

Statement by Assane Diop

Senegal

**Triply qualified – as
trade union leader,
government
minister and ILO
Executive Director
– to serve the world
of work**

Any organization, international or otherwise, must show itself capable of renewal even as it holds fast to the principles and values that nurture it. In the current context of a globalization in constant mutation, the principles and values of the ILO embody its strengths, its rationale and its added value within the international system. The reforms needed to tackle today's challenges and those to come must thus be anchored in our constituents' constant endeavours, in word and deed, over the decades. This is the basis for the Organization's now historic instruments, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as well as the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944). These notions of social justice and social cohesion are more topical than ever. It is in endowing ourselves with the means to embed those values in new realities and pursuing the objective of decent work for all that we will be better prepared for the tremendous task that lies before us.

Considerable efforts must be undertaken to consolidate the credibility of the Organization at an international level of excellence. In close consultation with the Governing Body, I propose to lead these efforts in four areas: (1) better governance of the secretariat and the Organization's own structures, (2) strengthening our capacity to produce and share knowledge so as to respond to the needs of the constituents, (3) making our technical cooperation more effective and building constituents' capacity to make it work in a sustainable manner, and (4) reforming the system of standards to enhance both its relevance at national level and its universality as a benchmark instrument.

1. Better governance

Programme and Budget

The constituents have always been driven by a justified concern for relevant and coherent policies and programmes, effective and coordinated action, transparent procedures, and evaluation of the impact of ILO activities on the conduct of Office business. Efforts have been achieved; we must intensify and bolster them. I propose to continue internal capacity building in the areas of financial control and programme monitoring and evaluation. There is a need to make better use of auditing and independent evaluation, and make management both more effective and more accountable.

The ILO's organs of governance

Discussions must also continue on ways to improve the functioning of the Conference, the Governing Body and regional meetings, to achieve greater efficiency, better cost control, and stronger tripartite mechanisms for consultation and for the development of policies and programmes at every level of ILO intervention.

The Office

Improved governance must also extend to the internal management of the Office, for more effective decision-making.

Strategic decisions affecting the future of the Organization and relations with its members are central functions of the Director-General. He must be able to devote most of his attention to them. To this end the many tasks of internal administration must be delegated in an appropriate and clear manner. I will propose, in consultation with the Governing Body, a structural reform based on specific delegation of authority to named members of the management team, who will need to account for the transparency and effectiveness of every decision. The Bureaux for Employers' and Workers' Activities must also occupy a clearly defined place in the managerial structure.

2. Strengthening our ability to produce and share knowledge

It is by strengthening its specific capabilities that the ILO will raise its credibility and influence and so be able to transmit its values. The political commitment of our Organization should focus on its areas of expertise. We must avoid a proliferation of activities, which can dilute both financial and human resources. In this light, boosting the ILO's technical capacity to produce analytical tools and good-quality statistics becomes imperative. It is key here that our capacity to intervene reaches a critical mass without resorting to large-scale recruitment, requiring resources that the ILO does not have. There are other ways to meet the challenge of staying effective and relevant within the limits of available resources.

I propose to refocus the resources of the Organization on ILO fundamentals: employment, especially youth employment, social protection, social dialogue and the international labour standards. These fundamental issues must be treated from various perspectives such as gender, job insecurity, the informal and rural economy, youth employment and migration.

Structural approaches will also contribute to capacity building in the Office. The first of these will be to pursue a consistent policy of collaboration and cooperation between the technical departments. Without this interdepartmental synergy we cannot reach critical mass. This kind of cooperation is fundamental, moreover, to the promotion of decent work, which in essence hinges on a multidisciplinary approach. The structure of the Office should be revisited within this perspective, taking due account of the role of the International Institute for Labour Studies. Thinking in this area could converge around the idea of a matrix structure based on departments working together in whatever combinations are most appropriate to achieve the specific objectives set by the Programme

and Budget – making the implementation of decent work more effective.

A second structural approach to ILO capacity building will consist of putting in place a policy that improves the geographical synergies between technical teams at headquarters and in the field, in line with the matrix concept. This will allow us to truly integrate into the analyses carried out at supranational level the rich range of initiatives implemented by many developing countries around social protection, enterprise creation and employment promotion. Research activities will therefore be carried out in a setting where programming involves all our specialists, both at headquarters and in the field, in configurations that correspond to the objectives set. In this way, structures and programming can be mutually supportive components of a coherent whole.

Strengthening the ILO's capacity will also let it play a crucial role within the UN system at the global, regional and national levels. The ongoing evaluation of the UN Millennium Development Goals and the concomitant discussions about improving the effectiveness of the system will then be the opportunity for an ILO that has regrouped and is in good working order to assert itself in the role which it alone is qualified to play. It is within this framework that our cooperation with the G8 and the G20 should be strengthened.

**3. Making our
technical
cooperation
more effective,
and so more
sustainable**

Technical cooperation programmes remain the ILO's main tool for translating our goals and ambitions into concrete outcomes. To better meet the expectations and demands of our constituents I will strive in particular to mobilize resources for technical cooperation, diversify sources of funding, and make the management and monitoring of our field projects more professional. This diversification will place a major emphasis on South-South and North-South-South cooperation.

The strength of the ILO's technical cooperation lies in its aptitude for putting programmes in place to build up national management capacity. The International Training Centre in Turin has acquired recognized expertise that must be more closely integrated into the programming of ILO technical cooperation activities; boosting synergies in this way will allow us to build our capacity without supplementary expenditures. At the same time the Centre's running costs could be contained by devolving activities to the regions, both physically and virtually. In this context, the ILO must roll out a strategy for strengthening national training structures. Here I will propose a reform of technical cooperation policy that better integrates our resources to enhance their impact on the ground.

4. Pursuing reform of the standards system for enhanced impact

The international labour standards constitute the essence of the ILO. They were the basis for the Organization's creation, and represent its future in an ever more global world. The adoption in 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and, four years ago, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization gave fresh impetus to ILO standards policy. We must pursue and intensify that quest for relevance and impact by working on concrete proposals to be implemented in the context of both these Declarations while taking into account the diversity of national circumstances.

In consultation with the tripartite constituents I therefore propose to maintain and strengthen the mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring standards, with a view to improving their legal and practical application. The ILO's relationship with national labour administrations must be accentuated, and made more effective through the creation of more robust governance structures. Of course the ILO must remain vigilant with regard to respecting fundamental principles and rights at work and promoting them. These principles and rights are the essential conditions for realizing the objectives of the Organization, most notably with regard to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The violation of fundamental principles and rights at work must not be invoked or exploited to gain any comparative advantage; nor indeed can the international labour standards be misused for protectionist purposes.

Going forward, the role of the international labour standards must take full account of the major changes that have occurred in recent years, in particular the consolidation of globalization together with the economic and financial crises. The standards are one of the fundamental tools available to the ILO to assist member States, especially during the unstable times with which we have become so familiar, and are still, with tripartism and social dialogue, the area where the Organization enjoys a unique comparative advantage. To remain effective, the standards must go on being relevant. They must therefore address current needs and conditions. So it is essential, beyond purely promotional action, to strengthen the effectiveness of the procedures and activities linked to their implementation. The international labour standards must continue to be the guarantee of protection for all, the paradigm being the process that led to the adoption in 2006 of the Maritime Labour Convention.

The role of the monitoring bodies should also be strengthened to enable them to be more effective, taking into account the rapidly changing world of work.

5. Conclusions As I see it, tomorrow's ILO will remain anchored in our values and our principles. Still faithful to its mandate, it will nonetheless reform its structures and its mode of operation, gaining in effectiveness by keeping its management firmly focused on achieving tangible results in the service of economic and social progress. The International Labour Organization of tomorrow will pursue the same goals as it does today: decent work, social justice and a fair globalization. But it will be better placed to achieve them, because it will be able to rely on a revitalized International Labour Office. The Organization of tomorrow will be stronger and better respected; in the countries of the North as in those of the South, it is and must remain the benchmark – social, moral, ethical and in terms of standards – for an inclusive and sustainable development process.

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Assane Diop