

A VISION STATEMENT BY GUY RYDER

CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF ILO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

When I was elected as Director-General in 2012 it was on a clear commitment to reform the ILO to give it greater influence in pursuit of its unchanging mandate to promote social justice in a world of work undergoing profound and rapid change and facing major challenges, above all a global jobs crisis.

That went with recognition of the need for the ILO: to be guided by its founding values; to strive for technical excellence; to work with maximum efficiency; and to be in permanent contact with its tripartite constituency so as to be able to respond promptly to their needs and to benefit from their insights, knowledge and guidance.

The criteria of quality, relevance, and usefulness of the ILO's work and its impact would be the measures of success. Four years on, what is the record?

Achievement and Challenges

The commitment to reform published on my first day in office has been implemented. The ILO is focusing its work better on priority issues and doing that work at higher levels of quality and efficiency.

Under the global and senior management teams which have been established, the restructured secretariat in Geneva and the field is now working to deliver on selected policy outcomes through multi-disciplinary approaches underpinned by strengthened analytical, research and statistical capacities. Silos and silo-thinking have been and are being dismantled.

Under the recently adopted development cooperation strategy, critical mass is being concentrated around new global flagship programmes, and in a challenging funding environment increased efforts are being made to exploit fully and appropriately the potential of South-South cooperation and Public-Private Partnerships.

Strengthened external partnerships in and beyond the UN system have been developed. The success in putting decent work at the heart of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has been crucial, and the ILO has demonstrated its universal relevance and capacities for example in its work to service successive G20 Presidencies, the BRICS and the g7+ group of fragile and conflict-affected countries. A major joint programme has been established with the World Bank. The ILO has taken roles of international system leadership and not only contributes as a convinced UN team player but derives benefit from greater diffusion of its priorities in the system – as for example through the UN Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth – and its consistent advocacy of system coherence.

The understanding that ILO success depends on a motivated, highly skilled staff reflecting the diversity of its global constituency has underpinned the participatory and consultative manner in which change has been managed and the new human resources strategy. This approach should continue as the ILO progresses from the solid platform established by the reform process to a trajectory of continuous improvement.

Since 2012, efficiency improvements have enabled 26 posts to be transferred to front line technical positions, within a zero real growth budget. Continuing work on business processes can generate further gains without compromising the over-riding responsibility for sound financial management.

There is need for continuing work where reform is incomplete or has fallen short. Two areas are particularly evident. External communications still do not project the full value of ILO work and internal communications are inadequate to ensure that all colleagues are aware of all relevant issues and developments. Similarly the “One-ILO” objective – bringing Geneva and regional services into much closer cooperation and synergy is unfinished business.

But organizational reform and improvement is a means to an end. What matters is its impact on reaching ILO objectives.

Organizing for impact

Over the next five years the ILO will need to organize its work to maximize its impact and overall influence.

In this, it will benefit from processes which are already underway or planned, but must also be able to respond rapidly to emerging challenges, as it has already done for example in its response to the Rana Plaza tragedy.

At the same session that the election for Director-General will be held, the Governing Body will consider its Strategic Plan 2018-2021, coinciding closely with his/her term of office. Several building blocks for that Strategic Plan are already known:

- the Centenary Initiatives
- the 2016 International Labour Conference evaluation of the impact of the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice
- the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
- the ILO’s commitment to continuous improvement

The Centenary Initiatives

The ILO centenary in 2019 stands, chronologically and politically, at the heart of the next period of office of the Director-General. The seven Centenary Initiatives first suggested in my report to the 2013 International Labour Conference are being pursued precisely because they have strategic significance for the ILO throughout that period.

- *The Governance Initiative* is well advanced with the structural reforms of the Governing Body and Conference largely completed and consideration of Regional Meetings pending. Consequently the efficiency and effectiveness of constituent governance have been markedly enhanced.
- *The Standards Initiative* has progressed significantly, particularly with the launching of the Standards Review Mechanism. From the acute difficulties that began at the 2012 Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, constituents have embarked upon a programme of work to restore full tripartite consensus around an up to date body of international labour standards and their supervision. Given the crucial importance of standards to all ILO activity the

significance of this is evident to all. Implementation of this Initiative is likely to be centre stage up to the centenary and beyond and should be given attention commensurate with that importance.

- *The Enterprises Initiative* now appears to have overcome initial difficulties which themselves reflect how innovative a conscious programme of ILO engagement with individual enterprises actually is and therefore how productive it can be, without detriment to any constituent interests or prerogatives. More than any other, this Initiative has been a learning process. It needs to be taken forward as a centrepiece of the ILO's work to promote sustainable enterprises in accordance with the principles of decent work.
- *The Green Initiative* is the necessary ILO response to the reality that the single factor that will most distinguish the ILO's activity at the beginning of its second century from that of its first is the integration of the environmental sustainability of the world of work. Last December's Paris Climate Change Conference has given major impetus to the task of "green-streaming" all areas of the ILO's work to achieve just transition to a world of work which meets human needs and the imperative of planetary survival. General advocacy of this approach needs now to bring increased practical support to member States in meeting their commitments to its realization.
- *The Women at Work Initiative* is taking forward the ILO's historic achievements in respect of gender equality, recognizing that innovative action is needed in the face of slow and uneven progress and the hidden or indirect obstacles to getting the job completed. More of the same is not enough. The Initiative has to unlock new areas of action.
- *The End to Poverty Initiative* is at a key crossroad as the international community moves from the adoption of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to its full and universal implementation. The ILO was centrally involved in the former and must be as well in the latter. That will require an organization-wide effort which is the subject of my report to the International Labour Conference in June 2016.
- *The Future of Work Initiative* has attracted great attention from constituents and others. It stands at the centre of the ILO's centenary activities, but more importantly it tackles key policy questions of our time - which is why it is having such resonance across the world. The three stage implementation process – national dialogue, global commission, 2019 Conference – is underway and success will depend crucially on member States taking ownership of it. Throughout, the objective of the Initiative - to equip the ILO to better prosecute its mandate for social justice - must be kept firmly to the fore. If that can be advanced through the adoption of a Centenary Declaration, comparable in weight and significance to the Constitutional texts of 1919 and 1944, then the opportunity should be taken.

The Centenary Initiatives are distinct from, but connected with, the policy and enabling outcomes that are at the heart of the two yearly programme and budget exercises. It will be for the Governing Body to decide these outcomes. But past experience and the reality that it generally takes at least a medium-term investment of effort to have significant impact on their achievement means that there is likely to be a high degree of continuity in their selection across biennia.

Additionally, the 2016 Conference discussion on the impact of the Social Justice Declaration should provide important lessons for the programming process which will need to be built into relevant discussions starting in November.

A Better Future, an Unpredictable Future

The ILO's mandate to strive for a better future for all in the world of work requires it: to set a firm strategic course for the Organization on the basis of current knowledge and circumstances; to understand and anticipate the transformational drivers of change which are already in operation; and to be ready to respond rapidly to events and challenges which cannot reasonably be predicted.

There are at least two sets of emerging issues which straddle these categories and which the ILO will particularly need to address:

- Mobility – either migration for employment which is a constitutional responsibility and a current policy outcome, or the refugees and displaced persons crisis discussed at the March Governing Body, or in other forms. In 2016 the international system will be focusing on these issues. The ILO must be part of that process and ready to act on its consequences.
- Supply chains – will be discussed at the year's Conference and are an increasingly important part of the world of work. Without anticipating what the Conference will decide, it is likely that new scope will be opened for ILO action. Again, the ILO must be responsive to new opportunities and demands.

Finally, as emphasized in my 2012 Vision Statement, it seems inconceivable that the ILO's quest for social justice could be carried out satisfactorily if the Organization did not continue to reach out to the most vulnerable. A start has been made with the attention accorded to informality, rural workers, migrants, domestic workers and social protection floors.

But the ILO, more than any other, will rightly be judged by what we do for the weakest and most disadvantaged, for those in poverty, without work, without opportunity, prospects or hope, for those suffering denial of fundamental rights and freedoms. For them our efforts must be redoubled.

* * * * *

To meet the challenges facing the ILO over the next five years I can bring more than three decades of activity in the world of work, the bulk of it international, and a significant part in positions of leadership at the world level.

Experience acquired and lessons learned during my existing term as Director-General would be valuable in a second one. They have confirmed my strong belief in the value of listening carefully to constituents and colleagues and of dialogue in the political management of the Organization and in realizing necessary change. I have learned also that patience in achieving consensus must be matched by determination and perseverance to ensure that commitment to improvement is not lost or diluted.

Over the past four years my belief in tripartism and identification with the social justice objectives of the ILO have remained unchanged. I am as motivated to work for them as I have always been.

Leading a 187 member State organization has strengthened my appreciation of the diverse national circumstances that the ILO must address. It has also been a reminder of the richness of multiculturalism which is a key feature of the ILO's own working environment. I understand that contributions of equal nature can be delivered in very different ways.

I speak French and Spanish as well as my mother tongue, English.