



FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Improvements in standards-related activities of the ILO: Technical assistance and promotion**Contents**

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1. Introduction

1. The Governing Body and its Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards (ILS) have been engaged over the last several years in a process of review and improvement of ILO standards-related activities. At its 283rd Session (March 2002), the Governing Body identified areas and aspects of standards-related activities which should be the subject of further discussion together with a tentative timetable.¹ In this context, the Governing Body requested the Office to prepare for its November 2002 session a paper on standards-related technical assistance and promotional activities.
2. This paper covers technical assistance and promotion in the broadest sense. It focuses on:
 - action for improved knowledge of standards; enhanced commitment to their application;
 - increase in ratifications of up-to-date Conventions;
 - improved implementation; and
 - assistance in the removal of problems in the application of standards.

It also covers various means of action such as advocacy, training and technical assistance. A central starting point is the fact that ratification as a rule has to be accompanied with specific measures for implementation – either prior to ratification or as a follow-up, or both.

2. Building on progress

2.1. Decent work

3. The Report of the Director-General to the 87th Session of the International Labour Conference (1999) introduced “decent work” as the converging focus of the four strategic objectives of the Organization. The Report emphasized *the need to reinvigorate international labour standards* and called for a number of actions *to raise the profile and increase the relevance of the ILO’s work on standards*. These included *stepping up efforts to help countries implement ILO standards*. The Report asserted that *setting standards is of course only the start. The ILO needs to reinvigorate its promotional efforts to see that standards are ratified and applied*, and it stated that *the ILO needs to be more proactive when it comes to implementation, assisting governments in giving effect to the Conventions they have chosen to ratify. At the formal level this could mean helping governments revise their labour legislation and improve their inspectorates. A key way to promote implementation is to ensure that everyone appreciates the value and use of standards*. A major emphasis was on *linking supervision with ILO technical cooperation and research*.
4. The Report further called for *concentrating attention on high-impact standards*. “... In this competitive environment it is important that the ILO concentrate its attention on high-impact standards to make them stand out from the pack. The Declaration on Fundamental

¹ GB.283/4.

Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up has performed an important role here by highlighting core labour standards. The Governing Body has further identified as priorities a handful of institutional standards, including those on tripartite consultation, on labour inspection and on employment policy. The social partners may wish to single out others for special attention, and the InFocus programmes may also be of assistance.”

5. Two years later, the Report of the Director-General: “Reducing the decent work deficit, A global challenge”, submitted to the 89th Session of the International Labour Conference (2001), stated that *it is possible to make rights, employment, protection and dialogue part of one development package ... difficult trade-offs may sometimes arise, and it is appropriate and inevitable to leave it to each Member to resolve them in the light of the special circumstances and preferences obtaining in each country*. Finally, the Report asserted that *we should continue to explore other new mechanisms and institutions in the field of standards. We should be open to innovations which could permit countries to progress faster, on a voluntary basis*.

2.2. Ratification campaigns

6. The success of ratification campaigns conducted since the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development and Beyond in 1995 has increasingly underlined the need for more assistance in implementation of Conventions. More and more member States are undertaking legal commitments through their ratification of the fundamental international labour Conventions. The results achieved over the last ten years by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (since 1998), as well as other assistance provided for implementation, have focused attention over and above ratification and advocacy to improved implementation of standards. This is a logical shift from awareness to action and from ratification to implementation.
7. The universal recognition of labour standards as a major component of the debate on globalization and its effect on employment and working conditions has created increased awareness and heightened expectations. The ILO is increasingly being called upon to mobilize resources in response to this expectation. In addition to the fundamental Conventions, the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) has been singled out for promotion as a basis for better social dialogue. Within the last ten years a number of United Nations conferences have referred to various fundamental and other ILO Conventions; they have served as a catalyst for ratification and improved implementation of international labour standards.

2.3. Improved focus on standards-related action

8. Seven years of examination by the LILS Working Party on Policy regarding the Revision of Standards² has led to identification of 71 Conventions, five protocols and 73 Recommendations as being up to date. In addition, 24 Conventions and 15 Recommendations are identified as instruments to be revised and 55 Conventions and 30 Recommendations are now considered as outdated instruments. Subsequently, 18 Recommendations have been expressly replaced by more recent instruments and five Conventions and 20 Recommendations have been withdrawn by the Conference. This

² From March 1995 to March 2002.

work was directly relevant to the development of an integrated approach to standards-related activities, referred to in paragraphs 30-31 of this paper.

9. Recent decisions on supervisory activities are also aimed at improving the overall focus of standards-related activities. The most important of these is a new grouping of standards for reporting purposes adopted by the Governing Body in November 2001. It takes into account the thematic content of the instruments and the reporting workload of the constituents as well as the amount of processing work by the Office.
10. It is also important to bear in mind the development debate across the multilateral system and the opportunities that it provides for the promotion of standards and fundamental principles and rights at work. A rights-based approach to poverty and development is in line with initiatives within the United Nations system as a whole as regards Poverty Reduction Strategies, in particular the Draft Guidelines on a Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which now are broadly adopted by the international community, include the promotion of good (social) governance, participation of civil society and other topics that are equally important entry points for international labour standards. Similarly the United Nations Global Compact has supported the work of the ILO to promote fundamental principles and rights at work through technical assistance and technical cooperation.

2.4. Strategic budgeting and greater integration of ILS

11. The introduction of strategic budgeting in the ILO, focused on the Decent Work Agenda, further improves the impact of ILO activities that have a normative dimension. Strategic budgeting was first introduced in the 2000-01 programme and budget. The activities planned for each budget cycle aim at achieving a specified target level of impact as regards each operational objective, measured by one or more indicators identified for each of the objectives.
12. This yields greater potential for effective standards-related promotional and technical assistance activities, better integration of standards in the overall activities of the ILO, and better integration of technical considerations in standards-related activities. Through such programming, all different ILO units and InFocus programmes can incorporate standards in their workplans. The same is true for the regional structures of the ILO.³

3. Overview of existing technical assistance and promotional activities

13. All ILO activities are related to standards, either directly or through support and backstopping of other activities. Various ILO projects and assistance programmes aim at creating an enabling socio-economic context in which national labour conditions can be enhanced and international labour standards better applied. In this sense the entire technical assistance and cooperation activities of the ILO, under any of its four strategic objectives, are related to standards, just as standards are related to all other objectives. The way in which effect is given to this needs to be reviewed.

³ A good example is the successful integration of “gender” into all activities as a major consideration in the programming exercise and as a cross-cutting issue.

- 14.** Today, technical assistance and promotional activities by the International Labour Standards Department (NORMES) are mainly in the form of technical advisory missions. Most of the missions are carried out by the 13 standards specialists located in multidisciplinary teams (MDTs).⁴ Missions by headquarters officials for the promotion of standards most often take the form of participation in seminars, workshops, symposia and meetings, or the provision of very specialized advisory services or consultations concerning the meaning and application of international labour standards. They also include technical backstopping of joint projects or programmes with other departments, which on occasion are substantial. Further, missions are undertaken to follow up the discussions at the Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations; upon the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR); or at the suggestion of the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA). Direct contact missions are undertaken at the invitation of the government concerned and they assist the government and social partners to remedy problems in the application of standards. Regional, subregional and national seminars and symposia on international labour standards are either intended to explain the requirements of certain Conventions or to introduce to the participants international labour standards and the ILO supervisory system in general. Such courses are attended by judges, lawyers, officials of ministries of labour, and employers' and workers' representatives.
- 15.** Technical assistance is provided to member States under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The Declaration itself has underlined the role of the ILO to assist its Members, inter alia, by mobilization of external resources and support. Such activities are based on the plans of action adopted by the Governing Body for each set of fundamental principles and rights. Preparation of these plans of action benefits from the discussions of the Conference and the Governing Body respectively on the Global Report and the Annual Reports as a follow-up to the Declaration, as well as the views of the Declaration Expert-Advisers provided in their introduction to the Annual Reports. The activities related to the elimination of child labour continue under IPEC which has developed in response to growing demand. The Declaration and IPEC provide a large portfolio of technical assistance and technical cooperation to the member States covering a wide range of areas and activities, and currently represent about half of ILO technical cooperation.
- 16.** The Turin Centre works closely with NORMES and the Declaration on developing training activities for constituents. These include courses for government officials responsible for reporting on international labour standards; courses for lawyers, judges and legal educators; labour standards, productivity improvement and enterprise development; international labour standards and globalization; and the rights of women workers. A regular feature is the annual Training Programme on International Labour Standards organized in cooperation with the Turin Centre during the two weeks preceding the ILC. All trade union training activities and a number of activities in other sectors include sessions on international labour standards relevant to the subject matter of the course.
- 17.** This assistance has resulted in additional ratifications or progress towards ratification of Conventions; improvements in implementation of Conventions whether or not ratified, including modification of both legislation and practice; improvements in trade union rights; and/or improvement in the rates and quality of reporting. National civil servants,

⁴ In 1980, the system of regional advisers on international labour standards was established in the developing regions; in time, the regional adviser system was replaced by the multidisciplinary teams that cover most developing countries and countries in transition. The standards specialists on these teams have significantly increased the volume of assistance provided to member States on a day-to-day basis. See GB.285/LILS/6.

and employers' and workers' representatives are trained on reporting obligations. Technical support is provided to national tripartite committees in the revision and analysis of national legislation and the examination of the comments formulated by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

18. In the field of dissemination of information, the ILO web site provides information on international labour standards, ratifications of ILO Conventions and reports of the supervisory bodies through the ILOLEX database, which is also distributed on CD-ROM. The web version has more than 100,000 monthly hits. NATLEX, a database on national labour, social security and related human rights legislation, covers about 180 countries and is accessible via the Internet. Last year, NORMES released the International Labour Standards Electronic library (ILSE) CD-ROM, containing basic international labour standards documents. ILSE is distributed for free to constituents and ILO offices.

4. Lessons learned

19. The first lesson from the ILO's technical assistance programmes on standards and fundamental principles and rights at work is that the demand is large and growing. The ILO's ability to provide this assistance is restricted mainly by the availability of resources.
20. It is also apparent that technical cooperation and normative action reinforce one another. This is demonstrated by IPEC and Declaration experience. IPEC technical cooperation activities resulted in enhanced understanding of the problems involved in eliminating child labour, which, in turn, influenced the normative agenda of the Organization. The work undertaken by IPEC from 1992 onwards definitely played an important role in the growing awareness of the need for a supplementary instrument for more focused action against the worst forms of child labour. Subsequently, there were increased ratifications not only of the new Convention No. 182, adopted in 1999, but also of Convention No. 138 on minimum age for employment and work. This Convention, adopted in 1973, has experienced a significant increase in ratifications since it was included in the ratification campaign launched in 1995 following the Copenhagen Social Summit.
21. A further lesson from the programmes developed by the Declaration is that linkages between standards and other areas – employment, social protection, social dialogue, poverty reduction – have to be fully explored if results are to be sustained. This approach applies to the programmes started in 2000 on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and in 2001 on forced labour, including trafficking of human beings. In 2003, a new programme on discrimination should be adopted. The ILO will then have a technical cooperation facility for each of the four categories of fundamental principles and rights at work.
22. Another lesson is therefore that the standards agenda needs to be firmly placed in a development perspective. The notion of a rights-based development framework in which social and economic progress accompany each other is also echoed in the concept of decent work, which in itself implies integration of the different strategic objectives of the Organization.

5. Challenges

23. It is possible to define two interlinked standards agendas and identify two principal challenges related to technical assistance. The immediate concrete agenda relates to any given Convention or group of Conventions and traces the path from ratification to implementation. ILO assistance may be needed to adapt the national law and practice

framework to a Convention and ensure ratification and implementation. Technical assistance and promotional activities can aim at: identification of a need which can be met through the work to achieve ratification; the ratification process itself – including better awareness of the implications; action to promote the provisions of Conventions once ratified and their translation into national law and practice; and supervisory dialogue, particularly in case of any problems which might be detected.

24. The second agenda is to define the standards component of the decent work needs of each country. The challenge is to determine the particular profile of standards-related action in promoting decent work at the country level. This involves relating standards tools to the needs that emerge, in conjunction with other ILO tools. This has to include both an analysis of the normative situation of a given country as well as of the factors which influence it, such as poverty, employment and social policy, state of education, child labour, state of social dialogue, freedom of association, the industrial relations system, etc.
25. The question is not so much how to assess the needs for standards-related action in each country. The answer to this question should in normal circumstances emerge from the tripartite ILO constituency in each country and from the dialogue with supervisory bodies. However, the modalities of the national tripartite contribution could well be further discussed.
26. The role of international labour standards as an objective of ILO technical assistance and technical cooperation therefore goes far beyond a checklist approach to certain Conventions or Recommendations. The following paragraphs present a number of ideas.

6. Tools to improve the normative component of ILO technical assistance and promotional activities

6.1. Joint programming

27. At present, various individual initiatives or projects involve coordination between the Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Sector and other sectors and parts of the Office. The Declaration and IPEC increasingly involve other technical sectors. Cooperation can take different forms, including joint management of projects or activities; informal “task forces” or teams; and ad hoc discussions. Other technical sectors, regional offices and technical cooperation structures are jointly involved in some functional areas. However, the policy response usually proposed has been to request the officers in charge of any technical cooperation project to incorporate standards-related concerns. This can remain at the level of a minimalist checklist approach where international labour standards are introduced in “other” activities in a mechanical manner.
28. To institutionalize standards-based cooperation, any technical assistance or promotional activity should be planned and formulated from the outset with a requirement to take the contents as well as real and potential impact of relevant international labour standards into account. This would require practical measures such as joint intervention at the MDT level, team-building at headquarters and in the field, and training of technical staff on the standards relevant to their field of competence. Those who do the planning and implementation of technical cooperation activities should be trained to carry out the necessary normative analysis in consultation with NORMES and standards specialists at the MDTs. Joint programming could develop into a major vehicle for this purpose.

6.2. Inclusion of indicators and targets

29. Another possibility is provided by strategic budgeting. Respect for, and ratification and application of, international labour standards could be covered more prominently, in the form of operational objectives under the different strategic objectives. Promotion of standards could also be present throughout the programme and budget under each operational objective in the form of indicators and targets.

6.3. Integration at the national level

30. Though it has always been stated that labour standards should guide ILO technical cooperation activities, much remains to be done for better integration of these modes of action. The resolution and conclusions concerning the role of the ILO in technical cooperation adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1999 stated that the four strategic objectives embrace respect for international labour standards and contain the implicit goal of promoting them. An enabling environment for the promotion, realization and implementation of international labour standards should be created with a view to ensuring that technical cooperation can assist in the ratification and implementation of Conventions.

6.4. Integrated approach to standards-related activities

31. Under the integrated approach to standards-related activities, adopted by the Governing Body in 2000, general discussions would be held at the ILC examining all ILO means of action in a given area. In addition to standard setting, this would cover promotion, technical cooperation, research, advocacy, etc. A key aim of this approach is to integrate standards with other activities of the Organization as well as looking in an integrated way at the interrelationship of standards. One feature of this will be an assessment of the actual impact of standards.
32. The first such general discussion based on an integrated approach will focus on occupational safety and health at the ILC in June 2003, to be followed by one on migrant workers in June 2004. The outcome of these general discussions, and subsequent ones in other areas, would be action plans to increase the impact of ILO standards-related activities. Such plans of action could include both future standard setting and methods to promote existing standards.

6.5. Better dialogue with the constituents

33. The establishment of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) within the regions, each covering a number of countries, was intended to bring the ILO closer to its constituents. The activities of the teams as well as the entire technical work of the ILO were to reflect the needs of constituents and the reality of their achievements and constraints. The activities of the teams were originally based on the country programme objectives which were developed in consultation with the tripartite constituents. This has now developed into Decent Work Country Programmes which include the promotion and application of labour standards as an integral part, enhancing ILO dialogue with its member States.

6.6. Increased tripartite participation

34. The LILS Committee discussed a document in March 2001⁵ on “Possible improvements in ILO standards-related activities – The supervisory system of the ILO”. The document proposed a number of approaches that could be explored as solutions to the issue of reporting workload for the member States and examination workload for the supervisory organs. They included the ideas of “**greater reliance on the tripartite consultation mechanism and social dialogue at the national level, ... without prejudice to the continued availability of special procedures**”. The LILS Committee did not endorse any specific proposals on this subject. However, there was much interest in how social partners at the national level can play an enhanced role in the ILO’s standards-related activities in general.
35. Another paper⁶ submitted to the November 2001 session of the LILS Committee referred to increased tripartite participation at the national level. “**The precondition of genuine tripartite cooperation**” would be “**in the sense of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and the Tripartite Consultation Activities of the International Labour Organization Recommendation, 1976 (No. 152)**”. In the discussion the emphasis was laid on voluntary country specific programmes of standards-related technical assistance. They would be aimed at improved implementation of standards based on the views of the tripartite constituents on the problems of application as they see it and on possible priorities and ways to overcome them. The Governing Body decided to **promote cooperation through agreements on country-by-country assistance programmes to resolve problems of application of Conventions and related questions. It invited the Director-General to hold further consultations on strengthening tripartite participation at the national level.**

7. Integration with the supervisory dialogue

36. The ILO supervisory mechanisms have developed over the years and now include complementary bodies and procedures which give effect to the overall mandate of the Organization. ILO action, including its supervisory activities, should lead to improved living and working conditions, and respect for and enhancement of rights at work. Supervisory activities should promote tangible improvements on the ground. Supervision is not an end in itself; it is a tool to achieve improvements. It helps identify problems in the application of international labour standards, whether in law or in practice, and to find solutions. One measurement of the effectiveness of the standards supervisory activities is their impact. The supervisory system assembles information about specific national circumstances in which the standards are applied. Analysing this information should lead to better understanding of the real situation. As a result, it should help the ILO to determine, together with the member States concerned, technical assistance and cooperation needed to tackle the problems of application in their actual context. It is also a source of valuable data on best practices.
37. ILO supervisory activities can be effective when there is dialogue with the member State and the social partners. ILO supervisory bodies do not make judgements in the legal sense. They examine the application of the Conventions; and dialogue is a major tool available to them. They often suggest how ILO can assist the member State concerned. Many cases and

⁵ GB.280/LILS/3.

⁶ GB.282/LILS/5.

discussions have led to practical engagement of the ILO together with the governments and their social partners in addressing the problems and envisaging solutions to them. In these cases the supervisory machinery has not only helped identify problems but also has helped to bring about a remedy to the problem through ILO assistance.

38. The Committee of Experts regularly encourages governments to have recourse to the Office's assistance to resolve problems, and many of them do so, in a formal or informal way. The Office attempts to respond within the limits of its resources and the degree of urgency. This close link between supervision and assistance distinguishes the ILO from other international supervisory systems.

7.1. Present trends in the work of the supervisory system

39. Statistics indicate that the Committee of Experts, the Conference Committee, the Committee on Freedom of Association, and the committees set up to examine representations under article 24 of the Constitution have increasingly encouraged technical assistance by the ILO. A review of the Committee of Experts' observations in the period from 1999 to 2002 indicates that in 2002 the Committee of Experts reminded governments on 38 occasions that they may avail themselves of the technical assistance of the ILO for the application of ratified Conventions. The Committee referred to this possibility on 33 occasions in 2001; on 13 occasions in 2000; and on 16 occasions in 1999. In some cases governments requested technical assistance on their own initiative. In 2000, the Committee took note of two such cases and in 1999 of five cases. There were two cases in 2001 where governments referred to technical assistance in response to statements by workers' organizations. In the same period of 1999 to 2002 the Committee of Experts also made references to technical cooperation, four in 2002 and nine in 2001. Corresponding figures are eight for 2000 and four for 1999.
40. The Conference Committee referred to technical cooperation in three of the special paragraphs adopted by the Committee in the said period. In general the availability of technical assistance was mentioned in the conclusions of the Conference Committee on individual cases on four occasions in 2001, on seven occasions in both 1999 and 2000. The Conference Committee at its most recent session (2002) listed five cases in which assistance from the Office had allowed governments to meet reporting obligations and four more in which such assistance was requested.

7.2. Enhanced role for the ILO supervisory system

41. The ILO supervisory system identifies problems in the application of international labour standards and encourages steps to overcome and remove those problems in a pragmatic manner. The use of technical assistance as a major tool in this regard has been an increasing trend. Wherever appropriate, the different supervisory bodies could consider where technical assistance could help resolve the issues. All parts of the Office should more systematically examine the comments of supervisory bodies in planning technical assistance to implement the Conventions. This would in normal cases imply dialogue with the constituents in countries concerned.

7.3. More information on needs for technical assistance

42. The question has also been raised whether the supervisory system allows for the identification not only of problems in the correct implementation of standards, but also for the identification of the measures to be taken to correct them, including through technical assistance.
43. In order to enable the supervisory bodies to make recommendations in this regard, they must know the needs of the constituents and also be aware of how ILO assistance and technical cooperation have already affected the situation. The report forms approved by the Governing Body could include a specific question on ILO assistance and technical cooperation which could improve the implementation of the relevant Convention, and on technical assistance already received from the Office and the impact of this assistance.

7.4. Supervisory bodies providing guidance

44. Based on governments' reports as well as reports from employers' and workers' organizations, replies to the comments of the supervisory bodies, and reports of ILO missions and activities, the CEACR might be better placed to include in its report observations on how ILO assistance or other measures had served to remove the problems of application. This is already addressed in a number of cases, but it could become a more prominent feature of individual observations. Such an approach could also help bridge the perceived divide between the legal and technical sides of problems in the application of standards.
45. Consideration of technical assistance in the report of the Committee of Experts would in turn enable the Conference Committee to address this aspect. The Conference Committee would benefit from a better integration of this aspect throughout its deliberations. It would be able to review ILO assistance and its impact in the context of each specific situation and aim at the improved application of standards. Likewise, the standards specialists in the field and officials in the International Labour Standards Department and other departments in headquarters would be better guided by the supervisory bodies in drawing up and in carrying out technical assistance and promotional activities.
46. The introduction of questions on the need for and impact of technical assistance in the report forms under articles 19 and 22 would permit the supervisory bodies to add more on this aspect to supervisory discussions. This would in turn lead to increased integration of technical assistance as a standards-related tool and the mainstreaming of promotional activities in the normative work of the Organization. This would also make the work of the supervisory bodies more interactive with the constituents and the technical structures of the Office. For the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work questions on needs for technical assistance have been incorporated in the relevant questionnaires, although naturally the focus of that follow-up is different from the supervisory process. The Office has been able to benefit from this information in planning assistance and promotional activities under the Declaration, with results which would not otherwise have been achieved.

7.5. Country-specific assistance

47. The extent to which supervisory procedures can take account of ILO assistance activities will depend on the availability of information. Apart from reports sent by governments and by the social partners, the standards specialists involved in technical cooperation and

assistance should advise on the best approach to resolve specific problems. The supervisory procedures could also benefit from information on the entire range of ILO activities in each country. The experience and knowledge of other technical units, and the knowledge of field and project staff, are useful assets for the standards procedures of the ILO.

48. In a country-specific approach, the Office could undertake a concentrated attempt to resolve as many of the standards-related problems raised by the supervisory bodies as possible. The governments and the social partners concerned would have to commit themselves to working with the Office to analyse and correct all the problems raised within their ability. This would often involve other actors in the country beyond ministries of labour, such as other ministries and national legislatures, to implement the Conventions, and apply the measures needed to eliminate the concerns of the ILO supervisory bodies.
49. This would contribute to a more proactive approach to technical cooperation in line with the individual situation in each country. All the 71 international labour Conventions which have been identified by the Governing Body as up to date and needing to be promoted would need to be looked at. The assistance should allow progress towards the ratification and implementation of the most up-to-date instrument. Priorities for each country would need to reflect its individual characteristics, and be elaborated in close cooperation between the relevant MDT and field structures and the technical departments at headquarters. It should correspond to national priorities as identified by government and employers' and workers' representatives and take into account the observations by the supervisory bodies. Logically, this should be part of Decent Work Country Programmes.
50. Training in dealing with actual situations, on project design and delivery, working together with other sectors, more joint work with the field structures, more contact with tripartite constituents within the member States, incorporation of both the technical as well as legal aspects both in activities and factual analysis, should lead to more effective and realistic programmes of work in each national or local situation. ILO experience on the elimination of child labour and in dealing with the problems of the informal economy are two good examples of how consideration of the social context can prove to be the key to success. Field realities are equally crucial for assessing which standards are ready for revision or other appropriate action.

8. Specific areas in need of further reflection

51. The above analysis points to specific areas in which concrete action could be envisaged in order to improve the normative content of technical assistance and promotional activities as well as their relevance and impact. These are:
 - *Integration of the technical assistance and promotional activities with the supervisory dialogue of the ILO.* The Governing Body on various occasions has stated its support for synergy between technical cooperation and standards-related activities. It might be appropriate to add a question relating to assistance to the regular report forms. Alternatively, one could in a more general way encourage governments to include information on the impact of assistance they are already receiving and on possible needs for further ILO assistance in their reports. This would provide the supervisory system with information on efforts made by governments, including with Office assistance. Consequently, these efforts would better be taken into account in the supervisory process. A related question could be on how to obtain additional guidance from supervisory bodies.

- *The extent to which governments would be interested in requesting country-specific standards assistance.* The Governing Body has already endorsed the idea of further concentrated country-specific assistance and advice. This could particularly address countries with identified long-standing problems in the application of standards. It could also include assistance in the discharge of their constitutional obligations on submission to the competent authorities or in the preparation of reports for the ILO supervisory mechanism. Resource and staff constraints allow country-specific assistance to a limited number of countries. Such assistance would naturally be on a voluntary basis and with the involvement of the social partners.

- *The integration of the respect for international labour standards into the country programmes of the ILO.* The Decent Work Agenda and the adoption of strategic budgeting by the Organization are tools to integrate standards into technical activities. A better focus on the up-to-date Conventions and Recommendations and taking stock of the effectiveness of the promotional approach should be further highlighted. Training of ILO staff in charge of planning and implementation of technical cooperation could incorporate normative aspects. The aim would be to ensure that the ILO technical activities promote up-to-date standards which, in turn, promote sustained development.

52. The Committee on Legal Issues and International Labour Standards may wish to indicate the areas in which concrete action could be envisaged.

Geneva, 2 October 2002.

Point for decision: Paragraph 52.