



# Governing Body

340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

Policy Development Section

POL

Development Cooperation Segment

**Date:** 2 November 2020

**Original:** English

Seventh item on the agenda

## Update on preparations for the V Global Conference on Child Labour

### Purpose of the document

This document provides an update on the preparations for the V Global Conference on Child Labour in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the confirmation of the Republic of South Africa as the host country for the Conference, including with regard to mobilizing the required resources. The Governing Body is invited to take note and provide guidance on the proposed course of action (see the draft decision in paragraph 14).

**Relevant strategic objective:** Fundamental principles and rights at work.

**Main relevant outcome:** Outcome 7: Adequate and effective protection at work for all.

**Policy implications:** Full alignment with UN General Assembly resolution 73/327 and SDG target 8.7.

**Legal implications:** None.

**Financial implications:** Additional extrabudgetary resources will need to be mobilized to pursue the proposed course of action.

**Follow-up action required:** See the draft decision.

**Author unit:** Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE).

**Related documents:** GB.332/POL/3 and GB.338/POL/4.



## ► Introduction

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1. The V Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour is a global deliverable of the Programme and Budget for 2020–21 (output 7.1). In accordance with the four-year cycle of global conferences on this topic, it should ideally take place in 2021, four years ahead of the 2025 deadline set by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7 to end child labour in all its forms.<sup>1</sup>
2. The IV Global Conference in 2017 ended with a renewed commitment from the international community to implement integrated policies and programmes towards the elimination of child labour. The outcome document, the *Buenos Aires Declaration on Child Labour, Forced Labour and Youth Employment*, underlines the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a unique opportunity to accelerate the eradication of inequality and poverty, and welcomes the establishment of Alliance 8.7. In total, 96 pledges were registered during the IV Global Conference to translate commitments into concrete action.
3. At its 332nd Session (March 2018), the Governing Body endorsed the Buenos Aires Declaration and requested the Office to support its implementation. The Governing Body reconfirmed its commitment to the elimination of child labour and forced labour and requested the Office to continue providing technical assistance to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, it asked the Office to make an overview of the pledges made in Buenos Aires and encouraged the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to declare the year 2021 the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

## ► Developments since March 2020

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4. A report was prepared for the Governing Body in March 2020.<sup>2</sup> Since then, with the rapid and worldwide expansion of the Covid-19 pandemic, the ILO has systematically reviewed all country-level activities under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) flagship programme, ensuring they take into account the potential impact on child labour of the health crisis and its socio-economic consequences, including a call for sustained and additional financing.<sup>3</sup> In July 2020, the brochure on IPEC+ implementation was updated accordingly.<sup>4</sup>
5. Also in July 2020, on the margins of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Alliance 8.7 presented a new digital report with a review of the progress made towards eliminating child labour and forced labour in pathfinder countries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Target 8.7 is: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

<sup>2</sup> GB.338/POL/4.

<sup>3</sup> ILO, *COVID-19 Impact on Child Labour and Forced Labour: The Response of the IPEC+ Flagship Programme*, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> ILO, *IPEC+ Global Flagship Programme Implementation: Towards a World Free from child Labour and Forced Labour*, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Alliance 8.7, *Pathfinder Countries: Leading the Way to Achieving Target 8.7*, 2018.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic is requiring Member States to redouble their efforts to keep up with the achievement of SDG target 8.7 by 2025. Under the slogan “COVID-19: Protect children from child labour, now more than ever!”, World Day Against Child Labour 2020 focused on the impact of the crisis on people’s lives, livelihoods and child labour. In a joint issue brief “COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act”, the ILO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned of the risk of reversing years of progress in the elimination of child labour and looked at some of the main ways in which the pandemic is likely to affect progress towards the eradication of child labour. Both organizations have proposed a number of measures to counter the threat of increased child labour, prioritizing more comprehensive social protection, easier access to credit for poor households, the promotion of decent work for adults, measures to get children back into school, including the elimination of school fees, and more resources for labour inspections and law enforcement.<sup>6</sup>
7. On 4 August 2020, with its ratification by the Kingdom of Tonga, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), achieved universal ratification. The Convention is the most rapidly ratified Convention in the history of the Organization, since its adoption 21 years ago by the International Labour Conference. The universal ratification of Convention No. 182 is an historic first that means that all children now have legal protection against the worst forms of child labour. It reflects a global commitment that the worst forms of child labour, such as slavery, sexual exploitation and the use of children in armed conflict or other illicit or hazardous work that compromises children’s health, morals or psychological wellbeing must end. With COVID-19 threatening to reverse years of progress, the effective implementation of the Convention is needed more than ever.
8. As a follow-up to UN General Assembly resolution 73/327 on the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, 2021, the Office is finalizing a “road map” to engage with constituents and external partners on joint events, activities and the generation of advocacy materials. A communication plan is currently under development.

## ▶ Update on preparations for the V Global Conference

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9. On 19 June 2020, the Government of the Republic of South Africa submitted a letter to the ILO Director-General, expressing interest in organizing, with ILO support, the V Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour. In light of the current ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Government also proposed organizing the Conference in 2022.
10. On 26 June 2020, the Director-General replied to the Government of South Africa to acknowledge the interest. He also pointed to the June 2020 decision of the Governing Body concerning the preparations for the V Global Conference on Child Labour (GB.338/POL/4) and offered the full support of the Office to convene tripartite consultations and to facilitate progress in the preparation of the Conference.
11. Ahead of the meeting of the Governing Body in March 2021, the Office is planning to convene a tripartite meeting with representatives of the permanent missions in Geneva and those appointed by the social partners, to discuss the way forward. Other development partners, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

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<sup>6</sup> COVID-19 may push millions more children into child labour – ILO and UNICEF, 2020.

Nations, UNICEF, the European Union and the Chair of Alliance 8.7, might also be invited to this first consultation meeting. Due to the circumstances of the Covid-19 crisis, this meeting will probably need to take place as a virtual or mixed virtual-presence meeting.

12. Regional consultations with the tripartite constituents and other potential partners will take place during the first semester of 2021, probably also as mixed virtual-presence meetings, with face-to-face meetings being subject to the availability of funding.
13. World Day Against Child Labour 2021 will encourage the engagement of all interested stakeholders with the V Global Conference. Alliance 8.7 will present an updated digital pathfinder report and present good practice during a side event to the High-level Political Forum of ECOSOC in July 2021.

## ▶ Draft decision

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14. **The Governing Body, by correspondence, requested the Office:**
  - (a) **to undertake consultations with the Government of South Africa, as the host country, on preparations to hold the V Global Conference on Child Labour in 2022, including the perspectives of the different regions;**
  - (b) **to organize a tripartite consultation in Geneva prior to the 341st Session (March 2021) of the Governing Body to discuss the way forward; and**
  - (c) **to inform the Governing Body on the progress of those consultations at its 341st Session (March 2021).**