

**FOR DEBATE AND GUIDANCE**

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Follow-up to the International Labour Conference discussion on changing patterns in the world of work

1. During the plenary discussion at the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2006, a number of speakers remarked that the Director-General's Report, *Changing patterns in the world of work*,¹ provided a useful overview of global trends that would assist the ILO and constituents in meeting the policy challenges inherent in the Organization's Strategic Policy Framework of making decent work a global goal. It might therefore be appropriate for the Working Party to review the Conference discussion and consider how to follow it up, including in the planning of its own agendas for future meetings. This paper therefore briefly recalls some of the issues raised by speakers at the Conference² and in the Report itself and presents suggestions for topics that the Working Party may wish to examine at future meetings. As the paper before the Working Party on the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration highlights, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda forms part of a wider international development framework further emphasizing the importance of the ILO's contribution to more effective and coherent policies.³
2. In the Director-General's reply to his discussion of the Report, four main themes were identified in the rich and varied remarks of speakers. These were:
 - Decent work and the international development agenda.
 - Work and society: Combating poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.
 - Globalization and the transformation of employment structures.
 - Modernizing the governance of the world of work.

¹ ILO: *Changing patterns in the world of work*, Report I, International Labour Conference, 95th Session, 2006; copies available on request or at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc95/pdf/rep-i-c.pdf>.

² *Provisional Record* No. 25, International Labour Conference, 95th Session, 2006; copies available on request or at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc95/pdf/pr-25.pdf>.

³ GB.297/WP/SDG/1.

3. Both headquarters and regional offices of the ILO are engaged in further work in these areas and a number of policy issues are on the agendas of different committees of the Governing Body. The four themes are also interconnected, as highlighted in the closing section of the *Changing patterns in the world of work* Report, entitled “Looking ahead”.⁴ The Working Party may wish to give particular attention to the implications of the trends identified in this document in considering its own agenda.
4. A major overarching issue identified in the Report is the worrying trend during a period of increasing economic interdependence for relatively slow growth of decent work opportunities despite relatively brisk output growth. As the Report says:

The world of work is undergoing a major transformation which has the potential for creating opportunities for all working women and men to have a decent job. Technological progress, if applied in ways that promote inclusion rather than exclusion, could increase productivity and make material poverty history within a generation. The main means for ensuring an inclusive character to the growth of the global economy is the way in which work and labour markets are organized and governed. Recent history is however disturbing ... Current patterns of growth are not generating enough decent jobs to meet the growth in the global labour force and the need to reduce current levels of unemployment and working poverty.⁵

5. Deepening our understanding of the possible causes of the slow pace of growth of decent work opportunities and of policies that could reverse these trends is part of the ILO’s research programme. The issues are multifaceted and sorting out the various local, national and global influences at work is a complex task. As the *Changing patterns in the world of work* Report discusses, viewed in a global perspective, the dominant trend is a shift of workers out of agriculture and rural areas into the informal urban service economy. Employment growth in the formal economy of many developing countries is not keeping pace with the number of women and men seeking better jobs that will lift them out of poverty or the threat of poverty. This has global repercussions. Coupled with radical technological change and the opening of economies to international markets, it underlies trends in migration and in trade and investment. The question of “jobless growth” or, more accurately, weak growth in decent work opportunities is a major topic of political debate and academic inquiry all around the world. Building on previous discussions in the Working Party, the Office would be in a position to present a series of related papers to future meetings on key aspects of the globalization process and its interaction with other factors in influencing the patterns of change in the world of work.
6. The nexus of growth, investment and jobs is also an ongoing topic of discussion at the policy coherence meetings with other agencies. A meeting on 3 November will examine the implications for the multilateral agencies of the ministerial declaration of the ECOSOC High-level Segment of July 2006, relating to the call for an explicit employment-impact analysis of the policies, programmes and actions of each agency’s work; and a South Asian policy coherence initiative meeting in February 2007 will discuss the role of the multilateral system in the promotion of job-rich growth, and the policies both within the multilateral system and at national levels to pursue this.⁶
7. The Working Party may wish to suggest topics on which papers presenting current research would be useful to its continuing discussions on the social dimension of

⁴ *Changing patterns in the world of work*, op. cit., paras. 220-251.

⁵ *idem*, paras. 237-8.

⁶ GB.297/6 and at the Conclusions of the G8 Meeting of Ministers of Labour and Employment in Moscow (10 October 2006); available on request or at <http://en.g8russia.ru/docs/27.html>.

globalization. Amongst the topics on which background papers could be presented at meetings in 2007 and 2008 are:

- Improving the rate of growth of decent work opportunities in an interdependent world economy: Policy pointers.
 - Globalization, informality, and institutions.
 - Relationships between growth, investment and employment in South Asia.
8. The Working Party is invited to review the discussion of the Director-General's Report *Changing patterns in the world of work* at the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference and the issues raised in the closing section of the Report, "Looking ahead", with a view to identifying agenda items for future meetings of the Working Party.

Geneva, 20 October 2006.

Submitted for debate and guidance.