

DECENT WORK PARTNERSHIPS FOR DECENT WORK

Newsletter



International
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101st Session of the International Labour Conference

The 101st Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC, May 30 to June 15) lifted restrictions on the full participation of **Myanmar** in its activities in accordance with the review of measures to secure compliance by Myanmar. The Conference decided to review progress in the elimination of forced labour in the country in 2013. In a historical [address](#) to the ILC, Aung San Suu Kyi called for democracy-friendly development growth in Myanmar and invited international aid and investment. Special guests addressing the Conference included the Presidents of Costa Rica, Italy, Panama, Peru, Tunisia and Zambia, Prince Felipe of Asturias, and the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum.

The ILC adopted a **Social Protection Floors Recommendation** and a **resolution on “The youth employment crisis: A call for action,”** which encourages action at all levels and gives new impetus to addressing this global crisis. In addition, in its recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW), the Conference reinforced their resolve to work towards the universal realization of FPRW as a necessary, urgent and achievable goal to advance development and social justice, resulting in a Framework for Action for 2012-16.

Social protection floors, a new Recommendation

The Social Protection Floors (SPFs) Recommendation provides guidance to the Members of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to “establish and maintain, as applicable, SPFs as a fundamental element of their national social security schemes”, and to implement SPFs within national strategies for the extension of social security. Social protection floors comprise nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees, which secure protection aimed at alleviating or preventing poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion by allowing access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level. They should be established by law and should at a minimum ensure that all in need have access to essential health care and benefits, as well as basic income security for children, for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income due to sickness, unemployment, maternity or disability, and for older persons. Recognizing the overall and primary responsibility of the State in implementing the Recommendation, the tripartite participation of employers’ and workers’ organizations, as well as consultation with other relevant and representative organizations of persons concerned, should guide the process, particularly in regard to the establishment and review of the levels of minimal guarantees.

The Recommendation sends a strong message to extend social protection systems. ILO Members should formulate and implement national social security extension strategies based on participative consultations and social dialogue. Implementation of SPFs should be prioritized as a starting point in countries that do not have minimal social security guarantees. In accordance with their fiscal and economic capacity, they should find means to invest available resources in affordable services in order to bring a higher level of social security to as many people as possible. Security extension strategies should identify gaps in protection and seek to close them through progressive, coordinated schemes, whether contributory or non-contributory. The aim is to complement social security with active labour market policies, reaching persons both in the formal and informal economy, and supporting the growth of formal employment.

This is based on regarding social security as an investment in people that empowers them to adjust to changes in the economy and labour market, where social security systems act as an automatic stabilizer. The prioritization of social security policies that favour social inclusion and long-term sustainable growth helps overcome extreme poverty and reduce inequalities, ill health and the number of premature deaths.

Youth employment crisis: A call for action

The ILC Conclusions on the youth employment crisis call for urgent action and establish a framework for the way forward. They present key elements to address the crisis: employment and economic policies for youth employment; employability through adequate education, training and skills, and the school-to-work transition; labour market policies, youth entrepreneurship and self-employment; ensuring rights for young people; and ILO action. There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Multi-pronged policies and measures should provide a balanced approach to the demand and supply side. Today, return to growth is needed to sustain aggregate demand, including through pro-employment macro-economic policies and investment strategies. Lessons of policies that work in the field of employment, employability, entrepreneurship development, and labour market policies that ease transition from school to work, provide a base for a call for action to governments, social partners and the international community.

Policy interventions should foster observing rights at work, equal treatment of young workers, and encourage transition from temporary to full, stable employment, as well as from informality to formality. The ILC has also taken note of the discussions at the Youth Employment Forum, which brought together over 100 young leaders and representatives of youth organizations prior to the Conference. The conclusions state that youth are part of the solution, their voices should be heard, their creativity engaged and their rights respected.

The report of the Committee on Youth Employment adopted by the Conference calls on governments, the multilateral system, and relevant national, regional and international organizations to address these challenges jointly. It invites the ILO to take a leadership role in promoting regional and national partnerships for youth employment and the ILO Director-General to lead this Call for immediate and targeted action.



Fundamental principles and rights at work

The Framework for Action adopted as a part of the Conclusions on the FPRW at the 101st ILC states that the FPRW should be universally respected, promoted and realized; accessible to all; and enforced at the national level. It further draws attention to mobilizing ILO means of action on FPRW and makes suggestions with regard to taking into account other initiatives to promote FPRW. The report states that “while important progress has been made since the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work towards their universal application and ratification of the eight fundamental Conventions, gaps still remain.” A plan of action on FPRW will be submitted for consideration by the ILO Governing Body at its 316th Session in November 2012.

Efforts are needed to ensure that all workers are protected by national legislation, that they have access to expeditious and fair enforcement mechanisms, and can effectively exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining. It should also be taken into account that most violations of FPRW affect adults and children in the informal economy. Certain categories of workers and population groups are more exposed to potential FPRW violations, such as migrant workers, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, as well as rural and agricultural workers, domestic workers or those in export processing sectors. Concerning national enforcement of FPRW, the effective functioning of institutions – monitoring compliance, providing fair dispute resolution mechanisms, and developing prevention measures – is a key element.

Recently, the increased interest in FPRW has been reflected in their growing integration into a range of initiatives outside the ILO. It is an opportunity for the ILO to provide assistance and expertise through effective planning and resource allocation, technical cooperation and capacity building, enhanced research capacity, and standards-related action. The ILO is encouraged to step up its monitoring of developments on FPRW in international fora, promoting policy coherence and support to private voluntary initiatives, including public-private partnerships.

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The 2012 ILC was marked by a reinvigorated commitment to South-South cooperation by Member States (more information will be provided in the next Newsletter). China and the ILO signed a “Partnership Agreement for Promoting Technical Cooperation with a Focus on South-South Initiatives”. China has committed US\$1 million to support South-South cooperation on Decent Work over three years. On 12 June 2012, India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) signed a declaration to reaffirm the IBSA commitment to South-South cooperation and the Decent Work Agenda.

The ILO [elected Guy Ryder](#) as its tenth Director-General in an election preceding the ILC on 28 May 2012. Mr. Ryder is currently the ILO’s Executive Director for International Labour Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. He was elected out of nine candidates in a secret ballot by the ILO’s Governing Body, conducted at ILO headquarters in Geneva, and will begin his five-year term in October 2012.

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