



FOR DECISION

SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Date and agenda of the International Labour Conference

(b) Proposals for the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the International Labour Conference

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Introduction

1. This document is submitted for consideration by the Governing Body at its 294th (November 2005) Session and contains proposals for a first discussion on items which could be placed on the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the Conference and beyond.
2. In accordance with its regular practice, the Governing Body holds in November each year a first discussion on items that are proposed to be placed on the agenda of the International Labour Conference which takes place two-and-a-half years later. In the framework of the provisions of article 10, paragraph (1), of the Standing Orders, the purpose of this discussion is to select a short list of items for close scrutiny in March the following year. The proposals contained in the first part of this document are submitted for consideration in this context.

Proposals for the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the Conference

3. As a general rule, each March the Governing Body finalizes the agenda of the session of the Conference to be held two years later. It may also happen, as is the case this year, that it decides for a variety of reasons to postpone its decision until its November session. In the document relating to the agenda of the 96th (2007) Session of the International Labour Conference, submitted to the current session, the Governing Body is requested to place an item on the agenda for standard setting in respect of work in the fishing sector, following a motion by the 2005 Conference on this matter, and the Governing Body is also invited to select two out of six proposed items.¹
4. Items considered for, but not placed on, the agenda of a specific year of the Conference, are normally resubmitted as a proposal for the agenda the following year. This is the situation in the present case, subject to decisions that will be taken at the same session of the Governing Body in respect of the agenda for the 2007 Conference. It should be noted in this regard that if the proposal relating to the strengthening of the ILO's capacity to support the efforts of its Members to achieve their objectives in the context of globalization were placed on the agenda for 2007, it would not be out of the question, if there were consensus, for it be the subject of another discussion at the Conference in 2008.
5. Consequently, the items proposed for the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the Conference include items that were not placed on the agenda of the Conference for 2007.² Moreover, a new proposal relating to the *promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction* is submitted to the Governing Body in the present document (Part I).

Proposals for the agenda of future Conferences

6. Since 1997, the Governing Body has extended the scope of the November discussions to include an examination of items that could be considered for inclusion in the agenda of *future* Conferences. The three proposals that were submitted in November 2004 in this context were updated to take into consideration the latest developments in the spheres under consideration but, for the reasons indicated in them, they do not yet appear to be

¹ Documents GB.294/2/1 and GB.294/2/1(Add.).

² See their content in the documents referred to above.

ready for immediate action. These proposals are contained in Part II of this document and relate to the following subjects:

- (a) **working time**, which could in future give rise, if necessary, to a general discussion;
 - (b) in the framework of the follow-up to the resolution on occupational safety and health adopted by the Conference in June 2003,³ the **guarding of machinery and chemicals**, which could in future give rise, if necessary, to the revision of the standards concerned;
 - (c) **port work**, which could in future give rise to a general discussion.
7. In relation to these proposals, the Governing Body may wish to give the Office guidance for priorities to be set and further research to be carried out, in order to advance their level of preparation, taking into account the resources and time necessary for this to be done.
8. *In order to draw up the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the International Labour Conference and to develop items for the agenda of future Conferences, the Governing Body is invited to:*
- (a) *examine the proposals for the agenda of the International Labour Conference, including the proposals contained in documents GB.294/2/1 and GB.294/2/1(Add.) which were not selected for the agenda of the 96th (2007) Session of the Conference, as well as the proposal contained in Part I of this document;*
 - (b) *select the proposals to be examined in greater depth at its 295th (March 2006) Session, when it will finalize the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the International Labour Conference; and*
 - (c) *indicate the proposals for which research work and consultation might be accelerated.*

Part I. Additional proposal for the agenda of the 97th (2008) Session of the Conference

Employment

1. **Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction** (General discussion based on an integrated approach)

Summary

Three-quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas, where decent work deficits are most daunting. Agriculture is still the predominant employer in the developing world, but its importance is declining. Lack of productivity in rural areas and imperfections in global production systems contribute to rural poverty. Without massive investment in rural employment generation, rural-urban migration is likely to accelerate. These are some of the issues the proposed general discussion will review, with the aim of setting the framework for a comprehensive strategy and integrated ILO programme of work to promote decent work in rural areas.

³ See ILC: 91st (2003) Session, *Record of Proceedings* No. 22, report of the Committee on Occupational Safety and Health.

9. Self-employment in small-scale agriculture and wage employment in commercial agricultural represent 44 per cent of the total and 70 per cent of rural employment in the world. An additional 30 per cent of rural employment in developing countries is found in non-farm activities.⁴ Many rural labourers are temporary, casual or migrant workers who are particularly vulnerable to poverty. Likewise, small and marginal farmers, as well as wage workers and the self-employed in low productivity non-farm activities, often live below the poverty threshold. In total, 75 per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas, where decent work deficits are greatest.
10. Even though urbanization is accelerating, the rural population still represents 59.5 per cent of the total population in developing countries,⁵ and the shift away from agriculture to manufacturing and services continues worldwide, the farming sector is still the main employer in most developing economies.⁶ Agriculture has the greatest dominance of female employment in the poorest regions of the world,⁷ and prospects for young people are particularly bad in rural areas leaving them with no option but to migrate in search of work in urban areas.
11. Poverty in rural areas may be caused by factors such as:
- low productivity in smallholder farms, often as a result of lack of access to basic education and skills training, or political instability;
 - the sudden dismantling of input subsidies and price stabilization mechanisms under structural adjustment policies without offering rural producers appropriate coping strategies;
 - unequal access to land in some countries;
 - persisting import barriers in industrial countries and falling world market prices for major agricultural commodities; and
 - the absence of efficient farmers' organizations and comprehensive local development strategies.
12. Much agricultural work is beyond the reach of labour standards for a variety of reasons, such as the pattern of land ownership, the size of farms and the seasonal or casual nature of paid farm work. Agricultural workers and subsistence farmers are most exposed to accidents and diseases, yet least covered by social protection schemes and occupational safety and health programmes. Many rural families do not have access to safe drinking water, sanitation, health services and basic education. Less than 10 per cent of the world's waged agricultural workers are organized in trade unions or rural workers' organizations. Some 70 per cent of all child labour is employed in agriculture. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is particularly difficult to control in rural areas.
13. During the 1990s, rural development was largely neglected by researchers, policy-makers and international organizations. Interestingly, this was the time when poverty reduction

⁴ ILO: *World Employment Report 2004-05: Employment, productivity and poverty reduction*, Geneva, 2005, WER 2004-05, p. 149.

⁵ ILO, op. cit., p. 131.

⁶ Almost 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and about 60 per cent in South Asia.

⁷ ILO, op. cit., p. 127.

rates began to slow down in the world. The global debate around poverty reduction strategies in the context of the MDGs has reversed this trend and once again drawn the attention of international agencies to the critical importance of rural development in the fight against poverty. Examples include:

- the United Nations Economic and Social Council called for a wide-ranging integrated approach to rural development;⁸
- the World Bank has adopted a new strategy to fight rural poverty under the title “Reaching the Rural Poor” (2003);
- the final report (2004) of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization called for the design of comprehensive local development strategies to enable rural people to seize the opportunities, and meet the challenges, created by globalization;
- the Plan of Action adopted by the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa (Ouagadougou, 2004) recognized agriculture and rural development as priority domains for action; and
- the report “Our Common Interest” (2005) published by the Commission for Africa highlights the importance of accelerated growth in agriculture for poverty reduction in Africa.

14. ILO involvement in rural employment promotion dates back to the earliest days of the organization. The International Labour Conference adopted Conventions Nos. 12, 25, 36, 38, 40, 99, 101, 110, 129 and 184, which define the social security standards and working conditions of agricultural workers. Some of these have been revised by later instruments. In addition, the Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 149), and the Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), are of particular relevance to rural employment.
15. All four sectors of the ILO implement work programmes in rural areas; examples include IPEC in sector I (standards and fundamental principles and rights at work), the employment-intensive investment, skills development, social finance, small enterprise, local economic development and cooperative promotion programmes in sector II (employment), programmes for the extension of social protection, occupational safety and health and improved working conditions in sector III (social protection), and the collaboration of ACTRAV and ACT/EMP with rural workers’ and employers’ organizations, as well as the Sectoral Activities Programme in sector IV (social dialogue). Different units carry out research in the field of rural development.
16. The promotion of rural employment was the subject of a general discussion during the 75th (1988) Session of the International Labour Conference. The background report (Report VII) and the conclusions of this Conference might serve as a valuable basis for an updated background document on rural employment, which would take into account the fundamental political and economic changes that have taken place since 1988. Such changes include the reform of the international trade regime, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, and the emergence of local-global production systems.

⁸ ECOSOC: Draft Ministerial Declaration, E/2003/L.9, 2003.

Some issues for discussion

- 17.** A number of important issues need to be discussed in order to explore the conditions and parameters that would make decent work in rural areas a reality. Among these are:
- What macroeconomic policies are best suited to ensure a balanced growth in rural and urban areas?
 - What mix of institutional, policy, organizational, technological and financial measures has the greatest potential to enhance productivity in small-scale agriculture, and what is the anticipated impact of such productivity increases on rural employment and rural-urban migration?
 - What economic and social sectors are most likely to create sustainable off-farm employment opportunities, and which complementary *urban* strategies are required to provide employment, basic services and shelter for rural migrants?
 - What measures should be taken to gradually remove import barriers that prevent developing countries from selling agricultural products in industrialized countries?
 - What are the most cost-effective ways to improve rural infrastructure and deliver basic education, vocational training, microfinance, social services, occupational safety and health, as well as pre- and post-production services, to the rural population?
 - What special measures might be necessary to promote decent rural employment for special groups such as indigenous peoples, youths and landless citizens?
 - Which types of local organization are best suited to represent the voice and interests of small-scale farmers, casual and seasonal farm workers, and rural non-farm producers?
 - What is the best way to mobilize local communities for rural employment generation?
 - What measures will enable employers' and workers' organizations to reach out to rural producers and workers?
 - What role should the ILO play in implementing the above, possibly in partnership with other international organizations and development partners?

Intended outcomes

- 18.** The intended outcome of the International Labour Conference general discussion would be:
- a stocktaking of the nature, magnitude and changing patterns of rural employment in the world, with a particular focus on developing countries. This would include a review of the international labour standards mentioned in paragraph 14;
 - a comprehensive strategy to promote decent work in rural areas around the world;
 - an integrated plan of action for the ILO to implement this strategy, including a conceptual framework, standard setting, technical cooperation and knowledge management.

Part II. Proposals for the agenda of future Conferences

Social protection

2. Working time

19. Working time is one of the areas which have been most affected in recent years by important changes in social and economic policies accelerated by the forces of globalization. Since the adoption of the principal ILO standards on hours of work, in particular the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), and the Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30), approaches towards the regulation of working time, and consequently of other interrelated issues such as the hours of rest and annual paid holidays, have evolved.
20. Recent developments relating to working time standards, specially focusing on the orientations given by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in this year's General Survey on Conventions Nos. 1 and 30⁹ and the views expressed during the discussion of that document at the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards,¹⁰ are reviewed in another paper submitted to the LILS Committee entitled "Mapping out a strategy for possible future ILO action on working time".¹¹ In particular, a meeting of experts that could outline an integrated framework of principles, policy options and recommendations which might serve as a basis for a possible general discussion on working time at the International Labour Conference, is proposed.

Research and other activities

21. In response to the Governing Body's request that further research should be undertaken on the subject of working time, with a view to developing proposals on this subject for future sessions of the International Labour Conference, the Office has been proceeding with an extensive programme of research and information collection on developments in the area of working time, as well as technical cooperation activities in response to requests from ILO constituents such as research-based seminars and training workshops. This work programme includes the following major components: a report on working time in the industrialized countries that reviews developments in the area of working time across the industrialized world, focusing on the relationship between workers' and employers' needs and preferences and how these can be combined in working time policies;¹² an online legal working time database containing legislative provisions on working time in ILO member States;¹³ a comparative analysis of national working time laws;¹⁴ and a collection

⁹ See: *Hours of work: From fixed to flexible?*, International Labour Conference, 93rd Session, 2005, Report III(Part 1B).

¹⁰ See: International Labour Conference, 93rd Session, 2005, *Record of Proceedings, Provisional Record* No. 22, Part One, paras. 73-131.

¹¹ See: GB.294/LILS/7.

¹² J.C. Messenger, ed.: *Working time and workers' needs and preferences in industrialized countries: Finding the balance* (London, Routledge, 2004).

¹³ <http://www.ilo.org/travaildatabase/servlet/workingtime> .

of papers by leading researchers presented at the most recent international symposium on working time.¹⁵ A series of country studies on recent statistical and policy trends in working time and work organization in developing and transition countries have also been commissioned, and these will provide the foundation for a comparative analysis of working time around the world, to be published in 2006.¹⁶

22. These projects share a number of primary themes which emerge from the goal of ensuring decent working conditions in the area of working time. For example, the research explores the ways in which working hours and working time arrangements are being designed, so as to preserve workplace safety and advance workers' health and well-being.¹⁷ It is also attentive to gender differences in the arrangement of working time, analysing the implications of these differences for the goal of gender equality and considering which forms of working time can advance the labour market and societal status of women. Also, the research focuses on the impact of existing working time arrangements on the ways in which workers are able to balance paid labour with their family lives and other non-work responsibilities and interests, examining how work/life balance can be promoted in ways which do not jeopardize gender equality. Finally, the Office's research programme seeks to identify working time arrangements which can both advance decent working conditions and simultaneously advance productivity, including flexible forms of work organization, as well as the business benefits of adopting policies that promote work life balance.
23. These research products, complemented by technical cooperation activities conducted in response to requests from constituents, will provide essential inputs into the direction and substance of any future discussion of working time developments at the International Labour Conference.

Proposal

24. In light of such developments and also considering the ILO's recent major research activities and enhanced technical expertise in this area, there seems to be an opportunity for the International Labour Conference to consider, at one of its future sessions, the subject of working time in its multiple dimensions. Subject to the favourable views of the Governing Body, the Office would be ready to develop a proposal for a general discussion on all aspects of working time regulation at the International Labour Conference which could take place as early as its 98th (June 2009) Session.

3. ***Follow-up to the 2003 Conference resolution on occupational safety and health***

25. As a result of the general discussion based on an integrated approach held in June 2003, the Conference drew up a global strategy on occupational safety and health that included the setting of priorities in the development and revision of ILO instruments. The first priority – the development of a new instrument establishing a promotional framework for occupational safety and health – has been discussed at the 93rd (2005) Session of the

¹⁴ D. McCann: *Working time laws: A global perspective*. Findings from the ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Database (ILO, Geneva, 2005) (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/wtwo-dm-05.htm>).

¹⁵ "Decent Working Time: new trends, new issues" (ILO, forthcoming 2006).

¹⁶ "Working Time around the World" [Working title] (ILO, forthcoming 2006).

¹⁷ See: A. Spurgeon: *Working time: Its impact on safety and health* (ILO and OSHRI, Geneva, 2003).

International Labour Conference and conclusions were adopted with a view to a Convention and a Recommendation. After the second discussion at the 2006 International Labour Conference, a new Convention and accompanying Recommendation on a promotional framework for occupational safety and health are expected to be adopted. These instruments would support placing occupational safety and health high on national agendas and promote the application of relevant ILO standards.

26. Other standard-setting priorities set out in the global strategy include the revision of standards related to machine safety (the Guarding of Machinery Convention, 1963 (No. 119), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 118)) and the revision of certain standards related to specific chemicals (the Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation, 1919 (No. 4), the White Phosphorus Recommendation, 1919 (No. 6), the White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921 (No. 13), the Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136), and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 144)).
27. In the field of machine safety, the global strategy also underlined the need for developing a code of practice on the guarding of machinery. The Office has started to review the latest developments in this field with a wider view of machinery safety as a basis for developing a code of practice. Developing a code of practice in this field would provide a firm basis for the revision of standards related to machine safety.
28. In the field of chemical safety, the Governing Body approved at its 292nd (March 2005) Session the organization of a tripartite meeting of experts to examine instruments, knowledge, advocacy, technical cooperation and international collaboration as tools with a view to developing a policy framework for hazardous substances as a work item of the Sectoral Activities Programme (GB.292/STM/1). The meeting would discuss how ILO instruments and other tools concerning occupational safety and health and hazardous substances could be best incorporated into a new policy framework and action plan. The meeting should also consider the impact of new and ongoing initiatives related to hazardous substances, in particular, the UN-wide Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), and implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). The meeting is now scheduled to be held in February 2007 and would adopt recommendations which would be the basis for further ILO action including the revision of standards related to chemical safety.

Social dialogue (specific categories of workers)

4. *An integrated approach to work in ports*

Developments since November 2004

29. The Office has continued to focus its port-related activities on the promotion and implementation of the two recently published codes of practice, namely: the ILO/IMO code of practice on security in ports (2004) and the ILO code of practice on safety and health in ports (2005). In parallel, the Office has undertaken considerable work in the field of social dialogue in the port sector. Moreover, demand from constituents has led to the intensive promotion, updating and implementation of the ILO Portworker Development Programme. As a consequence of these activities, resource constraints have prevented further research on a general discussion on an integrated approach to work in ports.
30. Activities pertinent to the ILO/IMO code of practice on security in ports (2004) included the development and validation, within the framework of a tripartite workshop, of training material for the implementation of this code of practice. This particular activity has been

undertaken in collaboration with the IMO. The Office has also entered into a technical cooperation agreement with the Action Against Terrorism Unit (ATU) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for the provision of training to participating States of the OSCE on the implementation of the ILO/IMO code of practice. This code of practice has been promoted by the ILO at international and national events in Belgium, Hong Kong (China), the Russian Federation, Singapore and the United Kingdom. The Office has organized the translation of the code into Chinese and Russian. Consultations regarding its translation into other languages and its subsequent implementation are being undertaken in a number of countries.

- 31.** The Office has also undertaken a range of activities in relation to the code of practice on safety and health in ports (2005). In collaboration with the GAPAS (“Gestion Ambiental en Puertos de America del Sur”) of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Office has developed training modules under the title “ILO Port safety and health management guide”, which support the implementation of the code. Two tripartite workshops on best practices on safety and health in ports were held in August 2005 in Africa using the abovementioned training modules. A national tripartite workshop on the code of practice on safety and health in ports was held in Greece, which led to its translation into Greek. The code is also being translated under relevant copyright agreements into Chinese, Russian and Turkish. Consultations are in progress regarding the translation of the code into other languages. The Office has also developed and published a “Port safety and health audit manual”, to assist ILO constituents in assessing their compliance with relevant ILO standards, including the code of practice on safety and health in ports (2005). A tripartite workshop on the use of this ILO audit manual has been scheduled for October 2005 in St. Petersburg.
- 32.** Relevant portworker development programme training units have been updated to reflect the provisions of the new code of practice on safety and health in ports. These revised units were validated within the framework of a tripartite workshop in Malta in July 2005. The Office has also developed and published a new 2005 edition of the “PDP chief instructors manual”. As a result of promotional activities undertaken by the Office, eight new licences for the use of the PDP have been issued during this reporting period increasing the number of PDP licensees to 67.
- 33.** The Office has developed the publication “Social dialogue in the process of structural adjustments and private sector participation in ports: A practical guidance manual”, that will be published by the end of 2005. It has also designed a tripartite workshop on the basis of this manual, which will be held at the International Training Centre in Turin in July 2006. The development of training material that would support the manual has been scheduled for early 2006.

Updated proposal

- 34.** The development of new manuals and training materials on security, safety and health and social dialogue in ports has generated considerable interest among the ILO’s constituents for the organization and delivery by the Office of relevant training and workshops. The current commitments of the Office and the need to meet some of the requests for holding port-related ILO training courses or workshops would require the full capacity of all resources that could be made available by the Office for the next few years.

35. In the light of the resource situation arising from the foregoing successes, the Office maintains its view that the selection of this item – a general discussion on an integrated approach to work in ports – be postponed for later consideration.

Geneva, 29 September 2005.

Point for decision: Paragraph 8.