

# International Labour Organization | 15 Oct 2019

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019.

- It is the only **tripartite U.N. agency**. It brings together **governments, employers and workers** of **187 member States**, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

## History of the ILO

- Established in 1919 by the **Treaty of Versailles** as an affiliated agency of the **League of Nations**.
- Became the first affiliated **specialized agency** of the **United Nations in 1946**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
- **Founding Mission:** social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.
- Promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.
- Received the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 1969.
  - For improving peace among classes
  - Pursuing decent work and justice for workers
  - Providing technical assistance to other developing nations
- The organization has played a key role in
  - Ensuring labour rights during the Great Depression
  - Decolonization process
  - The creation of Solidarność (trade union) in Poland
  - The victory over apartheid in South Africa
- Today it is providing substantial support in the building of an ethical and productive framework for fair globalization.

**Note:** The basis of the ILO is the **tripartite principle**, i.e. the negotiations within the organization are held between the representatives of governments, trade unions, and member-states' employers.

## Structure of ILO

The ILO accomplishes its work through three main bodies which comprise governments', employers' and workers' representatives:

- **International Labour Conference:** it sets the International labour standards and the broad policies of the ILO. It meets annually in Geneva. It is often referred to as an **International Parliament of Labour**.
  - It is also a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions.
- **Governing Body:** it is the **executive council** of the ILO. It meets three times a year in Geneva.
  - It takes policy decisions of ILO and establishes the programme and the budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption.
  - The work of the Governing Body and the Office is aided by **tripartite committees** covering major industries.
  - It is also supported by committees of experts on such matters as vocational training, management development, occupational safety and health, industrial relations, workers' education, and special problems of women and young workers.
- **International Labour Office:** it is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization.
  - It is the focal point for ILO's overall activities, which it prepares under the scrutiny of the Governing Body and under the leadership of the Director-General.
- **Regional meetings** of the ILO member States are held periodically to examine matters of special interest to the regions concerned.

## The Functions of the ILO

- Creation of **coordinated policies and programs**, directed at solving social and labour issues.

- **Adoption of international labour standards** in the form of conventions and recommendations and control over their implementation.
- **Assistance to member-states** in solving social and labour problems.
- **Human rights protection** (the right to work, freedom of association, collective negotiations, protection against forced labour, protection against discrimination, etc.).
- **Research and publication** of works on social and labour issues.

## Objectives of the ILO

- To promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work.
- To create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment.
- To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all.
- To strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

## International Labour Standards

- The ILO sets international labour standards with conventions, which are ratified by member states. These are **non-binding**.
- Conventions are drawn up with input from governments, workers' and employers' groups at the ILO and are adopted by the **International Labour Conference**.
- In ratifying an ILO convention, a member state **accepts it as a legally binding instrument**. Many countries use conventions as a tool to bring national laws in line with international standards.

## Decent Work Agenda

- As part of its mission, the ILO aims to achieve decent work for all by promoting social dialogue, social protection and employment creation, as well as respect for international labour standards.
- The ILO provides technical support to more than 100 countries to help achieve these aims, with the support of development partners.

## ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

- It was adopted in 1998, the Declaration commits member states to respect and promote **eight fundamental principles and rights** in four categories, whether or not they have ratified the relevant conventions. They are:
  - Freedom of Association and The Right to collective bargaining (Conventions 87 and 98)
  - Elimination of forced or compulsory labour (Conventions No. 29 and No. 105)
  - Abolition of child labour (Conventions No. 138 and No. 182)
  - Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Conventions No. 100 and No. 111)

## Core Conventions of the ILO

- The eight fundamental conventions form an integral part of the **United Nations Human Rights Framework**, and their ratification is an important sign of member States' commitment to human rights.
- Overall, 135 member States have ratified all eight fundamental conventions. Unfortunately, 48 member states (out of 183 member States), including member states with the highest populations, have yet to complete ratification of all eight conventions.
- The **eight-core conventions of the ILO** are:
  - Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
  - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
  - Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
  - Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
  - Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
  - Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)

- Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)
- The eight conventions, taken together, are more relevant today in the face of **global economic** and other challenges impinging on the welfare and livelihood of workers in all regions.
  - Indeed, they are part and parcel of the overarching architecture for the universality of human rights, offering protection to all, and responding closely to the quest for social justice in a globalized setting.
  - They are catalytic to the UN system, the international community and local communities as a whole.

## India and ILO

- India is a founding member of the ILO and it has been a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body since 1922.
- In India, the first ILO Office was started in 1928. The decades of productive partnership between the ILO and its constituents has mutual trust and respect as underlying principles and is grounded in building sustained institutional capacities and strengthening capacities of partners.
- India has ratified six out of the **eight-core/fundamental ILO conventions**. These conventions are:
  - Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
  - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
  - Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
  - Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
  - Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
  - Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)
- India has **not ratified** the two core/fundamental conventions, namely **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)** and **Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)**.
  - The main reason for non-ratification of ILO conventions No.87 & 98 is due to certain restrictions imposed on the government servants.
  - The ratification of these conventions would involve granting of certain rights that are prohibited under the statutory rules, for the government employees, namely, the right to strike, to openly criticize government policies, to freely accept a financial contribution, to freely join foreign organizations etc.

## Trade Unions at the ILO

- Trade unions play a crucial role in developing policy at the ILO, Worker group representation is drawn from national trade union confederations.
- The **Bureau for Workers' Activities** at the secretariat is dedicated to strengthening independent and democratic trade unions so they can better defend workers' rights and interests.

## The ILO's supervisory role

- The ILO monitors the implementation of ILO conventions ratified by member states. This is done through:
  - The **Committee of Experts** on the Application of conventions and Recommendations.
  - The International Labour Conference's **Tripartite Committee** on the Application of conventions and Recommendations.
  - Member states are also required to send reports on the progress of the implementation of the conventions they have ratified.

## Complaints

- The ILO registers complaints against entities that are violating international rules; however, **it does not impose sanctions on governments**.

- Complaints can be filed against member states for not complying with ILO conventions they have ratified.
- Complaints can be from another member state which has signed the same convention, a delegate to the International Labour Conference or the ILO's Governing Body.

## ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work

- The formation of an **ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work** marks the second stage in the ILO Future of Work Initiative.
  - It was co-chaired by **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa** and **Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven**.
- The commission outlines a vision for a human-centred agenda that is based on investing in people's capabilities, institutions of work and decent and sustainable work.
- It has undertaken an in-depth examination of the future of work that can provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- It outlines the **challenges caused by new technology, climate change and demography** and calls for a collective global response to the disruptions they are causing in the world of work.
  - Artificial intelligence, automation and robotics will lead to job losses, as skills become obsolete.
- **The key recommendations are:**
  - **A universal labour guarantee** that protects the fundamental rights of workers', an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and safe and healthy workplaces.
  - **Guaranteed social protection** from birth to old age that supports people's needs over the life cycle.
  - A universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to skill, reskill and upskill.
  - **Managing technological change** to boost decent work, including an international governance system for digital labour platforms.
  - **Greater investments** in the care, green and rural economies.
  - A transformative and measurable agenda for **gender equality**.
  - **Reshaping business incentives** to encourage long-term investments.