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FOR INFORMATION

Operational aspects of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

Summary: This document provides a summary of the meeting of the IPEC International Steering Committee held on 12 June 2012. The main item on the agenda was to consider the report *IPEC action against child labour 2010–11: Progress and future priorities*.

Author unit: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

Related documents: None.

Introduction

1. Mr Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General-elect and Executive Director of the Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Sector welcomed participants to the meeting of the IPEC International Steering Committee. He noted that the meeting had a different format than that of previous meetings that had taken place at the time of the March 2011 Governing Body session and that an oral report of those meetings had been presented to the Committee on Technical Cooperation. The 2012 meeting of the Steering Committee was taking place on the tenth anniversary of the annual World Day against Child Labour. In addition to welcoming its members, Mr Ryder welcomed observers from delegations attending the session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) and from a number of partners that had worked with IPEC.
2. Mr Ryder said that the main item for discussion was the report *IPEC action against child labour 2010–11: Progress and future priorities* (Implementation Report), which provided a comprehensive summary of IPEC's work during the biennium. The period included the launch of the ILO's Global Report containing new global estimates and a trend analysis on child labour; The Hague Global Child Labour Conference (hosted by the Government of the Netherlands); the adoption of the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016 and the ILC discussion and Governing Body endorsement of the 2010 Global Action Plan. The biennium also saw IPEC continuing to deliver a major programme of technical cooperation in member States, albeit against a background of significant resource constraints.
3. The 2010 Global Report had drawn attention to a slowing down of progress in reducing child labour and concerns over the impact of the global financial and jobs crisis on child labour. It had also highlighted the important link between the elimination of child labour and access to quality education, the importance of decent work for adults, the need for effective social protection and the critical role of vigorous law enforcement in tackling child labour. The importance of social dialogue in supporting and promoting policies to address the root causes of child labour had also been stressed. These themes were subsequently taken up in the 2010 Global Action Plan adopted by the Governing Body.
4. Mr Ryder was pleased to note that all relevant targets in the ILO programme and budget had been achieved and commended the new ratifications of Conventions Nos 138 and 182. At a time of pressure on development spending and of many competing demands on the ILO, it remained very important to keep a global focus on child labour. Mr Ryder welcomed the Government representative of Brazil, who would provide a briefing on the preparations for a follow-up international conference that his Government had agreed to host in late 2013.
5. Mr Ryder said that during the 2012 session of the ILC, a Conference Committee had adopted conclusions and a framework for action for the promotion and realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work for the period 2012–16. It reaffirmed their significance as human rights and as enabling conditions for achieving other ILO strategic objectives. It also underscored the inseparable, interrelated and mutually reinforcing character of each category of fundamental principles and rights including those concerning child labour, and the consequent need for an integrated approach to their realization. In conclusion, Mr Ryder said that the annual World Day against Child Labour had played a valuable role in raising global awareness of the child labour problem and thanked constituents, partners and staff for the great support they continued to provide for the World Day.

IPEC action against child labour 2010–11: Progress and future priorities

6. Ms Constance Thomas, IPEC Director, thanked Mr Ryder for his opening remarks and confirmed the adoption of the summary of the IPEC International Steering Committee Meeting held in March 2011. In introducing the 2010–11 Implementation Report, Ms Thomas said that IPEC's work was implemented under ILO programme and budget, Outcome 16 – Child labour is eliminated with priority given to the worst forms. The Implementation Report provided extensive detail on the work and progress of the Programme and provided comprehensive and transparent information on activities involving governments, employers, workers and civil society organizations.
7. The ILO's programme and budget contained two indicators for measuring progress on Outcome 16. Indicator 16.1 recorded the number of member States in which constituents, with ILO support, took significant policy and programme actions to eliminate child labour in line with ILO Conventions and Recommendations. The target for this indicator was 45, with 15 in Africa. In fact, 53 actions had been recorded with 17 in Africa. Indicator 16.2 related to the number of member States in which constituents, with ILO support, took action to adopt or modify their legislation or reinforce their knowledge-base on child labour. The target was 50 member States. In fact, 70 member States had been recorded as making progress on this indicator during the biennium. Ms Thomas also reported that there had been six ratifications of Convention No. 138 and three of Convention No. 182 during the biennium.
8. In relation to IPEC's technical assistance and advisory services, assistance had been provided in 102 member States. During the biennium 65 projects had closed and 32 opened. This trend in part reflected a more difficult funding environment. Some 95.8 per cent of IPEC's resources came from extra-budgetary sources but the number of donors to the Programme had fallen by one third during the biennium. In 2012 there had also been an end to earmarked funding from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). Although IPEC had secured two projects through a process of competitive bidding, the end of the earmarked funding had certainly created a more difficult funding situation. Total donor approvals in 2010–11 were US\$84 million compared to almost US\$120 million in the previous biennium. Although the situation was challenging, IPEC was also looking at new funding opportunities including through public–private partnerships and by obtaining greater access to Regular Budget Supplementary Account funding. It was also working with each region to develop strategies focused on identified priorities, streamlined and integrated action and sustainability of action, and replication of projects.
9. IPEC's work on the area of knowledge and data had continued to develop and there had been an increased focus on impact assessment. In relation to future strategy, Ms Thomas said that IPEC would deepen and upstream policy advisory assistance and integration with other areas of ILO work in order to address root causes of child labour. Ensuring the inclusion of child labour as a concern within ILO Decent Work Country Programmes and national tripartite action was an important element of this. IPEC continued to receive many demands for technical support, including from middle-income countries as well as low-income countries and the issue of skills for younger adolescents and school-to-work transition was increasingly high on the list of priorities of member States.
10. In concluding the presentation of the Implementation Report, Ms Thomas thanked donors and constituents for their continuous support and action, which enabled IPEC to continue to implement an effective programme even at a time of resource constraints.

11. The Worker spokesperson thanked IPEC for the Implementation Report. She expressed concern that the current economic crisis could erode earlier progress made in tackling child labour. IPEC and its donors must move from project support that dealt with the symptoms of child labour to policy support that tackled the root causes of the problem. The Workers' group welcomed IPEC's efforts to work with an integrated area-based approach and to focus on the informal economy. The Workers' group had noticed that much project support went to direct services either because the public sector lacked capacity or because provision of services had been switched to the voluntary sector or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The social partners could be involved in the delivery of specific direct services and should be considered by IPEC as an essential part of the grass-roots structure. The Workers' group called not only for the universal ratification of Convention No. 182, but also of Convention No. 138. Furthermore it was essential that ratification was followed by effective implementation. The spokesperson called for stronger coordination of work concerning public-private partnerships with the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and in this context recalled the importance of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policies and the need to prioritize activities relating to fundamental Conventions. Support for the Focus on Africa strategy and international partnerships was expressed. The Workers' group welcomed IPEC's attempts to work more with ACTRAV and ACT/EMP under the Irish Aid Project. They further underlined the importance of country level involvement of the social partners as well as obtaining funding for a new global advocacy campaign project. Finally, they thanked the Government of Brazil for organizing the forthcoming Global Child Labour Conference.
12. The Employer spokesperson congratulated IPEC on a comprehensive Implementation Report and reaffirmed the support of the Employers' group for IPEC activities. The vicious cycle of poverty and child labour continued to result in scores of under-skilled, unqualified workers and emphasized the importance of initiatives that aimed to keep children in school. In regard to the role of social partners, the group noted that they were pleased to see achievements in capacity building of workers' and employers' organizations as part of the 2010 Global Action Plan. They acknowledged the important contributions that had been made by donors such as Norway and Ireland, involving social partners in combating child labour. The group was pleased to see the examples of activities by employers' organizations given in the Implementation Report and also said that the execution of IPEC/MULTI webinars had been a positive development. They underlined the importance of increasing information exchange in order to disseminate good practices on eliminating child labour. The Employers' group welcomed IPEC's holistic approach, combining awareness-raising activities, policy support, and impact assessment. The group expressed some apprehension over the growing direct relationship between IPEC and companies on public-private partnership projects as most of these companies were members of employers' organizations and therefore the contact should be through these organizations which were the ILO's constituents. With regard to funding, the Employers' group was pleased to receive additional information in the Implementation Report on the breakdown of funds allocated by IPEC in 2010-11. The Employers did not seek to micromanage IPEC finances but there remained a concern that the budget distribution should properly reflect the priorities of the Organization. In looking at the budget for implementing agencies in Africa, it appeared that there was a significant imbalance between funding provided for NGOs compared to funding for action by government agencies. The Employers' group emphasized the need for IPEC to respect the tripartite provisions of the ILO and to involve the social partners in its work. The Employers' group closed by thanking the Government of Brazil for planning a global child labour conference in 2013.
13. Ms Denise Colin, National Secretary for Social Assistance in Brazil's Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger was invited to present the proposal for the third Global Child Labour Conference to be held in Brazil in 2013. Ms Colin recalled that the

Global Child Labour Conference held in The Hague in 2010 had adopted the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016. The participants of the Hague Conference had concluded that to ensure continuity of the fight to eliminate child labour, a follow-up conference should be held in Brazil in 2013 to enable an assessment of progress towards the 2016 goal. It was expected that there would be 3,000 participants representing governments, workers, employers and civil society. The ILO had been asked to support the mobilization of workers' and employers' representatives and to suggest civil society organizations that could participate in the event. The organizing structure would consist of an executive board, an executive secretariat, a national organizing committee and an advisory board. Dialogue would take place among countries to formulate the basic document for discussion at the Conference. The methodology to be used for consultations would include a virtual environment (with specific platforms in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English) and group discussions through chat rooms. These would begin in the second half of 2012 and run through to the first half of 2013. It would also involve international dialogue on arrangements and the identification of good practices. Financial support would be made available for the participation of least developing countries.

14. In the general discussion, contributions were made by Government representatives of ten countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lebanon, Panama, Senegal, Uganda and the United States), two Worker representatives (Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire) and one Employer representative (Pakistan).
15. Some of the main themes reflected in the discussion were the importance of ensuring that all children had access to education, the need to develop effective national policies and legislative approaches to tackle child labour, the importance of the ratification by all States of the child labour Conventions, and the need to position efforts to tackle child labour within the context of strategies to tackle poverty and boost employment for adult workers. Several participants expressed appreciation for the technical assistance provided by the ILO and a number also thanked the Government of Brazil for taking the initiative to convene a follow-up global conference.
16. The Government representative of Colombia reiterated her country's commitment to the elimination of child labour and provided a detailed summary of actions being taken to tackle child labour including through its National Development Plan 2010–14: Prosperity for All, which aimed to coordinate actions in two key areas: children's access to education and the social protection system.
17. The Government representative of Bangladesh said that the Government had been implementing a project intended to eliminate the worst forms of child labour from the informal economy. The project aimed to withdraw 50,000 children from hazardous work through non-formal education and skills development.
18. The Government representative of Uganda reported that a National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, which included a special emphasis on education, would be launched on 26 June 2012. He noted that policy measures such as a universal public education law, the National Development Plan and the National Employment Policy had enhanced efforts to keep children in school and out of the workplace.
19. The Government representative of the United States said that in 2011, USDOL had awarded \$21 million to ILO–IPEC to support new and ongoing programmes. Although funding arrangements had undergone some change, he emphasized that the United States remained an enthusiastic supporter of IPEC.

- 20.** In conclusion, Ms Thomas thanked all participants and noted the concerns raised by the Worker and Employer spokespersons regarding public–private partnerships. She also acknowledged a statement made by the representative of an IPEC partner from Pisa, Italy, which had donated a work of art to the ILO. Ms Thomas said that the 2012–13 biennium would see a number of important developments and events, including the launch of a world report on social protection and child labour, new global estimates on child labour, and the international conference to be hosted by the Government of Brazil. IPEC looked forward to continuing its cooperation with constituents in this work during the period ahead.

Geneva, 1 October 2012