



# Governing Body

346th Session, Geneva, October–November 2022

Institutional Section

INS

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## Report of the Director-General

### First Supplementary Report: A Global Coalition for Social Justice

#### Purpose of the document

In furtherance of the Director-General's proposal to forge a Global Coalition for Social Justice, bringing together the ILO tripartite constituents and organizations from the multilateral system as well as other stakeholders, the present document provides elements regarding the possible scope, principal focus areas and modalities of such a Coalition. Based on the Governing Body's initial discussion and preliminary guidance, further proposals will be developed for consideration by the Governing Body at its 347th Session (March 2023) (see the draft decision in paragraph 29).

**Relevant strategic objective:** All.

**Main relevant outcome:** All policy outcomes and enabling outcome A: Authoritative knowledge and high-impact partnerships for promoting decent work.

**Policy implications:** Yes.

**Legal implications:** None.

**Financial implications:** None.

**Follow-up action required:** Yes.

**Author unit:** Multilateral Cooperation Department (MULTILATERALS).

**Related documents:** [GB.346/PFA/1](#); [GB.346/INS/5](#); [GB.344/INS/7](#); [GB.344/PV](#); [GB.341/INS/8](#).

## ▶ Introduction

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1. In his vision statement, the Director-General proposed a global social justice programme comprising five key components, among them the establishment of a Global Coalition for Social Justice (Coalition) that would consist of the ILO tripartite constituents, organizations from the multilateral system and other stakeholders.
2. Bringing together relevant actors with a common ambition to promote strong, sustainable and inclusive development through strengthened global solidarity, policy coherence and concerted action, the Coalition would pave the way towards the emergence of a new global social contract.
3. The initiative generated much interest among ILO constituents during the electoral campaign as well as in the Director-General's further exchanges following his election.
4. The present document is intended to enable the Governing Body to hold an initial discussion on such a Coalition, with a view to providing preliminary guidance on its possible scope, principal focus areas and modalities. Based on the guidance received during the discussion, further proposals will be developed for consideration by the Governing Body at its 347th Session (March 2023).
5. This document is to be examined in conjunction with the proposed programme of work for 2024–25, as well as with the comprehensive and integrated ILO strategy to reduce and prevent inequalities in the world of work, submitted to the same session.<sup>1</sup>

## ▶ Context

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6. Poverty and inequalities within and among countries are on the rise in many parts of the world. The economic and social crises of recent years have been exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters due to accelerating climate change, geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts. Beyond the human tragedies associated with them and their impact on the world of work, these crises have highlighted the interlinkages and dependencies of economies and societies around the world and shown the crucial need for concerted action to respond to them, at global, regional and national levels.
7. This has happened against the background of important changes such as, inter alia, growing disruptions in economies linked to globalization and technology, significant demographic transformations, increasing migration flows and protracted situations of fragility. The world of work has not been spared by these upheavals. The perceived lack of satisfactory responses to these multiple challenges and changes has led in many countries to growing discontent and mistrust vis-à-vis established institutions and actors of public life.
8. Confronted with this complex situation, the multilateral system has also struggled to adapt to a changing environment and to provide concrete and coordinated responses to many of the world's most pressing challenges. The growing gap between international commitments and

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<sup>1</sup> GB.346/PFA/1 and GB.346/INS/5.

concrete achievements has fragilized multilateral action and its credibility, resulting in open criticism and disengagement. More than ever, it is urgent for the multilateral system to deliver and to contribute to bringing solutions to people's daily problems, and to do so in a more efficient and coherent manner.

9. This sense of urgency has been shared by many, including the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General who, in his report *Our Common Agenda*,<sup>2</sup> has warned against today's growing divide and called for a more inclusive and networked multilateralism, re-embracing global solidarity and renewing the social contract between governments and their people and within societies, anchored in a comprehensive approach to human rights. He has thus put the ILO's core values at the centre of the multilateral debate.
10. Building on its constitutional mandate, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, the Organization's steadfast ambition must remain to promote social justice as a necessary pre-condition of universal and lasting peace.
11. Social justice makes societies and economies function better and reduces poverty, inequalities and social tensions. It plays an important role in attaining more inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development paths and is key for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), especially at a time when the achievement of those goals remains faraway.
12. It is more important than ever that the multilateral system coalesce around a set of shared values and goals and identify the means to respond to peoples' aspirations and needs. Social justice has therefore to become one of the cornerstones of the renewed multilateralism that is required; a rallying objective but also a significant instrument for a more efficient multilateral system, ensuring coherence across a range of policy areas. The ILO is well placed to contribute to this process.

## ► Purpose and scope

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13. The overall purpose of the proposed Coalition is to contribute to the reduction and prevention of inequalities as well as to ensure that social justice is prioritized in national, regional and global policymaking and activities, including in development cooperation as well as financial, trade and investment agreements. The Coalition will also support the delivery of the 2030 Agenda by providing a coherent multilateral response to the world's socio-economic problems and by promoting increased financing to close the gaps towards the achievement of the SDGs, including SDG 8. As such, the Coalition should be seen as a vehicle to accelerate action or maximize the impact of action by ensuring more coordinated and coherent approaches among its members.
14. Although the world of work is a fundamental component in the attainment of social justice, it is certainly not the only one. There are many other aspects including access to healthcare, education, food, housing, water and sanitation. This requires strong and coherent policies in a multitude of areas. Financial, economic, trade and social policies all incorporate specific

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<sup>2</sup> UN, *Our Common Agenda*, Report of the Secretary-General, 2021.

objectives, but all should be geared towards the overall goal of promoting the welfare of citizens.

15. The quest for social justice cannot be an endeavour for the ILO alone, therefore, and requires the involvement of the multilateral system as a whole. Given its normative mandate, tripartite constituency and means of action, the ILO is uniquely positioned to legitimately advance social justice and call upon others to join forces. The objective of social justice needs to become a central component that is systematically present in all multilateral development discussions, strategies and activities at the national, regional and global levels.
16. The Coalition would bring together ILO tripartite constituents and the relevant organizations of the multilateral system. However, to be truly impactful, the Coalition should also seek the active collaboration of other actors who are either currently engaged in the promotion of social justice or who would have a major impact on its attainment. What is needed is the widespread mobilization and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders such as civil society, private foundations, academia, the private sector and development partners.
17. The Coalition should therefore provide the framework to foster policy coherence and investments for social justice and decent work globally and at country level, in particular through enhanced cooperation between the ILO and its tripartite constituents with the wider UN development system, the international financial institutions, regional development banks and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Coalition would be the ILO's main contribution to the shaping of the new social contract and renewed multilateralism called for in *Our Common Agenda*, paving the way for the formulation of an essential component of the development strategy of the multilateral system for the years to come.
18. The Coalition should also serve the purpose of ensuring policy coherence for social justice within the Office. It will be an integral part of the implementation of the proposed programme of work for 2024–25, most particularly outcome 7 on “integrated policy and institutional responses for social justice through decent work”.
19. Achieving greater policy coherence requires mutually reinforcing action at national as well as international levels if the current imbalance between social goals and economic, financial and trade policies is to be addressed. With the active assistance and expertise of the ILO offices in the field, the Coalition will promote policy coherence for social justice and decent work at country level through support for national measures across a range of areas, with the full engagement of the social partners and ministries of labour and in close interactions with other Ministries, particularly those responsible for economic, financial, trade and environmental policies.

## ▶ Guiding principles and main focus areas

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20. The Coalition would:
  - be embedded in the ILO's values and principles of tripartism and social dialogue as well as its normative mandate;
  - promote policy coherence for social justice at global, regional and national levels;
  - aim for concrete and measurable impact on the ground as well as a strong advocacy role for social justice in multilateral debates;

- focus on clearly identified priorities and set achievable and realistic objectives and targets, with lean, comprehensible and straightforward monitoring and reporting mechanisms; and
  - start with a limited number of partners considered as key for the achievement of the objectives of the Coalition.
21. In light of the multidimensional dangers of a continuation of the current trends towards more inequality in the distribution of income and wealth within and among countries, addressing inequalities in income and opportunities would constitute an overarching objective of the Coalition. Implementation will therefore be closely associated with the ILO comprehensive and integrated strategy to reduce and prevent inequalities in the world of work.<sup>3</sup>
  22. The Coalition will build on the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions launched by the UN Secretary-General, with the ILO as lead agency, to increase multilateral coordination and support for Member States in implementing and financing integrated policies and strategies to create decent jobs, extend social protection and facilitate just transitions.
  23. The Coalition will be at the centre of the ILO's partnership strategy. In view of the current context and in full synchronization with the activities in the five priority areas contained in the proposed programme of work for 2024–25,<sup>4</sup> it is proposed that the Coalition act as a conduit for initiating or accelerating action in the following focus areas, identified in the vision statement of the Director-General as requiring urgent and concerted action:
    - strengthening the ILO's cooperation with the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks to set up a socially sustainable anti-crisis framework;
    - realizing universal social protection through the development of social protection systems, including floors, with special attention to universal healthcare and the possibility of an evidence-based minimum living income for all;
    - developing an initiative to harness opportunities and address challenges for enterprises and workers in the transition to a green and digital economy, as well as to work in association with relevant partners, such as the Green Climate Fund, in support of green transition and climate finance for small and medium-sized enterprises; and
    - developing an initiative for socially fair trade, in consultation with relevant international trade organizations, most particularly the WTO, as well as the development within the ILO of a support programme for countries negotiating social measures in trade and investment agreements.
  24. These focus areas are related to specific outcomes contained in the proposed programme of work for 2024–25. However, activities in some of these areas are more advanced than others, requiring different approaches and forms of action as well as the involvement of varying sets of actors.
  25. Other major new initiatives involving a wide array of international organizations, development partners and other stakeholders could be considered, and the views of the Governing Body are sought with regard to possible priorities. In the development of such potential areas of

<sup>3</sup> GB.346/INS/5.

<sup>4</sup> The five priority areas are: gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion; transitions from the informal to the formal economy; just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies; decent work in supply chains; and decent work for crisis response.

activities, due consideration will be given to existing ILO multistakeholder initiatives, the outcomes of the ILO Global Forum for a human-centred recovery in light of the guidance provided by the Governing Body at its 344th Session (March 2022),<sup>5</sup> as well as to UN system efforts to enhance multilateral cooperation, with a view to maximizing ILO added-value and addressing areas currently not covered elsewhere.

26. With a view to placing the objective of social justice at the forefront of the multilateral development debate, the ILO could envisage the preparation of a report on the state of social justice in the world.<sup>6</sup> Such a report, which could be published at regular intervals, would provide a general overview of the main dimensions of social justice, allowing countries to benefit from a wide array of information and to decide in which particular areas they wished to focus their efforts.

## ▶ Possible modalities and schedule

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27. Given its nature and significance, the initiative will require a major degree of reflection and consultation. The Office therefore invites the fullest engagement of ILO tripartite constituents in the reflection around a Global Coalition for Social Justice and will conduct, as appropriate, initial consultations with a range of potential partner organizations within the multilateral system as well as other possible stakeholders.
28. The proposed schedule is as follows:
- November 2022: first discussion and initial guidance by the Governing Body. Based on the views expressed and guidance received, the Office will prepare a more detailed document for the 347th Session (March 2023);
  - February 2023: informal tripartite consultations will be undertaken to prepare the discussion at the 347th Session;
  - March 2023: further discussion and guidance provided by the Governing Body;
  - June 2023: discussion at the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference of the report of the Director-General in which he intends to address this issue.

## ▶ Draft decision

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29. **The Governing Body:**
- (a) **took note of the elements related to a Global Coalition for Social Justice contained in document GB.346/INS/17/1 and requested the Director-General to pursue his efforts and consultations, taking into account the guidance provided during the discussion;**

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<sup>5</sup> GB.344/INS/7 and GB.344/PV, paras 247–282.

<sup>6</sup> GB.346/INS/5, para. 18.

- (b) requested the Director-General to present an updated report to its 347th Session (March 2023), addressing the issues raised during the discussion and providing additional information; and**
- (c) requested the Office to organize informal consultations on the above matters prior to the 347th Session.**