend its coverage to those persons in self-employment for whom legislation restricts their schedules, such as for workers in commerce, whose business hours are regulated.
- 106.** In the discussion that followed, the experts considered that the proposed distinction between normal hours and contractual hours proposed was well founded. The two concepts

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were seen as representing the framework under which work is performed, while the other concepts proposed described work as it actually occurs. In this connection, it was noted that hours stipulated by collective agreements define the hours set in working contracts, and therefore might be seen as defining contractual hours rather than normal hours. However, as it was possible for workers covered by a particular collective agreement to have a contract of work stipulating a different schedule than that defined in collective agreements (for example, if the worker is on part time), the two concepts were clearly not equivalent. In order to clarify these distinctions, it was considered important to present the relationship between the concepts of normal, contractual and usual hours of work. It was also noted that the reference to “arbitral awards” for defining normal hours required clarification as it sounded outdated.

- 107.** Many experts considered that the concept should be limited to workers in paid employment covered by legislation. The concept had a specific meaning for workers in paid employment, as it was meant to monitor social standards and progress. It was relatively easy to apply to most paid employees in the formal sector but difficult to apply to the self-employed and to casual employees, as they were not always covered by legislation. Translating the meaning of normal hours, which is clear in theory, to the self-employed who do not have work contracts is difficult in practice. While they may have regular schedules dictated by business regulations, they are free to work when they want. Opening hours could not be used as a proxy to normal hours, and doing so was seen as stretching the concept to meanings that were different, thus taking away some of its usefulness. For these workers the applicable concept was more one of hours usually worked, seen as more appropriate for the self-employed, as well as for those workers in paid employment for whom normal hours were not applicable and workers engaged in unpaid non-market services. Another concept for self-employed could be the hours they are available to work or to attend to clients. It was noted that when the interest was to compare their hours with a norm, the normal hours of paid workers in the same occupation and industry could be used.
- 108.** On the other side of the issue, some experts also acknowledged that normal hours could make sense for self-employed persons, for example, when normal hours were defined for the economy as a whole, or when existing legislation or regulatory instruments made reference expressly to such workers, for safety reasons, for example in the case of taxi or other types of drivers. This is a situation that is beginning to arise in certain countries and that can be expected to extend in the future. Since statistical standards are meant to have a useful lifespan of over 20 years, such situations would need to be taken into consideration.
- 109.** The Meeting expressed a view that the application of normal hours in agricultural societies could be seen as a problem. In this context, there is some regularity in the hours worked, as workers are expected to start and end work at certain times of the day or as a function of the sun. However, the hours that can be scheduled for work depend on weather conditions. It was clarified that in this case these scheduled hours related to usual hours rather than to normal hours.
- 110.** There was some discussion regarding terminology used. In the French version of the report and draft resolution, for example, the term used for normal hours made reference to the normal “duration” of work, rather than to “hours” and should perhaps be changed. It was also debated whether the term “normal” hours in English was not the most appropriate one, as it conveyed a notion of normal behaviour, and that perhaps “legal” or “normative” hours might be used instead.
- 111.** The use of the concept of normal hours to measure full time was seen as complex. It would require different measures for the various sectors and occupations, and the whole exercise would become impractical. The use of the normal hours concept to define part-time work was also discussed, given the growth in this type of work arrangement in many countries of the world. It could be defined as a percentage of normal hours of full-time workers, as

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fixed by regulations and legislation. It was noted that part-time workers could already have been defined, albeit indirectly, in the international concept of time-related underemployment.

#### **2.3.4. Contractual hours**

- 112.** The Office presented the proposed concept of contractual hours as the hours expected to be performed by workers as stipulated in their individual contracts. These contracts may be implicit (i.e., verbal) or explicit (i.e., written). Contractual hours, like normal hours, can be defined for different reference periods, such as a day, a week or a year. Similarly, the content of the contractual hours may include periods which are not included in hours actually worked, such as lunch hours or commuting time. The concept of contractual hours is an individual concept that can vary between workers with the same normal hours. Contractual hours can be compared with normal hours (if they exist) and with hours actually worked. It is an administrative concept that is not applicable to all persons in paid employment but only to those whose contracts stipulate hours of work. The point was made that contractual hours, when defined for a short reference period, would include eventual leave entitlement actually taken, but contractual hours defined for a long reference period would exclude all periods of leave entitlement.
- 113.** Regarding the reference period to be used as a standard, some experts considered that the reference period that encompassed the broadest concept and thus was the most complete, was a year. Other experts, however, considered that it was not common to define annual contractual hours in their countries but that the commonly used reference period was a week. In addition, a weekly measure is useful to obtain overtime and absence from work. A yearly figure could in these situations not be measured directly, given limitations in recall capacity in surveys and given that public holidays often vary in certain societies. In these situations, annual contractual hours could only be derived on the basis of additional information regarding leave entitlements and holidays.
- 114.** The meaning of contractual hours for workers who do not have written contracts, but whose working schedules were informally agreed was queried and clarified to describe that in the proposed concept, workers may have contractual hours even when they do not have written contracts, as contracts can be verbal or written. Another issue raised was on the notion of what “individual” meant in the context of this concept; in cases where the hours that workers are expected to work are defined in collective employment contracts for all workers in an establishment, this would belong to the concept of normal hours. Another proposal was made to consider the concept of “scheduled hours” that would apply to workers who do not have fixed contractual hours and who only know their scheduled hours for one week, a few weeks in advance.

#### **2.3.5. Hours usually worked**

- 115.** The Office presented the proposal for the concept of hours usually worked. This concept is related to the typical weekly working hours, which are those weekly hours most commonly worked over a long reference or observation period. This may be a season, a month or a year. This concept covers workers in paid and self-employment, including those with no normal or contractual hours. This concept can be compared with normal and contractual hours and with the hours actually worked. With respect to contractual hours it will add overtime occurring regularly and will subtract absence that happens regularly. Technically it can be understood as the modal value of the distribution of weekly hours actually worked over the long period. The Office explained that this concept could be less relevant for workers with irregular schedules, for whom a modal value could not be observed. In these cases it was being proposed to use the median or the average of the weekly hours actually



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worked over a long period, although it was acknowledged that conceptually the average hours actually worked are not identical to the hours usually worked.

- 116.** In the discussion that followed, experts considered that the concept of hours usually worked was very useful and pertinent although the term “typical” was not defined. Regarding operationalization of the concept, some experts considered that proposing the use of different measures of central tendency to define a single concept was confusing. Defining hours usually worked in terms of the modal value could be understood as the mathematical expression of the concept. However, the concept should be defined independent of proxies (i.e., the median and average) to be used when the modal value is not easy or possible to determine. The proxies proposed should be presented as part of the measurement methodologies to be used. These proxies were discussed at some length. Some experts considered the use of a median or average as proxies to the modal value to be problematic because these measures could incorporate irregular overtime and absence in their calculation, which in principle are (already) excluded from the concept of hours usually worked. The median value was considered more difficult to operationalize in surveys than the mean, as it would require respondents to recall the distribution of their hours worked in order to make the calculation. Several experts shared their national experiences using the average hours of work as proxy to the modal value. It was recommended to refine the approach proposed, in particular concerning the inclusion or exclusion of weeks when no work is done in the calculation of averages. This is particularly important for workers whose working schedules are defined over a month and not over a week, in such a way that they only work on alternative weeks. For these workers, excluding weeks when no work is done to calculate average hours will overestimate the hours usually worked.
- 117.** A point raised concerning differences in the various language versions of the texts contained in the report raised the issue of presenting or not a hierarchy of proxies to be used. In the English version medians and averages are to be considered hierarchically while in the French version they could be used alternatively.
- 118.** The Meeting mentioned that hours usually worked should be measured for each job separately.
- 119.** When comparing hours usually worked with contractual hours, it was recommended to use the terms “adding” instead of “including” regular overtime, and the term “subtracting” instead of “excluding” regular absence, as these terms could be understood differently in the various languages. In response to queries concerning regular absences, examples were provided which included regular absence for family reasons of one hour every day, daily absence due to physical rehabilitation or weekly absence for educational leave. While examples can be found, it was recommended to provide working definitions of regular and irregular overtime and absence.
- 120.** One expert mentioned for information that the concept as proposed is no longer applied in his country, given that it did not allow to identify usual overtime, and thus could not estimate total overtime, paid and unpaid. In his country now, they measure a concept of hours usually worked that excludes all usual overtime.

### **2.3.6. Overtime**

- 121.** The Office presented the proposal for the concept of overtime. This concept is being defined as all hours actually worked in excess of contractual hours plus any hours defined as overtime in contractual hours. In the absence of contractual hours, overtime is to be understood as the hours actually worked in excess of normal hours in comparable jobs. In the proposal, overtime would not include any hours worked in excess of contractual or

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normal hours that are worked as part of a special flexible schedule, as in the context of flexible hours schemes and shift work. It was proposed to distinguish between regular and irregular overtime, as well as between overtime that is unpaid, that which is paid at normal rates, at premium rates, or compensated with time off at another period. As with other concepts, overtime may be measured for different reference periods, and this depends on the reference period for which the flexible schedule covering the worker is defined. The applications of statistics on overtime include the monitoring of business responses to varying workloads and economic cycles, and of workers' behaviour and working conditions. While this concept is intuitively relevant for workers in paid employment, the self-employed may also work overtime hours, even though the meaning of overtime for them may be different than for workers in paid employment.

122. In the discussions that followed, experts expressed an interest in statistics of overtime particularly for the paid employed, for which a strong demand exists. Overtime statistics for the self-employed were required to a lesser degree. The need was mentioned to consider not only the number of overtime hours worked but also "when" during the day or week these hours were worked, as it was not the same to work on weekends or at night as during core hours. Experts considered that both overtime and the additional hours that are worked as part of schedules were useful and important and should rightly not be combined.
123. Some experts were of the opinion that overtime should always be considered irregular and that collective bargaining was the means to adjust for a future year or period when it became too regular. Its measurement could also include part-time workers, as they also can experience overtime, and in some cases be compensated for it.
124. Regarding the inclusion of the self-employed, experts considered that overtime has a different meaning for them, as well as different applications. For workers in paid employment there is the consideration of compensation which does not exist for the self-employed. Self-employed workers manage their own time, their hours may or may not be regular and it is difficult to apply the concept of overtime to them. For these workers it would be more meaningful to compare their hours actually worked with the normal hours of paid workers in the same occupations and industries to obtain an indicator of extra or excessive hours. Alternatively, their actual hours can be compared with their usual hours, to obtain an indicator of "additional hours" actually worked.
125. The question of using different reference periods was also discussed. It was considered that when long reference periods are used, overtime which is compensated with time off during the same long period would not be detected, as it will cancel out. For this reason, it was better to measure overtime for a short reference period of a week.

### **2.3.7. Absence from work**

126. The Office explained that the concept of absence from work had already been discussed at the ICLS on previous occasions. The proposal included all hours not worked during contractual hours, including contractual leave actually taken, during a specified reference period. In the absence of contractual hours, the concept proposed to use the normal hours of comparable workers. The proposed definition excluded all hours not worked due to working-time arrangements, and included a typology of reasons of absence divided into three categories, namely (i) personal reasons, (ii) reasons related to the employer, economic unit or place of work, and (iii) institutional factors. The Office mentioned the importance of distinguishing between regular and irregular absence, of measuring total time of absence and absence during the year (to measure annual hours). This concept applies only to persons in employment as defined on the basis of the production boundary of the SNA.

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127. Regarding the classification of reasons of absence, the experts noted that the list proposed was not exhaustive and proposed to specifically include the following reasons: occupational injuries, jury service, leave for death of a relative, which could be considered as part of the residual “other personal absence” in the classification, as well as simply no reason at all. They also discussed the rationale for classifying certain absences as personal (e.g., vacation or maternity leave, military service) and argued that some of these reasons might need to be moved to other groups or that the name of this group should be changed to reflect that reasons under this heading include cases beyond the workers’ will or for which the worker has entitlement or obligation. The term “reasons related to the person” could be considered. Experts also noted that reasons linked to the workplace covered a heterogeneous set of cases, where some reasons were often compensated by unemployment schemes (such as bad weather, economic slowdown) while others were penalized (such as labour disputes). Clarification was sought and given concerning the coverage of certain absences, such as absences due to unrecognized strikes and unpaid absences. Again, a translation problem was identified in the French, with the term “*arrêt de travail*”, which is linked to industrial disputes, but was used to relate to the English term “work stoppage” in relation to technical or economic absences.
128. Another issue discussed related to the effect in household surveys of the measurement of employment in a country on the absence from work measured, particularly concerning extended absences. Countries that have a more restrictive definition of employment, i.e., that excludes persons on extended absences, will identify fewer persons absent from work and fewer days of absence from work than countries with a larger coverage in the definition of employment of workers on extended leave.
129. Some experts noted that the use of normal hours as a basis for calculating absence from work was not advisable. Normal hours is a collective concept that may not apply to any one worker in particular. Usual hours would seem a better alternative when contractual hours do not exist. Another concept proposed that could be used when contractual hours did not exist was namely the “time otherwise worked”, i.e. if the absence had not occurred the worker would have worked. By its nature, this would exclude from absence from work all compensation time planned for overtime worked in previous periods.
130. As with overtime, the concept of absence from work for the self-employed was discussed. For these workers, absence from work has a different meaning and applications. Absences are not linked with entitlements necessarily, and self-employed workers enjoy greater flexibility in their schedules. However, it was noted that self-employed workers in certain countries have certain compensation rights, for example, when reducing their hours of work after the birth of a child. Social rights are changing in many countries and it may not be advisable to restrict this concept to only workers in paid employment.
131. Experts considered it important to distinguish between absence that is paid from that which is not, and to identify absences that were initiated by the worker or the employer.

### **2.3.8. Working-time arrangements**

132. The Office presented the proposed concept of working-time arrangements (WTAs). This is an important concept for which international standards are needed, given the flexibilities which are being introduced in the labour market. The concept reflects the organization and the scheduling of work and non-work periods. The various combinations of these dimensions create specific WTAs which can be legally set up in countries, formalized in establishments or may be implicitly practised. The organization of the hours relates to the length of the working hours and the moment during the day or week when they happen (for example at night, or on weekends) and the scheduling relates to the stability of these elements (for example, whether the weekend hours are carried out regularly or not). It is

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important to know whether these arrangements are imposed or chosen by workers, whether they are above or below a norm or how variable or stable they are over time.

- 133.** Experts considered the proposal very useful for analysing the work situation of workers. As with previous concepts, the application of the various WTAs to all types of workers was questioned. In particular, they were not seen as applicable to self-employed workers nor to workers outside of the SNA production boundary used for calculating GDP. For these workers, measuring the characteristics of their WTAs was seen as more pertinent, even though some WTAs in practice could be applicable, such as compressed weeks, for example. There are indeed two approaches to measuring WTAs; one is to measure their characteristics, in which case WTAs are applicable to all workers. Under this approach, one identifies workers who work at night, on weekends, longer or fewer hours, how often these events are experienced and whether hours vary from day to day or from week to week. The other approach consists of measuring specific combinations of characteristics that describe particular formalized WTAs. These are applicable to workers who follow them, either contractually or by custom, as recognized by workers. Such customary WTAs can also occur in agricultural economies or in the informal sector.
- 134.** In response to a query concerning the cumulative nature of the various WTAs described in the annex of the proposed resolution, it was clarified that they are not mutually exclusive but that the same job could follow more than one WTA simultaneously, for example, a person on a part-time schedule could also have flexible working schemes.
- 135.** The experts noted that the list of WTAs annexed to the draft resolution in the report was a useful means to refer to currently recognized specific WTAs and, even if not exhaustive, was a good compromise in industrialized countries. A number of proposals were made to particular categories. It was proposed to change the terms of the WTA mentioned in paragraph 9(1), annualized hours arrangements, in order to generalize it to other long reference periods than a year, such as a month. The WTA in paragraph 9(19), shift work arrangements, could specify that the objective is the maximum utilization of existing equipment. New WTAs were proposed, such as the time-saving account, whereby workers work additional hours with the understanding that they will be able to take, for example, early retirement; job sharing wherein the same job may have different WTAs depending on the worker; prepaid leave, which implies working full time and receiving a defined percentage of their pay and then taking an equivalent leave entitlement afterwards; and shift change where the workers are able to trade their shifts. It was clarified that teleworking and work at home related to the location where activities are carried out, which was not a dimension of WTAs as proposed. The usefulness of complementing the list with examples of WTAs common in developing countries, if possible, was mentioned.

### **3. Compiled measures**

- 136.** The Office described the various compiled measures being proposed for discussion, namely “total hours actually worked” and “annual hours actually worked”. These measures are related and should be seen as an extension to the already discussed concept of “hours actually worked”. “Total hours actually worked” were defined as the sum of the “hours actually worked” by all persons in all jobs (according to the SNA domestic concept of employment) during a specified reference period, such as a quarter or a year. The “annual hours actually worked” related to the “hours actually worked” per unit (job, person, etc.) in a country during a year, which could be the calendar year, the fiscal year or another type. The Office explained that given the requirements of long reference periods and total population coverage, these measures could hardly be observed directly with existing sources but needed to be estimated using a combination of sources, and that therefore it was important to agree on the methodologies that could be used to estimate them. The Office described an additional measure, also related to the two previous ones, namely the

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“average weekly hours actually worked”, which was defined as the “annual hours actually worked” divided by the number of weeks in the year. In presenting each of these measures in detail, the underlying objective of international standards on these measures was examined, and experts were requested to provide views as to whether specific calculation and adjustment methods should be recommended or whether international guidelines should only draw attention to the types of elements that needed to be considered, corrected or adjusted, to guarantee that the measure was adequately estimated.

- 137.** Various opinions were expressed by experts; some indicating that since these measures have national accounts applications, it was perhaps beyond the mandate of an ILO resolution to propose specific methodologies. Others considered that the various methods of calculation presented provided too much detail and were too complicated, and that accounting equations were sufficient. International proposals had to take into account that even within a country there was sometimes no consensus as to the best sources or the best methods to estimate these measures. Perhaps the best approach was to draw attention to the elements that needed to be adjusted, and the requirements that needed to be satisfied to be useful for the various purposes. Another opinion held by some experts, however, considered that while the total hours actually worked concerned national accountants, and was little used for labour analysis, the annual hours actually worked was a very important measure to describe working time in the various sectors of the economy, and their relation to working-time arrangements, etc. For this measure it was essential to have internationally comparable estimates, so a minimum set of guidelines was needed regarding best practices on combining data from different sources, in order not only to evaluate differences in methodologies but to progress towards improved harmonization. One objective of the international guidelines was to stimulate countries to strive towards their implementation, taking into account the diversity in sources and the fact that not all countries are necessarily in a position to produce the statistics targeted in the immediate future. The series of annual hours actually worked produced by the OECD were mentioned by the Meeting. These are not yet comparable between countries and the number of explanatory footnotes is almost as large as the table itself. While a great deal of harmonization was still needed, there had nevertheless been progress, compared with the estimates when first computed, and national methodologies are more harmonized now than before. In this respect, a number of experts expressed the need for international guidelines in countries where receipt of international aid is dependent upon showing progress in the area concerned together with other indicators. Estimates of annual hours actually worked on their own might not show whether a decrease could be clearly interpreted as representing progress, especially beyond a certain level of hours worked.
- 138.** Several experts thought that a diagram that linked all the different concepts and the measures proposed and how they are constructed would facilitate understanding and clarify the equations.
- 139.** It was noted that in the French version the term “employed person” was translated as “employee” (*personne employée*) and needed to be corrected.

### **3.1. Total hours actually worked**

- 140.** The Office explained that for this first measure, also known as the volume of employment, three issues were important for its measurement: an adequate measurement of all hours actually worked, total coverage of the reference period (however defined) and complete worker coverage. The first issue depended on the frequency of the data collection. Estimates of hours actually worked which are based on one or more punctual observations during the year (which is still the most common approach used when the source is a labour force survey) will need to estimate the hours actually worked for the periods not covered. Estimates of hours actually worked derived from other working hour concepts, such as

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contractual hours or hours paid for (which is the method commonly used when the main source is either an establishment survey or administrative registers) need to add overtime worked and subtract estimates of absence from work. These other components could be obtained from labour force surveys or from administrative registers. In all cases, the estimate needed to be adjusted to obtain the domestic concept of employment by adding, for example, the hours actually worked of workers that reside abroad but work in economic units which are inside the country, and by subtracting the hours actually worked of workers who reside in the country but work in foreign-based economic units.

141. In the discussion that followed, the experts mentioned the direct application of this concept for national accounts purposes and considered that perhaps the term used for the measure should be changed to, for example, “volume of work”, that might better reflect what it contains and why it is used. In this connection, it was perhaps more accurate to consider these measures as “derived” rather than “compiled”, given that they are estimates. The inclusion of the proposed hours spent on unpaid non-market services did not seem pertinent if this measure is to be used for national accounts.
142. The experts discussed the formulas that were proposed to estimate total hours of work. The component of “unpaid hours” mentioned in the formula had not been defined so it was unclear whether it included only unpaid overtime or also unpaid additional hours. Also, it was considered that the elements identified in the formula could be difficult to identify in the context of agricultural societies.
143. These estimates required the combination of data from different sources, which are not harmonized amongst them. The experts mentioned the need to ensure that the same units would not be counted twice. The estimates also required extrapolation to periods, geographical areas or groups of workers which are not observed directly. In this connection, the experts mentioned the need to ensure that seasonality factors as well as geographical and worker variability were adequately considered.
144. Some experts made specific proposals for rewording of the draft resolution annexed to the report in the description of this measure to remove any ambiguity; for example, that it should explicitly state that calculations by components always started with the hours of paid workers and that the self-employed needed to be added afterwards, that estimates of hours worked in unregistered or underground work should also be added and that the use of many sources should be mentioned at the beginning of the section and not at the end as in the present draft. All these proposals will be taken into consideration when a revised draft resolution is presented at the ICLS later this year.
145. The experts supported the idea that the best methodology to estimate this measure was continuous labour force surveys, which cover every week of the year. In these surveys, the sample is designed so that each part of the year is covered by a representative sample. Even if the sample size in each week is not large enough to produce reliable weekly results, when aggregated for a month or a quarter, such a survey could guarantee full coverage of the period to which it refers. This contrasts with conventional monthly or quarterly surveys, where the sample covers only one week or a subset of weeks within that period, particularly when these weeks are chosen to exclude public holidays or periods when workers tend to be on annual leave. In those surveys, the resulting statistics are not representative of the weeks when no direct observation is made. Hours actually worked obtained from continuous surveys already incorporate seasonal variations as they cover weeks with public holidays and vacation periods. As a consequence, they need a minimum of adjustments to approximate the target worker coverage (they need to exclude the hours worked by persons working abroad and include the hours worked by non-residents working in the country), to correct for absence from work (which is usually underestimated in labour force surveys) as well as to correct for calendar year effects (for example, years that have 366 days). Thus, continuous surveys are the source that should be privileged to

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measure total hours of work, and other sources should be used to validate and complement them. It was, of course, acknowledged that many countries, especially developing countries, currently did not have the resources to carry out continuous surveys that cover each week of the year, and generally rely on other sources.

146. In response to a query, it was clarified that workers engaged in economic units that produce goods or services for a company in another country (commonly known as offshoring or outsourcing) are in principle workers that satisfy the criterion of domestic employment. Their hours should be included in total hours actually worked.

### **3.2. Annual hours actually worked**

147. The Office presented the proposed definition of “annual hours actually worked”, as the total hours actually worked per person in employment, per job or per person in the population. The first denominator related to the average number of workers during the year (not to the number of persons ever employed during the year), the second denominator related to the average number of jobs in the year, and the third to the average population in the year. Each denominator would result in a different measure, and each measure had its applications. In particular, the last denominator was considered more robust and less affected by seasonal variations.

148. The different denominators were much discussed with some experts considering that the average number of employed persons during the year was the more appropriate. Some experts recalled that it is the denominator used by the OECD when producing the annual hours actually worked series for its member countries. Other experts considered that using the employed as the denominator would result in a measure which was not comparable between countries, as the measure of employment varied in the degree to which they include or exclude persons on extended forms of leave. For this reason, those experts preferred to use the average number of persons “at work” as the denominator of this measure. It would take away the effect of including workers “not at work” on any given week and would be more coherent with the numerator, which is based on the working hours of persons “at work”. It would not be affected by the existence of seasonal work, which was mentioned as a disturbing factor in the measurement of average employment, given that it does not make sense to divide their total hours worked by the number of weeks they worked in a year. However, it was also considered that using persons “at work” as the denominator would overestimate the annual hours actually worked since it would overlook the fact that people will not work every week of the year. Such a measure would relate to a typical or usual situation. It was mentioned that the choice between employment or jobs would matter in countries where multiple job holding was widespread. Some experts saw using the “total population” as less useful and concrete and that would increase the denominator for countries with a large share of young persons who do not work in the population. It was mentioned, however, that this denominator could be useful to reflect situations where employment increases were due mainly to an increase in part-time work: in these circumstances, annual hours per employed person would decrease but annual hours per person in the population would increase. The Meeting concluded that the denominator used would depend on the purpose for the measure, the sources available (as establishment surveys produce estimates of jobs while labour force surveys usually produce estimates of persons in employment) and that what was important was to clearly document the denominator used and possibly also the reasons for the choice made.

### **3.3. Average weekly hours actually worked**

149. The representative of the Office presented the definition of this measure commonly calculated in countries for the experts’ consideration of its inclusion in international

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guidelines and its calculation. The “average hours actually worked per week” were defined as the “annual hours actually worked” divided by the number of weeks during the year. The formulas used vary widely between countries; some measure the average of punctual observations, where these punctual observations relate to weeks with no public holidays, others exclude “persons not at work” from the denominator. The resulting measures are therefore not comparable, and will inevitably be higher for the latter group of countries than for those that use annual hours actually worked as the basis.

**150.** In the discussion, it was noted that while this measure was not explicitly mentioned in the report the proposed calculation was appropriate and the measure could be seen as an extension of the previous two measures. However, some experts were of the opinion that by using the annual hours actually worked, the resulting measure would be lower than the intuitive meaning of average weekly hours actually worked, and would not be representative of what is worked by the population. It was noted that the series of average hours actually worked per week published by the ILO were not comparable because some countries only cover some weeks in the year, are covering only weeks that exclude public holidays or typical vacation periods, or exclude persons “not at work”.

**151.** In calculating the number of weeks in a year, the experts pointed out the need to take into account that not all years have an equal number of days that need to be considered (when a year has 365 days, the number of weeks is equivalent to 52.14 but when it has 366 it is 52.29), as well as the fact that not all years have the same number of working days.

## **4. Measurement methods**

**152.** The representative of the Office introduced the topic by explaining that the method of measurement of particular working hours concepts will depend on the data sources used. Data on different aspects of working time may be collected from the workers themselves, from employers who could make reference to their own administrative records and registers, and from administrative registers held by regulatory authorities. The advantages and disadvantages of particular types of statistical sources with respect to the different working hours variables were outlined. Establishment surveys are a good source of data on hours paid for and contractual hours but may only provide data on a subset of paid employment types. Household surveys apply to the whole population and were a good source of data on hours actually worked. Administrative registers could provide data on normal hours, hours paid for, leave entitlements, absence due to illness from social security and due to industrial disputes. Furthermore, a number of concepts are inherently related to particular types of data source. Since feasible reference periods will differ by source, this will affect implementation of reference periods for particular concepts. Ideally, all available sources should be used in a country to produce working-time statistics. A more detailed description of each method was provided.

**153.** The Meeting noted that agricultural surveys are an important mixed establishment–household-based type of source, especially in agricultural societies, where information can be obtained for agricultural labour input from farms, for their households and (mainly unpaid) family workers and other paid labour.

### **4.1. Household-based surveys**

**154.** Regarding household-based surveys the proposal recommended to measure hours actually worked separately for paid and self-employed workers. For paid workers, it was possible to start by asking questions on contractual hours and then prompt respondents for any absence or overtime experienced during the reference period, to result in the hours actually worked. For the self-employed, the sequence of questions could start with hours usually



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worked rather than contractual hours. Another approach that can be used is to request the hours actually worked separately for every day of the reference period, and separately for each job, and then ask for information on hours usually worked. This approach is particularly appropriate to measure hours actually worked for casual workers and self-employed workers. Continuous labour force surveys are more suitable for measuring hours actually worked than punctual observations covering a subset of weeks in the year. Question formulation should stress elements that may be forgotten such as unusual absences, weekend work, work at home, lunch breaks, etc. A number of issues were raised that would need to be further researched, such as the effect of proxy responses on the quality of reported hours actually worked, and the need for advice on what is the most important concept to measure when surveys can only afford one question item; hours usually worked or hours actually worked.

- 155.** The experts noted that in developing countries, administrative registers and establishment surveys had a very reduced coverage and could not be considered as the only source for national statistics of working time. The only source for many of these countries were household-based surveys. However, these surveys have sampling errors and so they are limited as to the level of detail that can be presented. One way to counter this limitation was to effectively use administrative information where the coverage of workers was good. In administrative registers, where there is a total count of the persons covered it is possible to match at the individual level, the information on working hours for workers in the survey sample, allowing for the production of greater detail on hours and to validate the information obtained from the labour force survey.
- 156.** In labour force surveys, countries generally measure hours usually worked and hours actually worked. The experts shared their experience that hours usually worked, when workers did not have a regular schedule, were approximated with the average hours they work in a week, even when they are absent from their work during the reference period. Some experts mentioned that their survey also obtained information about various characteristics of working-time arrangements, such as shift work, night work, mixed schedules, etc. and also on whether it was a regular job during the year. It was mentioned, however, that not enough expertise existed yet to apply the other concepts proposed in the draft resolution, and that guidance was needed regarding the most adequate method to measure them. In response to various queries, the Office clarified that labour force surveys are able to measure hours paid for and the experts shared their experience with measuring this concept in their surveys, in some through a special module. It was also mentioned that migrant workers in rural areas would be covered in principle in these surveys, if their status qualified them as usual residents of a household.
- 157.** The approach to measure full-time and part-time work in labour force surveys was raised. In European countries, this working-time arrangement is measured by self-reporting (i.e., the respondent classifies himself or herself as a full- or part-time worker). The result is that workers identified as part-time workers may work hours in excess of normal hours in the country while workers identified as full-time might work fewer hours than normal hours. Some experts considered that an objective measure of part-time was difficult to envisage.
- 158.** The effect of proxy response on the quality of responses provided in these surveys was also examined. It was to be expected that proxy respondents would tend to report overtime better than absence from work. Some experts were of the opinion that the resolution should state that proxy response should be avoided for measuring working time, or vice versa that self-response be recommended. At the same time, it was noted that even when no proxy respondents are used, it is difficult to report hours actually and usually worked, especially when levels of education are low. The experience in some countries is that measured hours actually worked are practically the same as hours usually worked. Indeed, the measurement of hours actually worked assumes people are keeping timesheets in their heads which is not a reality.

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- 159.** In this connection, the experts also mentioned the need to balance priorities and the aim of obtaining detailed information about working time with the capacity of respondents to provide such information, particularly proxy respondents, as well as with the main existing objectives of regular labour force surveys in countries. It could be said that there was a correlation between the amount of detail requested and the amount of response errors.

## **4.2. Time-use surveys**

- 160.** The characteristics and issues regarding time-use surveys for the measurement of working time were described. These surveys measure all activities carried out by the population, where “work” and the working time is one activity. It is a complex survey that is often carried out infrequently, except in a few countries. These surveys are useful to analyse the relationship between the various activities, paid and unpaid, and between the activities of the various members of the same household. Time-use surveys are particularly suitable for measuring unpaid services for own households’ consumption and those economic activities that tend to go unrecorded because they happen simultaneously or intermittently with non-economic activities, and serve to adjust the information on the latter from labour force surveys.
- 161.** The Meeting noted that in many countries time-use surveys have proven to be of great value for measuring hours actually worked of persons in self-employment, most notably farmers, who have more difficulty distinguishing between work and non-work periods. As time-use surveys do not require that the person decides whether the activities are work, but simply to indicate all activities performed, it is possible to identify activities which otherwise could be overlooked. On the other hand, some experts questioned the applicability of time-use surveys in some village settings where the basis for work is whether it is light or dark and not about the exact moment they start or stop work or for how long, nor whether it is a week day or a weekend. The Office explained that for these workers, an interviewer is generally engaged to observe their daily activities. In response to a query, it was clarified that these surveys are useful to obtain mainly information on hours actually worked, overtime and working-time arrangements.

## **4.3. Establishment surveys**

- 162.** The Office described the main characteristics and outputs of establishment surveys. They are the main source for data on hours paid for and all administrative concepts, such as contractual hours, paid overtime and paid absences. The coverage of establishments is usually limited to registered establishments, which in many countries is a reduced number of total establishments. Informal sector surveys are able to cover all these units which are excluded. Establishments provide information on the basis of payrolls or attendance records and therefore they are able to provide information for long reference periods, which are coherent in time. In general, they do not record information on hours actually worked or hours usually worked, nor on the characteristics of individual workers. In order to obtain hours actually worked information, it is necessary to obtain estimates of unpaid overtime and unpaid absences from other sources. In some cases, when national establishment surveys obtain information on value added, they do not collect information on hours paid for but only on employment. In these cases, it was being proposed to estimate the hours actually worked on the basis of full-time equivalent workers. This is an approach often used in national accounts.
- 163.** Experts noted that in some countries establishment surveys are able to cover small establishments, and within small establishments, they are able to cover the self-employed, unpaid family workers as well as casual workers. It was noted that some establishment surveys measure contractual hours and hours paid for and to obtain the hours actually

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worked, add the unpaid overtime hours and subtract any unpaid absence. It was also indicated that establishment surveys tend to have a lower sample error than household-based surveys, which was an advantage that should be mentioned.

- 164.** Another important although more infrequent source in developing countries mentioned by the experts were the mixed surveys that target informal sector units. These surveys are useful to obtain information on working time for workers in the informal sector, many of whom work in private dwellings. They are very much like household-based surveys where they interview self-employed persons. In developing countries, standard establishment surveys might under-report the number of workers in the formal sector in order to reduce their taxes or social security contributions, hence informal sector workers were quite possibly much better covered than the employees in the formal sector. However, they cannot integrate many variables given the costs, and the quality of the information obtained was an issue, partly due to limitations in the training of interviewers, for which there is little time, so that it was never possible to be sure that they had understood the concepts.

#### **4.4. Administrative registers**

- 165.** Finally, the Office introduced the source “administrative registers” of three types which are useful for statistics on working time. These are registers maintained by regulatory bodies, which provide information on normal hours and leave entitlements. They can also be registers maintained by the social security system in a country that can provide information on normal and contractual hours, compensated absences, such as occupational injuries, sickness and maternity leave. A third type of administrative register is those maintained by the labour inspection system in a country that can provide statistics on time not worked due to occupational injuries. These registers are basically maintained for purposes other than producing statistics, and so the requirements regarding coverage, quality and timeliness are not necessarily satisfied. They serve for quality checks, imputation and validation of statistics obtained directly from surveys.

### **5. Tabulation and international reporting**

- 166.** The Office introduced the proposals concerning the way statistics on working time should be presented for national objectives and for international reporting. Regarding the first, countries should decide on the disaggregations that are useful and necessary, such as sex, industry, age, etc. depending on the purpose for which data will be used, e.g., for calculating labour productivity or for labour market analysis. When presenting data of hours worked per person, the hours in all jobs held should be assigned to the characteristics of the main job. When presenting data on hours per job the hours should be assigned to the characteristics of the main job only when there is no information on the characteristics of the other job(s). For analysis of work–life balance, it is important to understand the context in which the hours are worked, so a cross-classification by household composition is important. Working-time arrangements for which statistics are to be produced should be those that are most common in the country. For international reporting, the proposal recommended to produce statistics on total hours, on annual hours and on the distribution of hours actually worked by specific hour bands.
- 167.** In the discussion that followed, the five-hour bands proposed for reporting on the distribution of the hours actually worked were discussed at length. Some experts considered a four-hour band to be more intuitive than a five-hour band, given that the most common work schedule is eight hours a day and an interval of four hours could be seen as relating to half a day. This is particularly important in those countries that do not operate in terms of hours but in terms of half days. Other experts, however, pointed out that in

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different contexts, a half-day shift could be more or less than four or even five hours. As the standard international reporting was based on five-hour bands, there did not seem to be adequate reason for changing the recommendation of five-hour bands. It was also noted that as a minimum requirement, the bands should be able to show those workers who work less than 48 hours, those from 48 to 60 hours and those working more than 60 hours per week because even if this breakdown does not reflect national legislation, it will reflect international standards. On the same topic, the quality of the distribution of hours worked for small-hour bands when the bands are not representative needed to be considered.

- 168.** On international reporting, it was mentioned that it is usually not a priority in countries, but that countries should be in a position to report data according to international requirements. Perhaps international guidelines should specify that national statistics should be produced in such a way that they allow the reporting of data according to international requirements without providing further detail. Connected to this, it was also noted that guidelines should be general, and not provide details regarding formulas to be used to calculate particular measures, as this is a task of researchers for particular objectives.
- 169.** In response to a query from the Meeting regarding the requirements for data comparisons between countries, it was clarified that what was important was that the statistics stem from the same statistical source and with similar coverage, and not be based on identical collection instruments and methods. Also, an explanation was provided regarding the cross-classification of individual information on hours worked with household information on family composition. This cross-classification was useful to analyse gender equity and work–life balance, as it draws attention to the fact that the behaviour of men and women workers is defined by whether there are important family constraints, such as small children or other dependants in the household. In these situations, women will tend to work fewer hours and men will work more hours outside of the home in basically all countries for which data exist. Additional explanatory variables were proposed such as the cross-classification by head of household. In this connection, it was noted that some labour force surveys ask questions on participation in activities other than economic work, like household work and studies, etc. which provide useful information for gender analysis as they identify double work schedules, mostly among women, and how the work is distributed among all family members.
- 170.** Some experts considered that persons carrying out more than one economic job simultaneously, mentioned in the draft resolution, was too rare of an event and perhaps the proposal should state that it is not possible to work simultaneously on two activities or that this was more of a definitional issue than of measurement or tabulation. It was also mentioned that age as a classification variable in tabulations should be repeated under international reporting. In the recommendations concerning variables of working time the term “working hours concepts” should be used to ensure that the meaning referred to all hour concepts; otherwise specific hours concepts should be used. It was noted that the term “international reporting” was translated into French as “Présentation des rapports nationaux” meaning “Presentation of national reports”, which although by implication meant to the international community, might have a better translation.
- 171.** Regarding future work, a proposal was made for the Office to continue work to arrive at a set of best practices to measure working hours concepts and to develop a manual to present measurement methodologies.

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