

## **Mona Sahlin**

### **My vision for the future direction of the ILO**

#### ***The ILO mandate – more relevant than ever***

I submit this declaration as a very eager candidate, willing to take on the challenges of today's global labour market.

Living and working in Sweden, I have been 'brought up' with tripartism and an understanding of the importance of social dialogue and workers' rights in contributing to growth and development.

As a former Minister of Labour, I am a strong supporter of the ILO mandate. Throughout my professional life, and out of personal conviction, I have been deeply engaged in labour and industry issues, social dialogue and rights as key features of society, welfare and development. For more than twenty years as a minister, I worked closely and constructively with the social partners and gained their confidence. I have brought a woman's perspective to my areas of responsibility, making a solid contribution to gender equality, anti-discrimination and anti-racism, as well as to the fight against child labour and trafficking.

Let me share my vision of a modern, efficient and relevant ILO – an organisation that is ***courageous, competent*** and ***credible***. *Courageous* in that it dares to identify and tackle new needs and challenges, and confront controversial issues; *competent* in that it makes the best use of knowledge and resources, and *credible* in that it combines a strong voice and moral authority with a pragmatic and practical approach to its activities.

#### ***Courageous***

To be courageous we need to reinforce and modernise the standards and control mechanisms. We need to discuss and promote our values. We need to respond to the changing world economy and labour markets, and fight for those at risk of precarious work and discrimination. Courage is about values, global norms and dialogue.

## *Values*

As a leading international body addressing the real economy, the ILO has a global responsibility to engage in job promotion, rights at work, non-discrimination and good governance. ‘Jobs, but not at all costs’ is a concept close to my heart, relevant for developed, emerging and developing countries alike.

Today, national economies are exposed to external shocks and rising global unemployment. Unprotected work, income inequality and the informal economy are growing. Enterprises, and SMEs in particular, are struggling to survive the turbulent economic climate.

In this world of great uncertainty, the ILO’s values and the social dialogue need to be enhanced. We must not focus only on how to save banks and financial institutions. We have to use our knowledge to save women and men, and promote decent work for all, in all parts of the world. We must not accept unfair differences in working conditions.

## *Enhancing standards*

Hundreds of conventions and recommendations adopted since 1919 and covering all aspects of the world of work bear testimony to the sustainability of the ILO’s role. The added value of the labour standards lies in their impact on national law and practice. The ILO’s unique tripartite structure and supervisory mechanisms are fundamental to its role as a global watchdog.

Revision and reform of the standards must reflect the challenges of today. Conventions based on formal employment, an industrial society and the male breadwinner model must be revised and complemented. We have to deal with the social consequences of economic globalisation, new working patterns, technological change, green jobs, greater female workforce participation, an expanded service sector, increased precarious work, inequality suffered by migrant workers, and high youth unemployment.

New and renewed standards must be easy to understand, implementable and ratifiable. We have to find a formula that takes into account the need for fair regulation without creating red tape and excessive reporting obligations for member countries.

### *Dialogue*

For many of us, the concept of decent work is synonymous with the ILO mission. But decent work is not just a slogan. It is about changing the alarming developments reported in the Global Employment Trends towards short-term contracts, low wages, informal work, and little or no job security that place heavy demands on the ILO to promote a renewed social dialogue.

Constructive relations between the social parties are key to stopping the polarisation that is a consequence of the crises and that threatens to undermine the recovery of the world economy.

### *Competent*

For the organisation to play its rightful part in world developments, its knowledge base should be further enhanced. As an innovator, a doer and an experienced leader, I see great potential in making the secretariat more transparent, efficient, results-oriented, focused and internally coherent. Together with governments and social partners, I want to clarify the roles of governance and management, and create a climate of trust.

### *Management and resources*

The ILO needs a first-class administration, including a modern human resource management system that can contribute to releasing the full potential of the ILO's present staff and make ILO an attractive employer for new talent. All recruitment and promotion must be strictly merit-based, with gender balance and diversity as important goals. The ILO will certainly gain from having more women in top positions.

I will contribute to creating a climate of trust and transparency within the organisation. A climate where knowledge sharing and creativity are rewarded. A climate where the highly qualified staff continue to hone their intellectual versatility and analytical skills, deepening their knowledge of labour markets issues and the real economy. A climate where debate is encouraged, not avoided.

To successfully promote external policy coherence, the secretariat must have a well-functioning internal coherence system. Teamwork and optimal use of human resources are essential.

The Strategic Policy Framework is an excellent tool for work in this direction and should be used to describe, in a simple and transparent way, the long-term results, impact and change in the regions, countries and areas where the ILO works. It is necessary to further strengthen the ILO's results-based management system to ensure an efficient and evidence-based allocation of scarce resources.

In times of budget constraints and austerity measures, the ILO and other international organisations are faced with a true dilemma. They face the risk of slashed contributions while the need to tackle global challenges boosts the demand for their work.

Here, the task of the ILO leader is to take a close look at costs and efficiency, to attempt to do more with less, and to make the ILO worth investing in for all. Such processes will have to be guided by priority-setting, involve staff and the trade union. Discussions on priorities and budget levels must be transparent and inclusive, and contribute to increased levels of trust between management and governance, and the clarification of roles.

### *Governance*

The steps taken to improve the governance of the organisation through the new format of the Governing Body should be followed by further improvements in the GB and the renewal of the International Labour Conference. The ILC must be renewed to make it attractive as a forum for high-level dialogue while enhancing its standard-setting role. Time spent at the ILC must be time well spent.

The ILO's oversight functions are essential to hold the secretariat accountable and to help the organisation enhance the quality of its work. I will endeavour to ensure that the ILO adopts best practices in all areas of audit, oversight, ethics and risk management.

### *Credible*

A courageous and competent ILO gives a credible voice to labour issues and employment. It builds on successful outreach to economic decision-making forums. It strengthens its field work with partners. It takes on new challenges, provides new thinking and takes action.

### *Reaching out*

The ILO is no longer merely a forum for discussion among those who are already well informed. As a true multilateralist and internationalist I will build on outreach already achieved and position the ILO in the international dialogue at all levels to:

- create respect and trust with governments and decision-makers to make impact on work life a central factor in their decisions;
- expand the role of the ILO in the G20, from cooperation in the fields of employment and labour to influence overall policy decisions and finance issues;
- continue to strengthen the joint influence of the ILO and other global actors that impact the global economy and welfare – UN agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO, the OECD and others.

The influence of the ILO will become even more relevant as it develops and presents ways to reduce the negative impact of crisis management efforts on employment and social development and to create the basis for sustainable long-term job growth.

I see the need for policy coherence as a top priority. The ILO has done a great deal to mainstream decent work by means of analytical tools and international dialogue.

We need to build on the growing realisation of the importance of the work agenda in the world economy and make it a universal objective. Our practical experience can contribute to more informed policies at global level. We need to strengthen the voice of the ILO in the global economy, on trade policies and welfare systems.

In parallel we should enhance the partnerships that complement the ILO's own work.

### *Development challenges*

It is encouraging that ILO's technical cooperation is in great demand by many partners. In this work, the normative agenda coincides with the developmental agenda, as the support of the implementation of ILO decisions is a core function of cooperation at country level. The technical cooperation programmes also enhance decent work as a whole and make the agenda known to all development partners, not least through the UN 'Delivering as One' process. The dialogue between governments and the social partners is essential to ensuring that the technical assistance programmes are useful and successful at regional and country levels.

### *Gender equality*

The ILO needs to put a great deal of effort into increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of gender equality for the economy and development. We have to make it clear to everyone that gender equality is smart economics – not only for women, but for society as a whole – and that it contributes to economic growth. It is also a matter of rights; the right to support oneself and one's children, the right to be independent by controlling one's own personal finances, the right to equal opportunities and professional development.

Action in this field will have to address the fact that women's unemployment rates have remained higher than men's despite an increasing number of women in the labour market. Women are overrepresented in informal employment, are paid less and are more often exposed to dangerous jobs.

My ambition is to continue, advance and further develop the work initiated through the gender policy. Research on gender issues must be given priority so that we can underpin our actions with knowledge. The gender equality perspective must be the responsibility of the entire organisation, incorporated into all sectors and at all levels of decision-making.

### *Migration*

International migration is one of the engines of globalisation, making all states and economies even more integrated. Today, all migrants in the

world would form, if they lived in a single nation, the fifth largest country by population. Millions of migrants – from domestic workers to computer engineers – work outside their home countries and millions of family members are dependent on their salaries. All over the world, in too many nations and in too many jobs, migrants are mistreated, discriminated against and forced to work under unfair conditions.

It is of the utmost importance that the ILO also contributes to decent and fair working conditions for migrant workers. Our economies are becoming increasingly interdependent and we must find ways to protect people who work outside their home country.

***I will spare no effort in working with all concerned to make the ILO an organisation that takes on these challenges with courage, competence, and credibility.***