



**European Union**

**Written Statement**

**ILO Governing Body, 341<sup>st</sup> session**

**15 March – 27 March 2021**

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**Review of annual reports under the follow-up  
to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and rights at Work**

**GB.341/INS/5**

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**Geneva, 9 April 2021**

**EU Written Statement**  
**Review of annual reports under the follow-up**  
**to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and rights at Work**

**GB.341/INS/5**

Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro\*, and Albania\*, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Japan align themselves with this statement.

1. We would like to express our gratitude to the Office for the ‘Review of annual reports under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work’. We welcome the opportunity to provide our views on this vital subject, contributing to achieving the goal of universal ratification and implementation of all fundamental Conventions.
2. The EU and its Member States are deeply concerned by the slow progress of ratifications of ILO’s fundamental Conventions in the past year. We are still 114 ratifications, involving 41 Member States, short of the intended goal. We encourage the ILO to strengthen its efforts towards universal ratification and implementation of the fundamental conventions, including in view of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. We know that universal ratification is possible. Europe and Central Asia region became, in 2017, the first region to reach universal ratification. We thus support and look forward to increased ratification efforts in other regions as well, in line with the commitment taken in the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. We also look forward to increased efforts in promoting, respecting and realising fundamental principles and rights at work in States that have not yet ratified some fundamental conventions
4. During this International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, we welcome the universal ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No 182, which is a significant step forward, proving that the ILO has a crucial role to play in our global efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, it is crucial that we work towards a full implementation of Convention 182 and wider ratification of the Minimum Age Convention N°138.

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*\*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

5. Just like child labour, forced labour remains an outstanding and grave concern, exacerbated further by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular among vulnerable groups and minorities. The prevalence of forced labour constitutes grave violations of human rights. Eradicating this scourge requires renewed mobilization and must be a priority for the ILO and its member States, who have all committed to eliminate forced and compulsory labour under the 1998 Declaration. Supported by its normative, supervisory and development roles, the ILO must intensify its efforts to contribute to the eradication of forced labour by 2030, a major milestone towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, including through the promotion of universal ratification and full and effective implementation of fundamental Conventions 29 and 105, and Protocol 29. The European Union gives a particular priority to the implementation of the commitments taken to implement these conventions in the framework of its multilateral relations. We welcome that in March 2021 we reached the “50 for Freedom” campaign target, with ratifications by Sudan and Luxembourg. Yet, we would like to see faster progress. We welcome this opportunity to set the goal even higher and call on all countries to ratify and implement the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention and join forces in the pursuit of a world free from forced labour.
6. We welcome partnerships of the ILO in support of fundamental principles and rights at work, such as actions undertaken by Alliance 8.7, to maximise results in the elimination of child labour and forced labour.
7. At the same time, we are concerned that Conventions 87 and 98 continue to be the least ratified fundamental Conventions, including the implied lack of meaningful and effective social dialogue. The ILO, this unique tripartite international organisation, was conceived based on the understanding that lasting peace is not possible without social justice. The protection of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are key building blocks in ensuring that strong social partners, through social dialogue, will lead to decent work and social fairness and justice. We therefore welcome the promotional activities and technical assistance provided to governments and social partners and encourage further activities to this end. This is even more crucial than before if we are committed to achieving a sustained, fair and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis; social dialogue is key in this recovery.
8. We deeply regret the 31 percent decrease in response rate reported by the Office. The provision of annual reports by the Member States is an essential tool for the ILO's work in assessing compliance with the obligation for ILO members to promote, respect and realise fundamental principles and rights at work. We are pleased to note that a new user-friendly questionnaire will soon be available to governments to facilitate reporting. We appreciate the rich information contained in the Country baselines established on the basis of the annual reports and would appreciate the Office to increase their visibility. In view of the valuable contribution of the social partners in the implementation of the Declaration, we would welcome the Office's assessment of the degree of reporting by social partner organisations.
9. With these considerations in mind, we support the decision point.

Thank you, Chairperson.