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Legal Issues and International Labour Standards Section

LILS

FOR INFORMATION

Participation of women in delegations to the International Labour Conference: Update

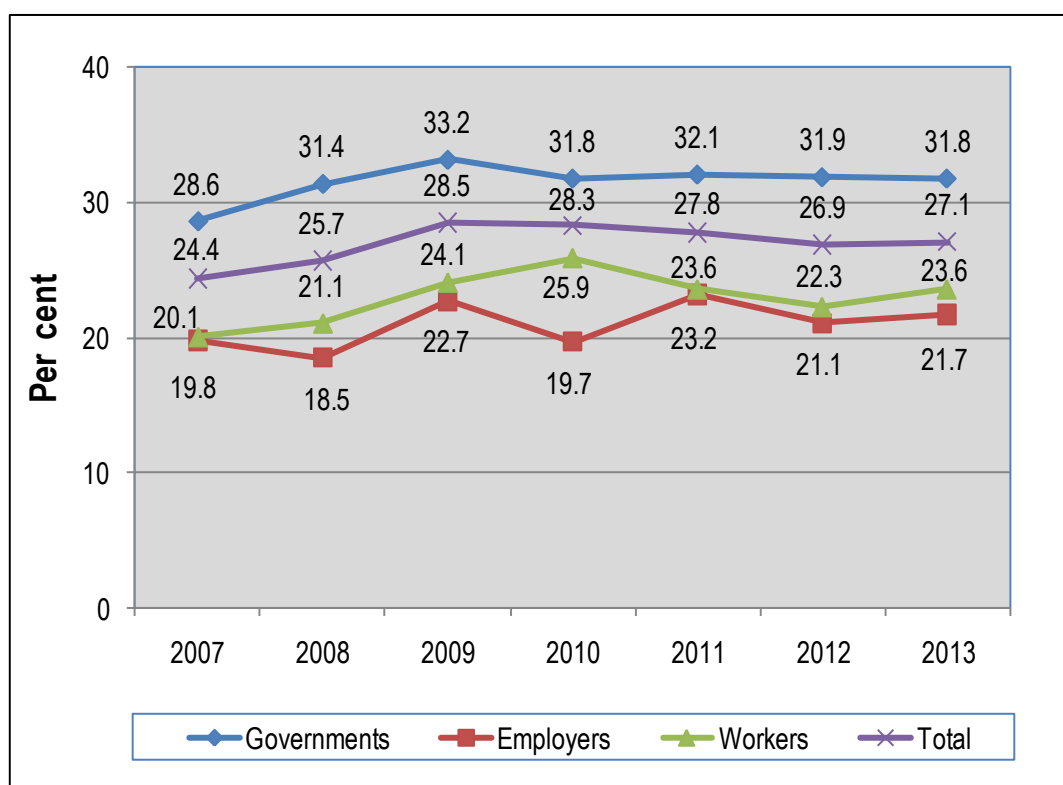
Summary: This paper updates the Governing Body on the follow-up given by the Office to decisions adopted concerning the achievement of a more equitable proportion of women in delegations to the International Labour Conference.

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Related documents: ILO: Second report of the Credentials Committee, in *Provisional Record* No. 4C, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, Geneva, June 2013.

1. This paper provides an update on the follow-up given by the Office to decisions adopted since November 2011 concerning the proportion of women and men in delegations to sessions of the International Labour Conference (ILC). The decisions mandating Office action reflect concern over the fact that women's participation in the ILC has still not reached the target set by the United Nations in 1990 for a minimum critical mass of 30 per cent in decision- and policy-making bodies – with the aim of achieving parity, which is 45 to 55 per cent. At the current rate of progress, which has been tracked by the Office since 2001 in *Gender Balance in the International Labour Conference – Statistics on the representation of women and men in the ILC* (see the figure and the table below), parity will not be achieved until sometime between 2064 and 3014.

Female ILC participants by group, 2007–13 (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers)



Female ILC participants by region, 2007–13 (in per cent)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Africa	19.9	20.8	22.9	23.4	22.6	20.3	23.9
Arab States	11.7	14.2	13.1	13.0	12.8	11.7	14.0
Asia and the Pacific	18.8	18.1	21.4	21.3	23.9	24.6	21.1
Europe	30.9	35.6	39.1	36.3	35.6	35.8	36.1
Americas	29.8	28.5	33.7	30.9	35.0	32.2	32.2
Total	24.1	25.4	28.4	27.6	27.9	26.8	27.2

2. This update provides additional information on follow-up actions that were already reported to the Governing Body at its 317th and 319th Sessions.¹ The measures were identified following consultations within the Office and collated in an internal ILC gender

¹ GB.317/INS/12/5 and GB.319/INS/14/4.

parity strategy in June 2012. This strategy complements ongoing actions, such as including special sections on the importance of gender parity in delegations in communications sent to Members during the pre-ILC period, as well as in the ILC guide itself. External consultations (for example, with constituents and other UN system entities) have also been held in order to understand the scope and functioning of related initiatives, aimed either directly or indirectly at increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies, in particular within workers' and employers' organizations.

3. One of the requests made by the Governing Body was for the Director-General to contact, after every session of the ILC, Members that had not reached the minimum target of 30 per cent female participation in their delegations. The letters, sent by the Director-General on 15 November 2013, requested those Members to provide reasons for not having reached the target. The Director-General also inquired about the strategies being implemented by those Members to achieve the target of 30 per cent for the ILC in June 2014, as well as to achieve gender parity. The letter encouraged each Member, when preparing a reply, to consult with employers' and workers' organizations, as well as with other government departments, as necessary.
4. The strategies described in Members' replies included: contacting the relevant national social partners regarding the Director-General's letter and encouraging them to increase women's participation when selecting the members of their delegation; requesting the social partners to identify the reasons behind the unequal representation of women in their nominations for national ILC delegations; planning, in consultation with the government departments that will be concerned with the questions discussed at the next ILC, in order to put forward more women; and relying on ongoing processes to achieve gender parity and to mainstream the gender perspective into national programmes and initiatives, such as the goal of increasing the number of women in decision-making posts, such as parliamentarians, judges and lawyers. One Member noted that its national diversity policy was the basis upon which it was employing more women, who were being given opportunities to participate in various international conferences and to partake in training opportunities, including at the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin (Turin Centre).
5. The Governing Body also requested the Office to continue collecting relevant information, and to encourage and assist tripartite constituents in implementing concrete measures to achieve gender parity in delegations to ILO meetings. In response, the Office will continue to compile and publish (in three languages) *Gender Balance in the International Labour Conference – Statistics on the representation of women and men in the ILC*. The Office will also continue to report on the implementation of related instructions contained in the 2009 ILC resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work,² and in resolutions and targets of the United Nations,³ and to share progress with UN system entities that are also interested in achieving gender parity within their structures, for example through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), chaired by UN-Women.
6. Office services to encourage and assist Members included a half-day clinic held in May 2013, to which all Members with Geneva-based representation were invited. The

² Paragraph 55(c) called on the ILO to "... improve the representation of women at all levels, in all ILO meetings – including sessions of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference".

³ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 58/142 of 10 February 2004 urges member States to "... promote gender balance for their delegations to United Nations and other international meetings and conferences".

focus of this clinic, which was also highlighted in pre-ILC briefings for Members at headquarters, was good practices and lessons learned on more equitable representation of women and men in delegations to the ILC. At the event, which was attended by some 25 female and male participants, representatives of some of the Governments that had achieved gender parity in their most recent ILC delegations – Botswana, Bulgaria, Norway, Trinidad and Tobago – shared their successful strategies, lessons learned and challenges overcome.

7. In addition, the Office shared with clinic participants the results of the ILO survey of 22 Members that had achieved gender parity in their ILC delegations in 2011. Four areas emerged in which those Members had indicated useful concrete measures or actions. In the first area on policy and legislation, examples included having national gender equality policies, action plans, high-level gender equality ministries and specific legislation. The second area on equity measures included quotas for women's parliamentary or executive branch representation, as well as for political parties, women's parliamentary caucuses and gender equality committees, and targeted support for women coupled with sensitivity training for men. The third area on strategic partners included outreach actions, such as lobbying by gender equality committees within political parties, and Members' engagement with civil society. The fourth area on enabling measures included strengthened institutional structures, equity for women as a goal in employment strategies, public opinion campaigns, and training for employers' and workers' organizations.
8. The very fact that the ILC Credentials Committee, through the ILC, requested ⁴ the Governing Body to consider concrete measures to improve women's participation in ILC delegations, sends a strong message about the serious attention paid by ILO Members and social partners to gender equality. As part of that mandated follow-up, the Office's future reports to the Governing Body could track good practices on gender balance among participants in international meetings achieved through national equality-related legislation; future reports could also consider tracking what comprises the concrete measures that have led to an increase in women's participation, for example, by examining its possible correlation with progress made towards the more equitable representation of women in government ministries.

Geneva, 3 February 2014

⁴ ILC: Reports on credentials, *Provisional Record* 4B, 101st Session of the ILC, Geneva, May–June 2012; and as recalled in the Composition of the International Labour Conference: Proportion of women and men on delegations, *Provisional Record* 4C, 102nd Session of the ILC, Geneva, June 2013.