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SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Composition of the International Labour Conference: Proportion of women and men in delegations

Purpose of the document

This document provides up-to-date information regarding the proportion of women and men in delegations to the International Labour Conference and Regional Meetings. It covers the period June 2012–June 2017, during which the 101st Session (2012), 102nd Session (2013), 103rd Session (2014), 104th Session (2015), 105th Session (2016) and 106th Session (2017) of the International Labour Conference took place, as well as the Ninth European Regional Meeting (April 2013), 18th American Regional Meeting (October 2014), 13th African Regional Meeting (November–December 2015) and the 16th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting (December 2016) (see draft decision in paragraph 23).

Relevant strategic objective: None.

Main relevant outcome/cross-cutting policy driver: Cross-cutting policy driver: gender equality and non-discrimination.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Subject to guidance provided by the Governing Body.

Author units: Office of the Legal Adviser (JUR); Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch (GED).

Related documents: GB.316/LILS/1; GB.316/PV(&Corr.), paragraph 537; GB.320/LILS/INF/3.

Introduction

1. This document provides updated information regarding the proportion of women and men in delegations to the International Labour Conference and Regional Meetings. It covers the period from June 2012 to June 2017, during which the 101st Session (2012), 102nd Session (2013), 103rd Session (2014), 104th Session (2015), 105th Session (2016), and 106th Session (2017) of the International Labour Conference took place, as well as the Ninth European Regional Meeting (April 2013), 18th American Regional Meeting (October 2014), 13th African Regional Meeting (November–December 2015), and the 16th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting (December 2016).
2. It responds to a request of the Governing Body for a periodic report on this matter,¹ analysing the responses to the letters sent by the Director-General after each International Labour Conference to those Members that had not reached a 30 per cent level of participation of women in their delegations, any obstacles encountered and the measures taken to achieve gender parity. The last report on the subject was submitted to the 320th Session of the Governing Body (March 2014) for information.² That report provided information for the period 2007–2013 on the proportion of women in delegations to the International Labour Conference, by group, the function undertaken by them, as well as by region. It also highlighted action taken by the Office to promote gender parity, for example, including information on the subject in convocations to the Conference and through the post-Conference letter.
3. The first section of the present document provides statistical information with respect to the proportion of women accredited in delegations to the Conference and Regional Meetings that took place during the aforementioned period (June 2012–June 2017). The second section provides information on the responses to the letters sent by the Director-General after each Conference to member States concerned.

Overview

4. It is recalled that the participation of women in ILO meetings has been an essential goal of the ILO since 1919. The drafters of the ILO Constitution were of the view that “women could be appointed for any purpose under the convention on a footing of complete equality with men”,³ although the only requirement included in the ILO Constitution in this respect provides that “when questions specially affecting women are to be considered by the Conference, one at least of the advisers should be a woman” (article 3, paragraph 2, of the Constitution). This call has been reinforced by various Conference resolutions⁴ that have been adopted on the matter seeking to enhance women’s participation not only at the

¹ [GB.316/LILS/1](#); [GB.316/PV\(&Corr.\)](#), para. 537.

² [GB.320/LILS/INF/3](#).

³ ILO: Commission on International Labour Legislation, Minutes of Proceedings No. 5, *Official Bulletin*, 1919–20, Vol. I, p. 28.

⁴ ILO resolutions adopted during the 60th (1975), 67th (1981), 78th (1991) and 98th (2009) Sessions of the Conference.

Conference, but also at the Regional Conferences and other national, regional and international meetings convened by the ILO.⁵

5. It is also recalled that certain United Nations resolutions are relevant on the matter, in particular the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1990/15, which requested governments, political parties, trade unions, professional and other representative groups to “aim at targets to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30 per cent by 1995, with a view to achieving equal representation between women and men by the year 2000”,⁶ as well as the UN General Assembly Resolution 58/142, which urged member States “to promote gender balance for their delegations to United Nations and other international meetings and conferences”.⁷
6. This report examines the proportion of women not only in Conference delegations, but also in Regional Meeting delegations and is based on relevant information compiled by the respective Credentials Committees of each annual Conference and Regional Meeting.

International Labour Conference (ILC)

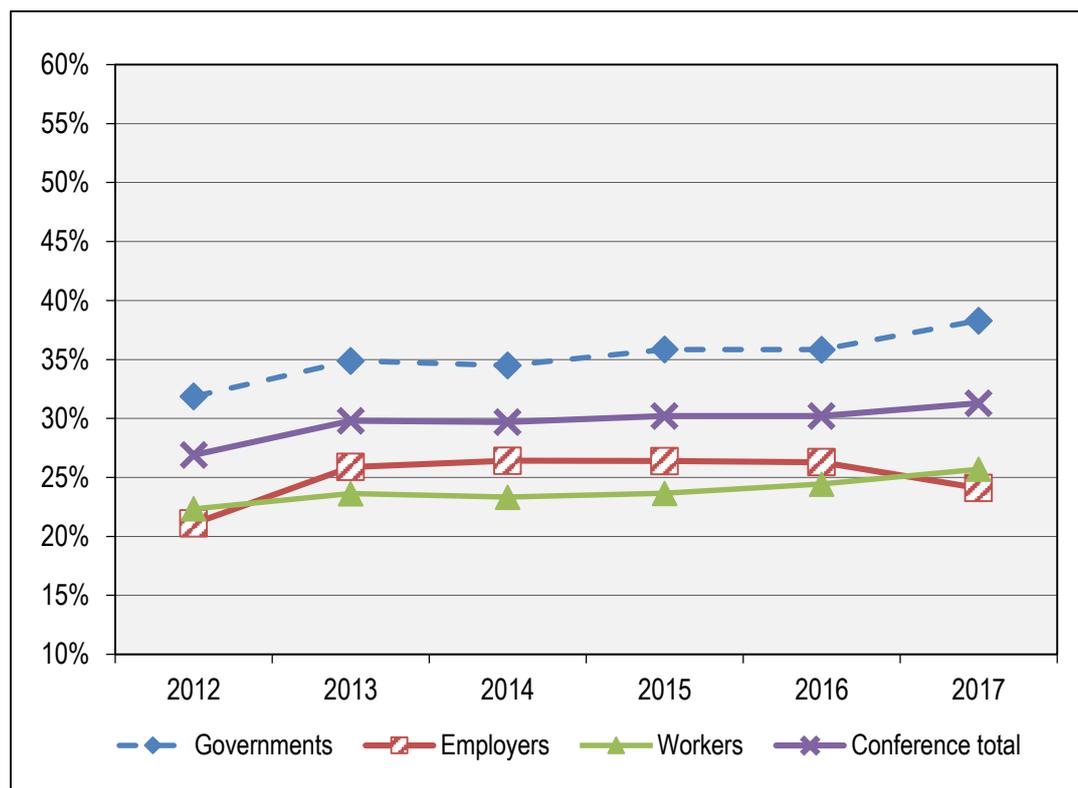
7. The participation of women stood at 30.2 per cent at both the 104th Session (2015) and 105th Session (2016) of the ILC. This rate of participation slightly improved at the 106th Session (2017) when it reached 31.3 per cent. The distribution between the three groups has remained uneven, with a lower rate of accredited women in Employers’ and Workers’ delegations (25.03 per cent and 23.85 per cent, respectively on average) as compared to Government delegations (35.21 per cent on average) (see figure 1 below).
8. Therefore, while the overall proportion of women in Conference delegations has reached the 1995 short-term minimum target of 30 per cent set by ECOSOC Resolution 1990/15, this target has not been met by either of the social partners. When examining the year 2000 long-term goal of equal representation set by ECOSOC Resolution 1990/15 and of gender parity set by the UN General Assembly Resolution 58/142, it is evident that intensified efforts are needed by all groups.

⁵ ILO: *Resolution concerning a plan of action with a view to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for women workers*, ILC, 60th Session, Geneva, 1975, para. 10 (Women’s effective participation in national, regional and international bodies).

⁶ ECOSOC: *Resolution 1990/15* of 24 May 1990, *Recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000*, Annex, Recommendation VI.

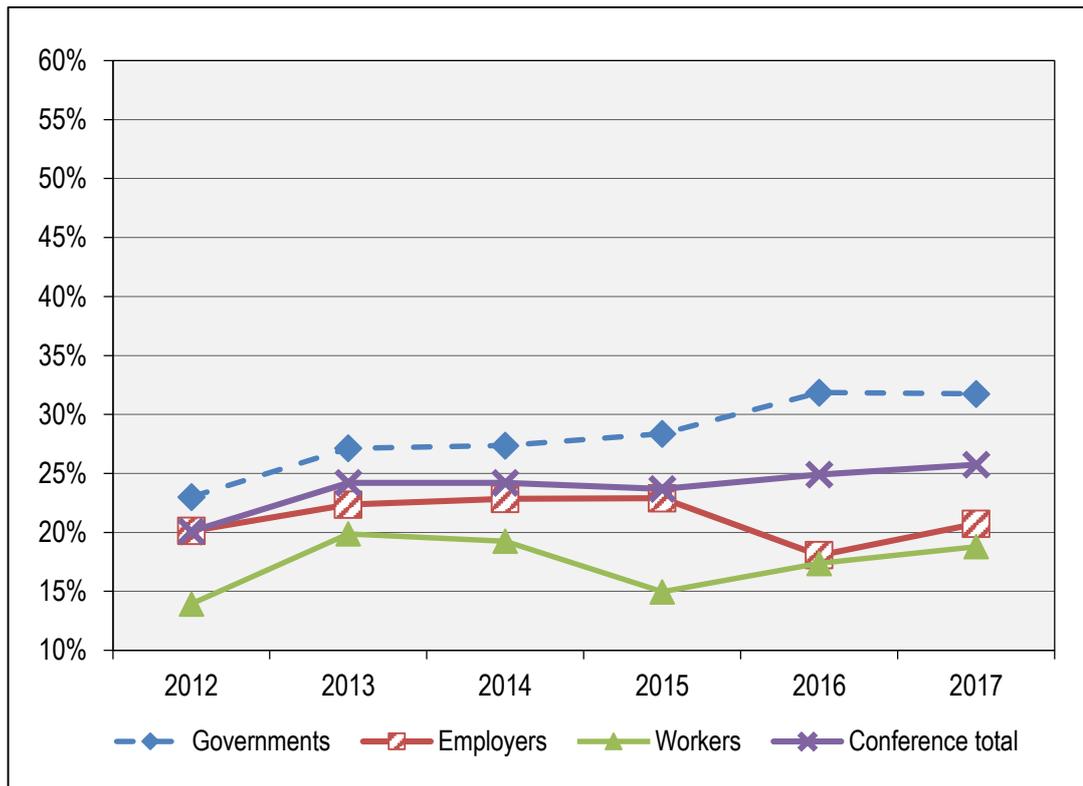
⁷ UN: General Assembly *Resolution 58/142* of 22 December 2003, *Women and political participation*, para. 1(j).

Figure 1. ILC: Proportion of women accredited in delegations by group (2012–17)



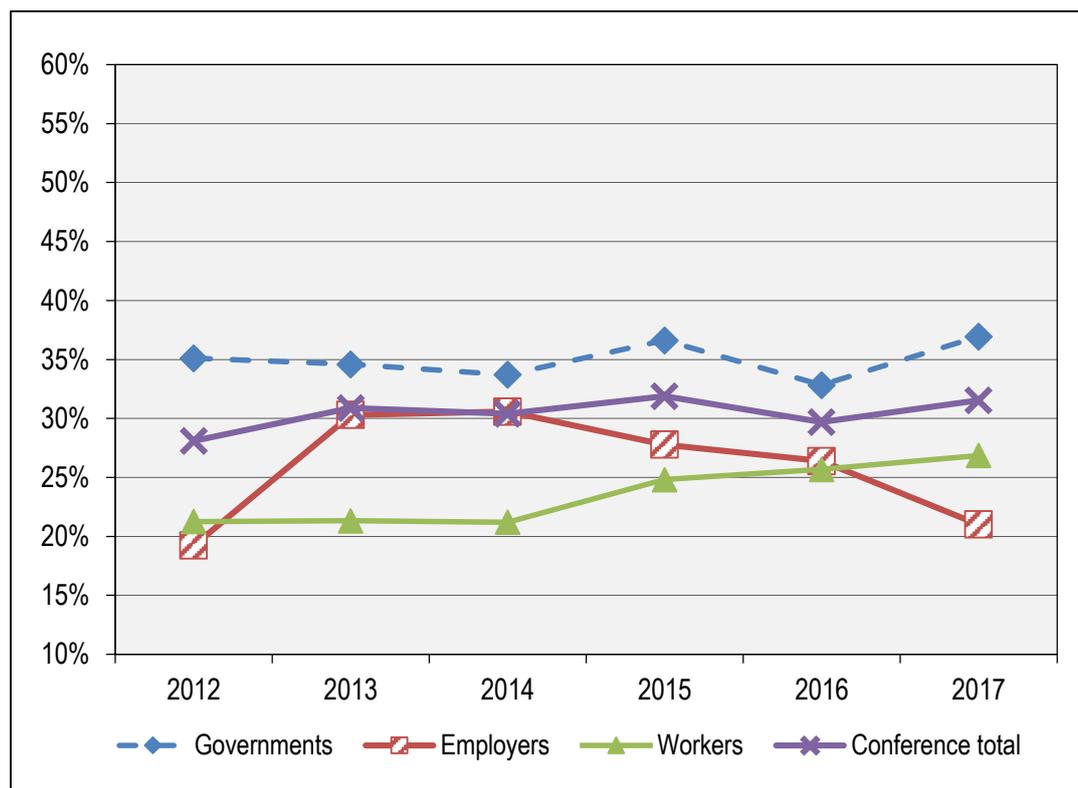
9. With respect to the proportion of women in leadership positions (i.e., titular delegates) in Conference delegations, the general trend for the period under review (2012 to 2017) indicates an upwards movement (from 20.1 per cent in 2012 to 25.74 per cent in 2017). However, the 30 per cent target has only been attained by the Government group since 2016 (31.86 per cent). This rate was maintained in 2017 (31.75 per cent), whereas the Employers' and Workers' groups continued to fall short of the 1995 target of 30 per cent (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2. ILC: Proportion of women by function and group – Titular delegates



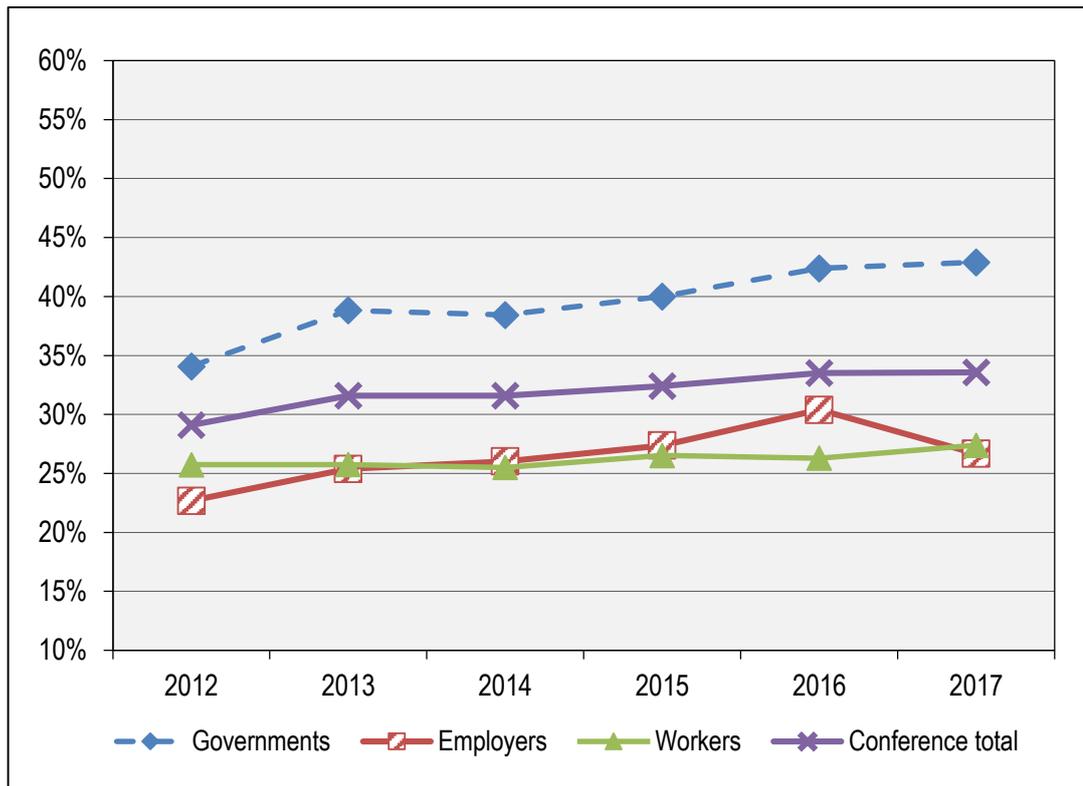
10. With respect to the proportion of women substitute delegates in Conference delegations, the 30 per cent target has been attained in four of the six sessions (2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017). In particular, the proportion of women substitute delegates in the Government group has consistently exceeded this target. The proportion of women substitute delegates in the Employers' group has decreased from 30.3 per cent in 2013 to 21.02 per cent in 2017, whereas the proportion of women substitute delegates in the Workers' group has increased from 21.26 per cent in 2012 to 26.86 per cent in 2017 (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3. ILC: Proportion of women by function and group – Substitute delegates



11. With respect to the proportion of women advisers in Conference delegations, since 2013 the 30 per cent target has regularly been met by the Government group which has neared the goal of gender parity (from 34.07 per cent in 2012 to 42.9 per cent in 2017). The share of women advisers in the Employers' group was 30.4 per cent in 2016 but fell in 2017 to 26.67 per cent. With respect to the proportion of women advisers in the Workers' group, this slightly increased from 25.74 per cent in 2013 to 27.39 per cent in 2017 (see figure 4 below).

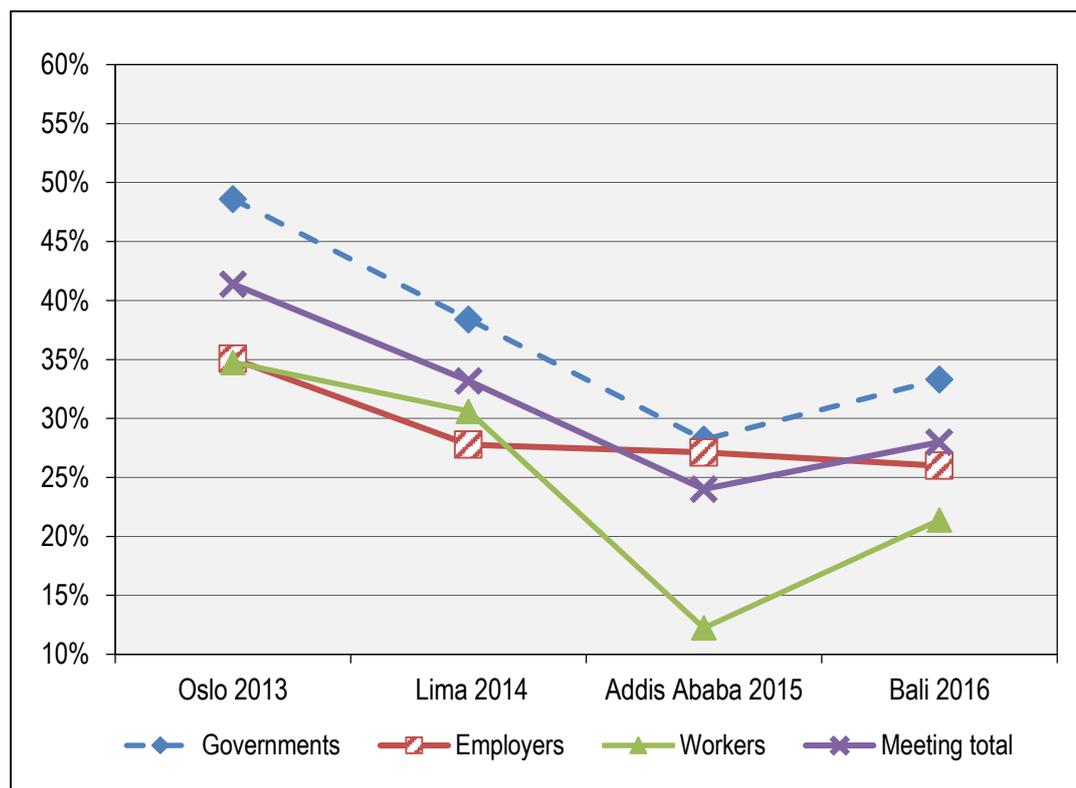
Figure 4. ILC: Proportion of women by function and group – Advisers



Regional Meetings

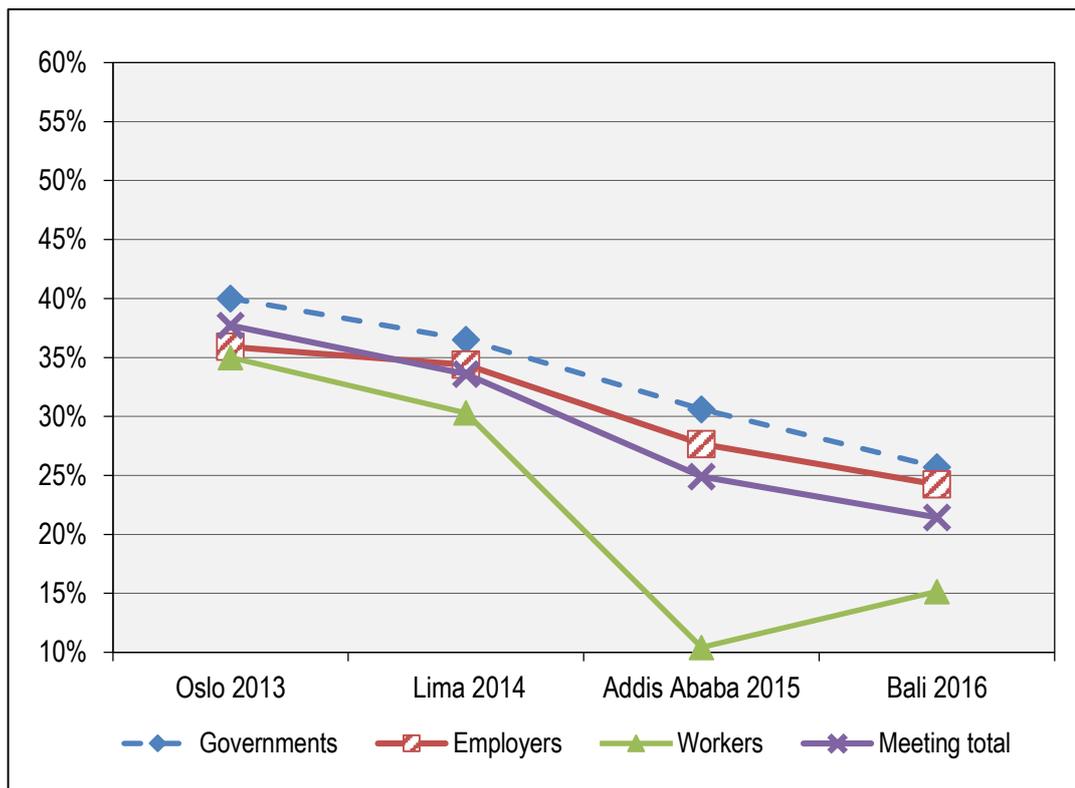
12. The average rate of women in delegations to Regional Meetings for the period under review attained was 31.65 per cent. Although this appears to meet the short-term minimum target of 30 per cent, there are striking differences between regions and groups, none of which have achieved the goal of gender parity. Of the four Regional Meetings, only two met the 30 per cent target (Oslo with 41.4 per cent and Lima with 33.2 per cent) while the other two fell short (Addis Ababa with 24 per cent and Bali with 28 per cent). Of the three groups, the Government group attained the 30 per cent target at three of the four Regional Meetings (Oslo 2013 with 48.50 per cent, Lima 2014 with 38.41 per cent, and Bali 2016 with 33.3 per cent). The Employers' group attained the 30 per cent target on one occasion (Oslo 2013 with 35.06 per cent) and the Workers' group attained it on two occasions (Oslo 2013 with 35.75 per cent, and Lima 2014 with 30.61 per cent) (see figure 5 below).

Figure 5. Regional Meetings: Proportion of women accredited in delegations by group (2013–17)



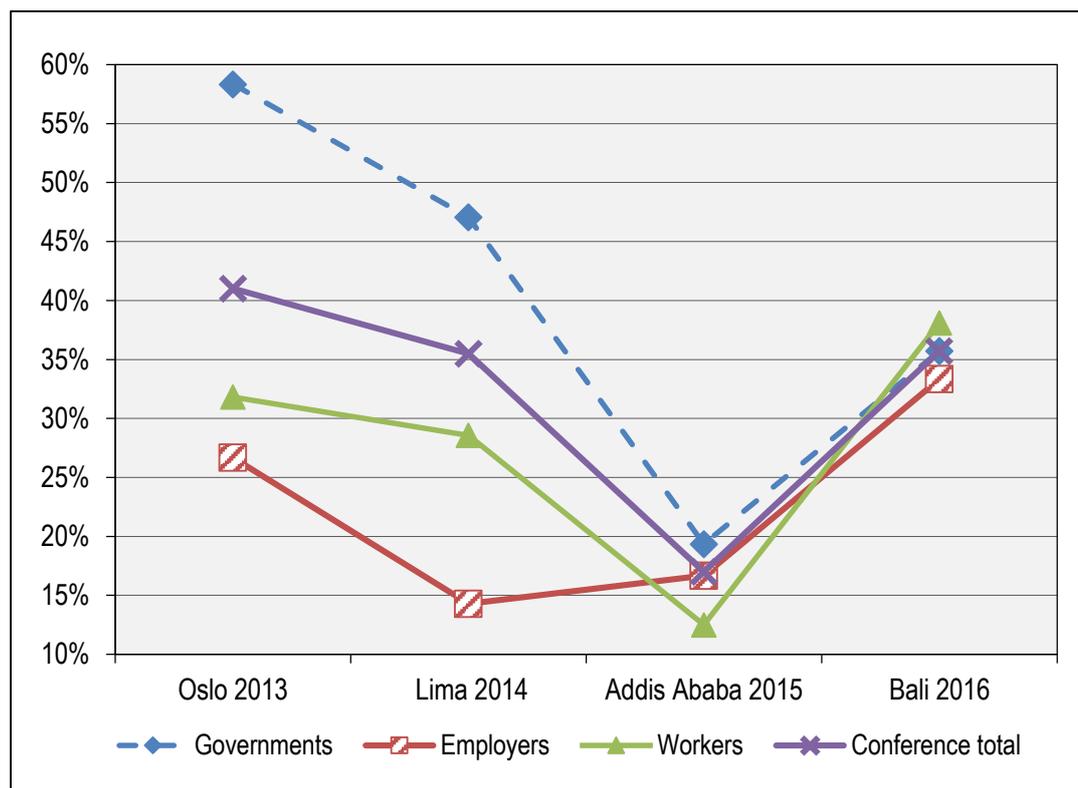
13. The proportion of women in leadership positions (i.e., titular delegates) in Regional Meeting delegations for the period under review followed a downward trend going from 33.6 per cent in Oslo 2013 to 21.43 per cent in Bali 2016. The Government group has attained the 30 per cent target in three Meetings (Oslo 2013, Lima 2014 and Addis Ababa 2015), whereas both the Employers' and Workers' groups have attained it in two Meetings (Oslo 2013 and Lima 2014). None of the groups have achieved gender parity (see figure 6 below).

Figure 6. Regional Meetings: Proportion of women by function and group – Titular delegates



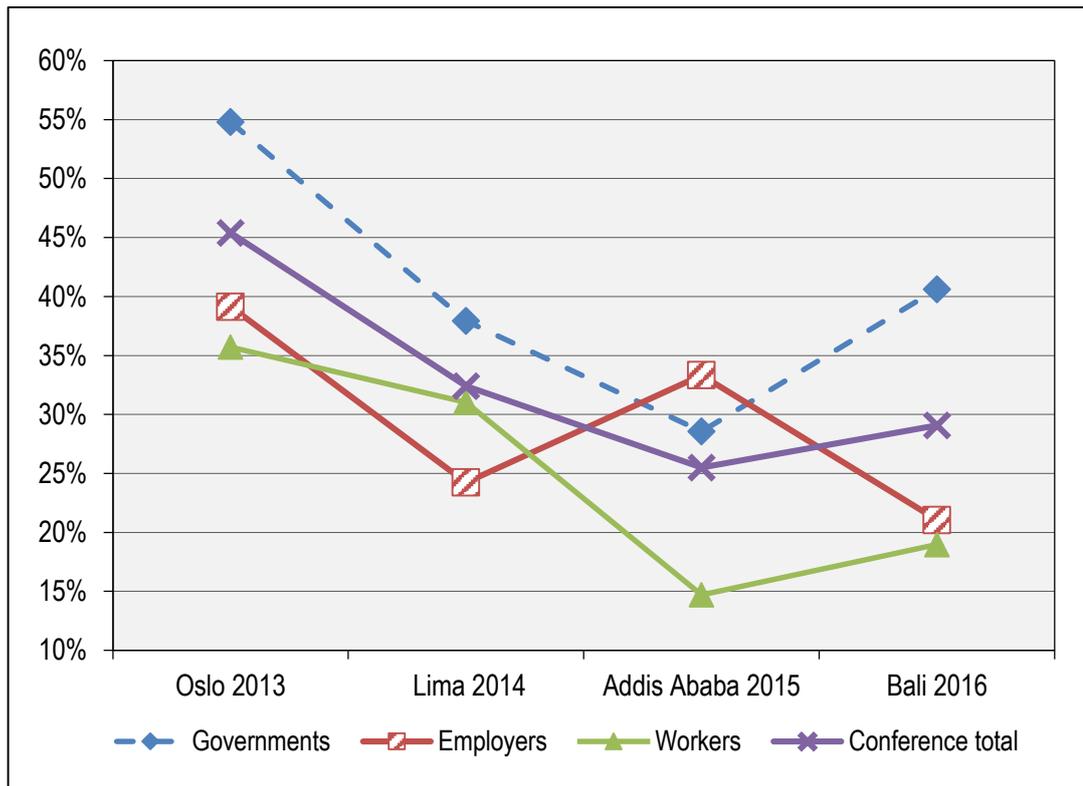
14. With respect to the proportion of women substitute delegates in Regional Meeting delegations, the 30 per cent target has been attained in three of the four meetings (Oslo 2013, Lima 2014 and Bali 2016). The Government group has attained the 30 per cent target on the same three occasions, whereas the Employers’ group has attained it once (Bali 2016) and the Workers’ group twice (Oslo 2013 and Bali 2016) (see figure 7 below). None of the groups have achieved the goal of gender parity.

Figure 7. Regional Meetings: Proportion of women by function and group – Substitute delegates



15. Turning to the proportion of women advisers in Regional Meeting delegations, the 30 per cent target has been attained in two of the four meetings (Oslo 2013 with 45.40 per cent and Lima 2014 with 32.4 per cent). The Government group has attained the 30 per cent target in three meetings (Oslo 2013 with 54.79 per cent, Lima 2014 with 37.93 per cent, and Bali 2016 with 40.63 per cent). The Employers' group has attained it once (Addis Ababa 2015 with 33.33 per cent) and the Workers' group twice (Oslo 2013 with 35.71 per cent and Lima 2014 with 31.03 per cent) (see figure 8 below). With the exception of the Government group on one occasion (Oslo 2013), the goal of gender parity has not been achieved by the groups.

Figure 8. Regional Meetings: Proportion of women by function and group – Advisers



16. Based on the foregoing, there have been noticeable divergences between the regions with respect to the overall proportion of women in delegations to Regional Meetings (e.g., Addis Ababa 2015 with 24 per cent as compared to Oslo 2013 with 41.5 per cent), which therefore call for tailor-made and proactive Office strategies that take into account the respective regional context.
17. In conclusion, the importance of arriving at gender parity in the overall proportion of women in delegations to the Conference and Regional Meetings cannot be underscored, since its absence negatively impacts the advancement of women and continues to perpetuate obstacles in women achieving legal literacy, equality in economic decision-making, integration of women's concerns in national development planning and the involvement of women in international decision-making, as highlighted in ECOSOC Resolution 1990/15⁸ and subsequently reiterated in other relevant resolutions on the matter. This underrepresentation of women also compromises the credibility and inclusiveness of social dialogue at the highest levels of the decision-making organs of the Organization, which should serve as a model for such social dialogue.

Follow-up by member States

18. This section analyses the responses communicated to the Director-General by those member States that have not reached the 30 per cent short-term minimum target of participation of women in their delegations. The Director-General's circular letter also inquired about

⁸ ECOSOC: Resolution 1990/15 of 24 May 1990, *Recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000*, Priority Themes for the Period 1993-1996.

obstacles encountered, as well as the measures taken by member States to attaining the long-term goal of gender parity.

19. In their replies, member States identified three main obstacles. The first is the low ratio of women in national-level management or specialist positions in Conference-related themes. The second concerns structural barriers to women's equality and empowerment in the world of work, including sex-based discrimination and gender stereotypes. The third is financial constraints with respect to travel and subsistence expenses for delegations. Concerning measures taken by the constituents to increase the participation of women in Conference delegations, the majority of member States indicated that they were taking a comprehensive approach linked to national development goals, mechanisms and institutions – with a focus on dismantling structural barriers to equality between women and men including in decision-making roles. However, member States observed that although gender parity had been achieved among many government delegations, they could only appeal to or encourage the social partners to take similar steps since to do otherwise could be considered governmental interference. In this regard, several member States had shared the Director-General's letter with the relevant employers' and workers' organizations.
20. In response, the Office has piloted workshops to encourage and provide assistance to those member States with Geneva-based representation that have not yet reached the 30 per cent minimum short-term target of women participants in their delegations. Through these workshops the Office shared constituents' good practices for achieving the objective of equal representation between women and men in governance mechanisms. The four areas identified as good practices are: (i) policy and legislation including a national gender equality policy, plan of action, and gender equality ministry; (ii) equity measures including temporary quotas for women's participation in Parliament and for political parties, women's parliamentary caucuses, and awareness-raising and capacity building for both women and their male colleagues; (iii) strategic partnerships including with civil society, male decision makers and champions, and women's committees that could lobby for gender parity; and (iv) enabling measures including linking efforts with regional gender equality initiatives, strengthened institutional measures, employment strategies on equity for women, advocacy and public campaigns, incentives for fathers' more active involvement in parenting, addressing work-life balance, and sensitizing the social partners. Feedback from workshop participants was that the Office should continue to: (i) encourage gender parity in Conference and Regional Meeting delegations; (ii) compile and disseminate information relative to the challenges to achieving gender parity, lessons learned, and how these were overcome with good practices; (iii) furnish assistance by collecting concrete examples of good practices, including through internal mechanisms and rules; (iv) regularly provide to governments and social partners the sex-disaggregated statistics of their tripartite Conference delegations; (v) conduct research on the reasons for women's under-representation in tripartite delegations, especially with respect to the social partners; and (vi) host capacity-building workshops – similar to the two held prior to the 102nd and 103rd Sessions (2013 and 2014) of the Conference – with a view to assisting not only Governments but also employers' and workers' organizations.
21. In addition, the Office has prepared since 2005 an annual publication entitled "*Gender balance in the International Labour Conference: Statistics on the representation of women and men in the ILC*". This publication is based on sex-disaggregated statistics of Members' tripartite delegations to the Conference. It was discontinued in 2017, since the Conference Credentials Committee now includes in its first report a detailed section entitled "*Proportion of women accredited in Conference Delegations*", as well as an annex with sex-disaggregated statistics by member State and by tripartite group.
22. More recent communication efforts have extended to the publication of infographics, illustrating the proportion of women and men accredited in delegations to Regional

Meetings. Such an infographic was enclosed with the convocation to the 16th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting (Bali 2016), thus strengthening the Director-General’s call for equitable representation of women in tripartite delegations. It contained sex-disaggregated data on the overall level of women participants in the 15th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting (Kyoto 2011); the number of women having voting rights or none at all; women participants by group; and the level of women’s participation in the 15th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting as compared with other Regional Meetings. At the 16th Asia–Pacific Regional Meeting (Bali 2016), a meeting of senior women participants with the Director-General resulted in several suggestions to the Office, including that initiatives surrounding the reform of the Regional Meeting Rules, the Centenary Initiative, and the selection process of Future of Work Commissioners, be used as opportunities to promote gender parity in tripartite delegations and that additional steps be taken (e.g., hosting of all women events before and after high-level meetings, submission of formal explanations by exclusively male tripartite delegations, increase visibility of sex-disaggregated data, avoidance of male-dominated panels).

Draft decision

23. The Governing Body:

- (a) strongly urges Governments and employers’ and workers’ organizations to increase the number of women in their delegations to the Conference and Regional Meetings, to achieve the minimum target of 30 per cent with the goal of gender parity in delegations; and***
- (b) requests the Director-General to continue to bring this issue, after every Conference as well as Regional Meeting, to the attention of Members that have not reached the minimum target of 30 per cent of women’s participation with the goal of gender parity, and to periodically report to the Governing Body on obstacles encountered, as well as measures taken by tripartite constituents to achieve gender parity.***