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Institutional Section

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THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Matters arising out of the work of the 102nd Session (2013) of the International Labour Conference

Follow-up to the discussion of the Report of the Director-General

Purpose of the document

The document focuses on the next steps to be taken with respect to the centenary initiatives presented in the Director-General's Report to the International Labour Conference given the general indication from delegates that they should be pursued as a major means of ensuring that the ILO is equipped to deliver its social justice mandate in its second century.

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Policy implications: Yes.

Legal implications: Yes.

Financial implications: Work items not covered in the budgets of the present and next biennium would need to be costed and sources of funding identified.

Follow-up action required: Action to set the initiatives in motion in light of the guidance provided by the Governing Body.

Author unit: Office of the Director-General (CABINET).

Related documents: GB.319/PFA/2; GB.319/INS/5; GB.319/INS/3/2; GB.319/INS/4.

Introduction

1. The Director-General's Report to the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference¹ focused on the period leading to the ILO's second century and on the action required in a number of critical areas if it was to be up to the task of responding effectively to the changing realities in the world of work, and to have the capacity to deliver its social justice mandate. The Report was framed by the terms of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization with the aim of advancing its objectives.
2. The Report attempted to define key issues for renewal of the Organization in the context of rapidly evolving realities in the world of work. The major drivers of change identified were: the impact of demographic change; the transition to environmental sustainability; the onward march of technology; the changing contours of poverty and prosperity; growing inequality and the challenge to social justice; rebalancing, convergence and recovery; and the changing character of production and employment.
3. Delegates were also invited to consider specific issues that would be critical in determining whether the ILO would arrive at the threshold of its second century as a credible champion of social justice with a strong identity, clear strategic direction and messages and tools appropriate to the conjuncture. The issues raised were: tripartism and representative legitimacy; standards; the challenge of coherence; the ILO and enterprises; and the overall need for the Organization to reflect on what needed to be done if it was to remain faithful to its objectives of social justice in its second century.
4. Seven initiatives – the centenary initiatives – were proposed in areas considered to be fundamental in placing the ILO in such a position, namely:
 - the governance initiative;
 - the standards initiative;
 - the green initiative;
 - the enterprises initiative;
 - the end to poverty initiative;
 - the women at work initiative; and
 - the future of work initiative.

It is evident that these initiatives cover a range of subjects of a diverse institutional, policy and analytical nature requiring different time scales for implementation over the next six years.

5. Speakers in the Conference plenary debate on the Report generally welcomed its longer-term perspective in the context of the approaching ILO centenary, the identification of major issues of key significance, and the idea of establishing a series of initiatives to address them effectively. Representatives from all groups made reference to their own national experiences in relation to the drivers of change outlined in the Report and recognized the need for the ILO to construct adequate responses.

¹ ILO: *Towards the ILO centenary: Realities, renewal and tripartite commitment*, Report I(A), International Labour Conference, 102nd Session, Geneva, 2013.

6. The nature of the plenary debate – a series of five-minute interventions – does not allow for precise presentation of positions or concrete decision-making on action. Therefore, on the basis of its content (notably the wide interest expressed in the suggested centenary initiatives and the absence of opposition to them), in his reply, the Director-General proposed that an item be included in the current session of the Governing Body on follow-up to the discussion, with a view to establishing a “centenary roadmap” for implementation of the initiatives.
7. This document therefore presents proposals on the next steps in the implementation of the initiative, indicating those cases in which details are to be found in other documents before the Governing Body at this session. The action proposed necessarily reflects the specific and varying character of each initiative, all of which will need to be pursued under the guidance of the Governing Body.
8. It should be noted that, beyond the centenary initiatives, a number of important issues were raised in the discussion of the Director-General’s Report that are not taken up in this paper but are being pursued elsewhere. Three such issues may be singled out: **(i) the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories** (as presented in the appendix to the Director-General’s Report) was of great concern to many and there was a strong appeal to the ILO to give all support possible to the Palestinian people. The document GB.319/POL/6 “Enhanced programme of technical cooperation for the occupied Arab territories” describes the ILO’s action in this regard; **(ii) child labour** was a recurring theme, with many interventions highlighting national action, challenges and achievements. The forthcoming child labour conference being hosted by Brazil in October 2013, with which the ILO is closely engaged, will be an important opportunity for the global community to give a new impetus to integrated action to end child labour; **and (iii) migration**, with several delegates speaking of the challenges of labour migration. Both the forthcoming High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development at the United Nations in October 2013 and the ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting on Labour Migration taking place in November this year will help to guide the ILO’s efforts to renew its work in this area.

The initiatives, ILO programming and planning frameworks and linkages with other areas of work

9. In this regard, the initiatives would provide strategic direction in specific areas for the journey to the second ILO century and are not intended to be new programmes as such. They would all have direct implications for the ILO’s future work and may inform its future strategic orientations and programme and budget exercises. However, the initiatives have no independent programmatic content. When they do overlap with ongoing work, this will complement work planned under the Programme and Budget for 2014–15, with no change to the existing results framework. Indeed, several Conference delegates pointed to the links between the programme and budget and certain initiatives, for example that between the areas of critical importance (ACIs) on social protection, the rural economy and informality and the end to poverty initiative. Initiatives linked to a range of substantive work items would bring together strands of work and provide focus and continuity for them across biennia.
10. Consequently, the initiatives, the programme and budgets and any future strategic framework decided upon would form a single, coherent agenda, enabled by the reform agenda directed at realizing the vision of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.

Next steps

11. To varying degrees, action to implement the different initiatives will need to build upon activities or processes already under way. But innovative steps will also need to be taken to give full effect to them all.
12. **The governance initiative:** It was proposed that this initiative should bring together the following elements:
 - completion of the reform of the International Labour Conference;
 - review of the reform of the Governing Body introduced as of November 2011;
 - review of the functioning of Regional Meetings;
 - consideration of progress on ratification of the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the Constitution or of alternative action in respect of the Governing Body;
 - evaluation by the Conference of the extent to which the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization 2008 has contributed “to promoting, among Members, the aims and purposes of the Organization through the integrated pursuit of the strategic objectives”, as mandated in the follow-up mechanisms to the Declaration.
13. The institutional vehicle is already in place to address the reform of the International Labour Conference as well as the issue of Regional Meetings in the shape of the Governing Body Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference.
14. The Working Party may be credited with having been at the origin of the well-received reform of the Governing Body, which is to be evaluated fully in March 2014 on the basis of preliminary consideration at this session. But reform of the International Labour Conference is very much work-in-progress, with diverging positions taken by constituents on how to reconcile economy in the use of time and resources with the full discharge of Conference responsibilities. There is need to give new impetus to the Working Party’s deliberations if it is to meet the expectations placed in it and clearly reflected by many at this year’s Conference. Acceleration of its work in that regard will allow the functioning of Regional Meetings to be addressed.
15. The approach taken by the Office to the Working Party at this session of the Governing Body is intended to facilitate progress in this direction.
16. The Governing Body may consider that there is now sufficient experience with the operation of the 2008 Declaration to justify a Conference evaluation of its contribution to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Organization. If so, and in the light of proposals presented to it concerning the Conference agenda in document GB.319/INS/2, it may decide when such an evaluation should be undertaken.
17. The Governing Body is also invited to provide guidance on action it might consider appropriate with regard to the issues raised by the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution.
18. **The standards initiative:** The achievement of the objectives outlined in the proposed standards initiative is generally recognized as being crucial to the future of the ILO and its essential normative functions. At the same time, and for reasons well known to the Governing Body, the issues involved stand at the centre of political and legal controversies

in the Organization which have, to date, proven difficult to resolve. However, the fundamental objectives of a standards initiative may be relatively easily stated:

- to establish full tripartite consensus in respect of supervisory mechanisms which have the full support and commitment of constituents and which are therefore credible and authoritative; and
- to enhance the relevance of international labour standards through a standards review mechanism.

19. The challenges underlying these objectives, however, are considerable and complex, and are already being addressed in both formal and informal settings, including the Conference and the Governing Body. At the current stage of development it does not appear possible for the Governing Body to determine with confidence what institutional arrangements might offer the best prospects for the progress which is needed to emerge from the current impasse.
20. Nevertheless, by endorsing the objectives of the proposed initiative and committing to their achievement within time frames to be established, the Governing Body can give new impetus to this critically important area of work and set out a framework which recognizes the interrelated nature of the many issues to be addressed.
21. **The green initiative:** The Director-General suggested in his Report to the Conference that action to prevent and mitigate climate change, more than any other single element, would distinguish the ILO's future responsibilities from those of its past. A green initiative would serve the purpose of giving practical application to the concept of a decent work dimension of the transition to a low-carbon, sustainable development path.
22. This year's Conference held a technical discussion on sustainable development, decent work and green jobs, which provided constituents with the opportunity to work out a tripartite consensus on these issues, which is contained in the corresponding resolution adopted by the Conference. Proposed actions to give effect to that resolution are before the Governing Body in GB.319/INS/3/2 and it is proposed that this, in the light of related Governing Body comment, be the basis of a green initiative.
23. **The enterprises initiative:** An enterprises initiative was proposed to the Conference as a means of leveraging to the full the potential for the ILO's engagement with enterprises in order to achieve the goals of the Organization.
24. This initiative was the subject of significant comment at the Conference and the matters raised are examined in detail in the document before the Governing Body, "A strategy for ILO wider engagement with the private sector" (GB.319/INS/5). That document recalls that the ILO already undertakes a significant amount of work for and with enterprises and identifies innovation which might be added. It is proposed that, in the light of Governing Body discussion, these form the basis of an enterprises initiative.
25. **The end to poverty initiative:** The ILO will enter its second century of existence in conditions which offer real prospects that the war on poverty can finally be won. An end to poverty initiative would aim to ensure that the role of the ILO in that achievement be maximized, in the light of the proposition that access to decent work is a key to getting out of poverty. Such an initiative would benefit from developments already under way in the multilateral system and within the ILO itself.
26. Building on the – unfinished – achievements of its Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations is already engaged in the task of constructing its post-2015 development

agenda, in which the ending of poverty seems sure to occupy the central place. The Governing Body has already agreed that the ILO should campaign to have decent jobs and the establishment of social protection floors become explicit objectives in the post-2015 development agenda, as further considered in a separate document before the Governing Body.² These developments provide a very favourable setting for an ILO end to poverty initiative to contribute to key goals of the multilateral system and to underpin partnerships with the ILO's sister organizations in that system.

27. Additional opportunities will also arise at regional and subregional levels as, for example, in the coming African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa (ten years after the first such Summit), and the related process leading up to it, in which the ILO would engage actively.
28. Developments inside the ILO appear equally supportive, as recognized by a number of speakers at the Conference. Since taking office, the Director-General has consistently underlined the particular responsibilities of the Organization to those who are worst off and most vulnerable in the world of work. That proposition has led directly to the inclusion of the informal economy, the rural economy and social protection floors among the eight ACIs in the Programme and Budget for 2014–15.
29. The challenge for, and potential of, an end to poverty initiative is to bring together and give coherence to the diverse areas of technical work and partnerships which contribute to ending poverty. Subject to guidance from the Governing Body, arrangements would be made within the Office to coordinate work so as to maximize the ILO's contribution to this shared goal.
30. **The women at work initiative:** The ILO has an established record of advocacy and achievement in respect of gender at work, and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization mandates the Organization to make gender equality and non-discrimination cross-cutting issues in its activities. The manner in which gender is addressed in the restructuring of the Office is intended to respond concretely to that mandate and to strengthen the ILO's capacity to identify and promote the labour market interventions that really help to overcome persistent obstacles to equality.
31. In the light both of progress made and of challenges still remaining, against the background of rapidly changing realities in the world of work, a women at work initiative could serve to take stock of the place and the conditions of women in work, with a view to mapping out a renewed ILO strategy for equality.
32. There was relatively limited reaction from Conference speakers to the proposed initiative, despite the references quite often made to national action on gender. Nevertheless, a first step in implementation could be the convocation at an early date of a tripartite expert meeting to identify the main issues that an initiative should address and the means for doing so.
33. **The future of work initiative:** The ILO's centenary provides the ideal opportunity for the ILO to step back from the immediate and pressing demands of its everyday work and to examine in depth the big trends which are transforming, and will continue to transform, the world of work, and to draw the corresponding conclusions about how it is to pursue its mandate in its second century.

² GB.319/INS/4.

34. All the evidence suggests that such a future of work initiative would not simply be a parochial response of purely institutional interest to the ILO. Rather, it could address issues which are of central concern to policy-makers, employers and trade unions around the world and to which a considerable volume of academic work is already being devoted.
35. Should the Governing Body favour the implementation of an initiative of this character, its first challenge will be to set a scale of ambition for the exercise and to determine the issues to be addressed. That would help avert the danger of dispersion of effort (given the enormous variety of issues that might be considered), which would be to the detriment of the overall value of what is done. Initial reactions to the proposed initiative also seem to indicate that a considerable number of foundations and academic institutions might be interested in contributing to the initiative and that their expertise could certainly add much value to it.

Reporting progress

36. If the Governing Body decides to pursue some or all of the proposed centenary initiatives it may also wish to provide guidance on how it would wish to be kept informed of progress in their implementation – with respect either to specific initiatives or to the exercise as a whole.
37. As indicated above, by and large the proposed initiatives incorporate areas of work which directly involve the Governing Body or on which it already receives reports. There would be no purpose in duplicating such arrangements. Nonetheless, given their potential to reflect strategic directions of the ILO in key areas, and to pull together areas of work in different parts of the Organization and under different programmes, the Governing Body may find value in receiving regular progress reports.

Draft decision

38. *The Governing Body decides:*

- (a) *to instruct the Director-General to pursue implementation of the proposed centenary initiatives in the light of the guidance provided; and*
- (b) *to consider reports on progress made annually at its October–November session and additionally as circumstances require.*