

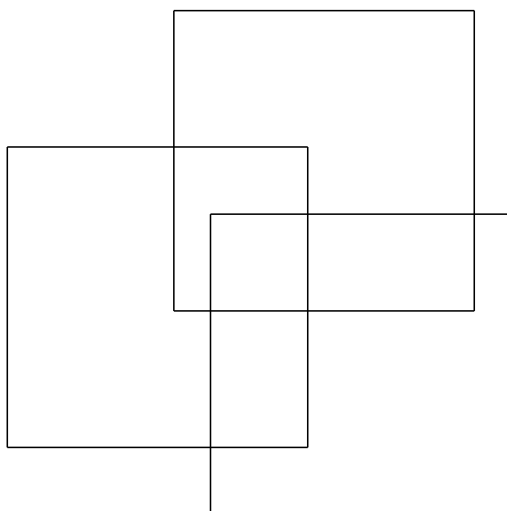


International
Labour
Office

Geneva

Gender balance in the International Labour Conference

**Statistics on the representation
of women and men in the ILC ***
(2010–2016)



Geneva, 2016

Conditions of
Work and Equality
Department

* Statistics kindly provided by the ILO Official Meetings, Documentation and Relations Department (RELMEETINGS).

Preface

The International Labour Conference is the global forum for social dialogue among the Organization's tripartite constituents of governments, and workers' and employers' organizations. Such dialogue promotes consensus-building on key labour and social issues and inclusive decision making by stakeholders in the world of work. Yet as this annual compilation of statistics shows, women are not equally represented in the national tripartite delegations to the Conference. As a result, women do not have an equal voice in the process of developing and adopting international labour standards, approving the Organization's programme and budget and electing its Governing Body, as well as on other key matters addressed by the Conference.

At the Conference in 2016, the official number of women attending was 914 or 30.2 per cent, compared to 2,113 men or 69.8 per cent. Among the tripartite groups, women made up 35.8 per cent of government representatives, 26.3 per cent of representatives of employers, and 24.4 per cent of those for workers. The European region had the highest representation of women at 38.4 per cent followed by the Americas with 33.8 per cent, then the Arab States with 29.5 per cent, and the lowest two were Africa with only 23.7 per cent, and Asia and the Pacific with only 23.5 per cent. There were no women (including ministers) in seven of the tripartite delegations, which was a decrease from 2015 when there were ten delegations comprised of only men.

Calls over the years for women's equal representation in social dialogue and decision making at all levels in the world of work including for ILO governance have been anchored in the understanding that this is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. As an organization dedicated to fundamental human rights and social justice, the ILO must take a leading role in international efforts to promote and realize gender equality. This justification – which also recognizes that decent work initiatives must benefit women and men equally – is further bolstered by the case for representative and inclusive social dialogue leading to better outcomes for all. Rather than excluding women, such dialogue and decision making should embrace and harness diverse concerns and perspectives in order to identify solutions and outcomes that are more sustained and effective. This helps render labour market institutions more efficient and relevant, businesses and economies more productive and competitive, and societies more democratic and just.

At the Governing Body's request in 2012 (Annex 1), after each session of the Conference, the ILO Director-General contacts those member States that did not reach a minimum critical mass of 30 per cent women in their delegations.¹ The letter inquires about measures being taken to increase the proportion of women in the delegation at the next Conference – and encourages consultation with employers' and workers' organizations – with a view to achieving gender parity.

Governments responding to the letter in 2015 cited reasons such as “financial constraints”, a low ratio of women in overall management positions in the respective Government and social partner organizations, and a lack of women specialists on Conference themes. Some also cited unpaid work for which women are expected to carry the overwhelming responsibility.

¹ The Resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work, adopted by the June 2009 International Labour Conference, instructed the ILO to improve the representation of women, including in the International Labour Conference, and UN General Assembly Resolution 58/142 of 10 February 2004, urges Members to promote gender balance in international meetings and conferences. In 2009, the ILO Director-General challenged member States to achieve a target of 35 per cent women in their delegations by 2010.

Many respondents stated that gender parity (defined by the United Nations as 45 per cent to 55 per cent women) had been achieved among Government representatives in their tripartite delegation, but not by the other constituents. However they observed that they could only encourage or appeal to workers' and employers' organizations to do the same, in order to avoid the perception of interference with the social partners' independence. A number of Governments set out a range of strategies they were using to increase the representation of women in their delegations, a summary of which can be found in Annex 2.

Data cited in this report were compiled by the Official Meetings, Documentation and Relations Department, whom we thank, along with the Office of the Legal Adviser of the ILO, for making this publication possible.

Shauna Olney
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Table 1. Percentage of women participants (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers) at the ILC by position and group, without ministers (2010-2016)

2010	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	26.0	33.8	33.3	31.8
Employers	16.5	18.8	21.9	19.7
Workers	15.2	21.5	30.9	25.9
Total	21.5	27.6	31.8	28.3
2011	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	22.5	35.4	34.1	32.1
Employers	18.6	27.4	23.9	23.6
Workers	16.2	24.1	25.5	23.2
Total	20.0	30.5	29.7	27.8
2012	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	23.0	35.1	34.1	31.9
Employers	20.1	19.2	22.7	21.1
Workers	13.9	21.3	25.7	22.3
Total	20.1	28.1	29.1	26.9
2013	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	25.9	30.7	35.4	31.8
Employers	22.0	26.8	22.4	23.6
Workers	16.3	18.5	25.1	21.7
Total	22.5	26.7	29.4	27.1
2014	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	27.4	33.7	38.4	34.5
Employers	22.8	30.6	26.0	26.4
Workers	19.3	21.2	25.5	23.3
Total	24.2	30.4	31.6	29.7
2015	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	28.4	36.6	40.0	35.9
Employers	22.9	27.8	27.4	26.4
Workers	15.0	24.8	26.5	23.7
Total	23.7	31.9	32.4	30.2
2016	Delegates	Substitute delegates	Advisers	Total
Governments	31.9	32.8	42.1	35.8
Employers	18.1	26.4	30.4	26.3
Workers	17.4	25.7	26.3	24.4
Total	24.9	29.7	33.5	30.2

Table 2. Percentage of women ministers at the ILC (2010-2016)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Women ministers	25.4	29.3	24.8	28.6	27.8	21.1	25.5

Figure 1. Percentage of women delegates at the ILC by group (2010-2016)

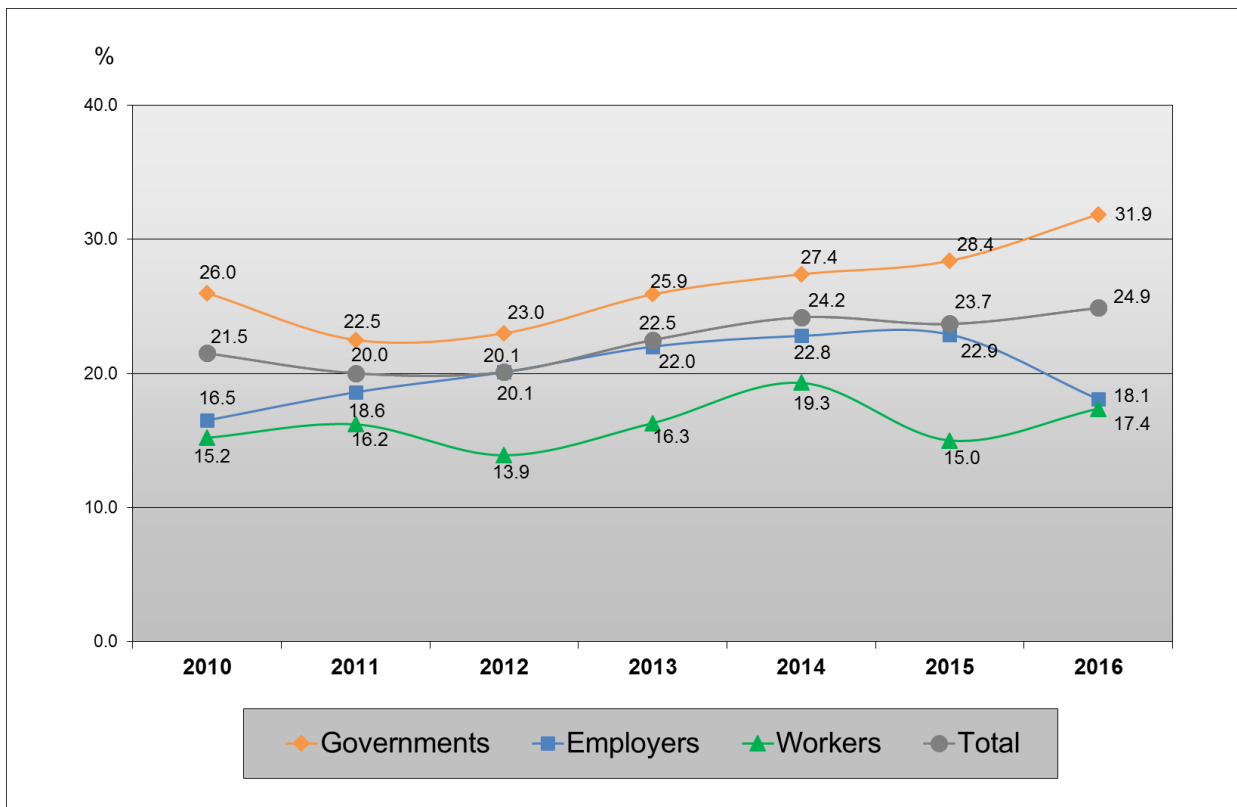


Table 3. Percentage of women participants (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers) at the ILC by region, including ministers (2010-2016)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Africa	23.4	22.6	20.3	23.9	23.8	24.5	23.7
Arab States	13.0	12.8	11.7	14.0	22.8	18.8	29.5
Asia and the Pacific	21.3	23.9	24.6	21.1	24.8	27.7	23.5
Europe	36.3	35.6	35.8	36.1	38.6	38.3	38.4
Americas	30.9	35.0	32.2	32.2	34.0	34.1	33.8
Total	27.6	27.9	26.8	27.2	29.7	29.8	30.2

Figure 2. Percentage of women participants (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers) at the ILC by region, including ministers (2010-2016)

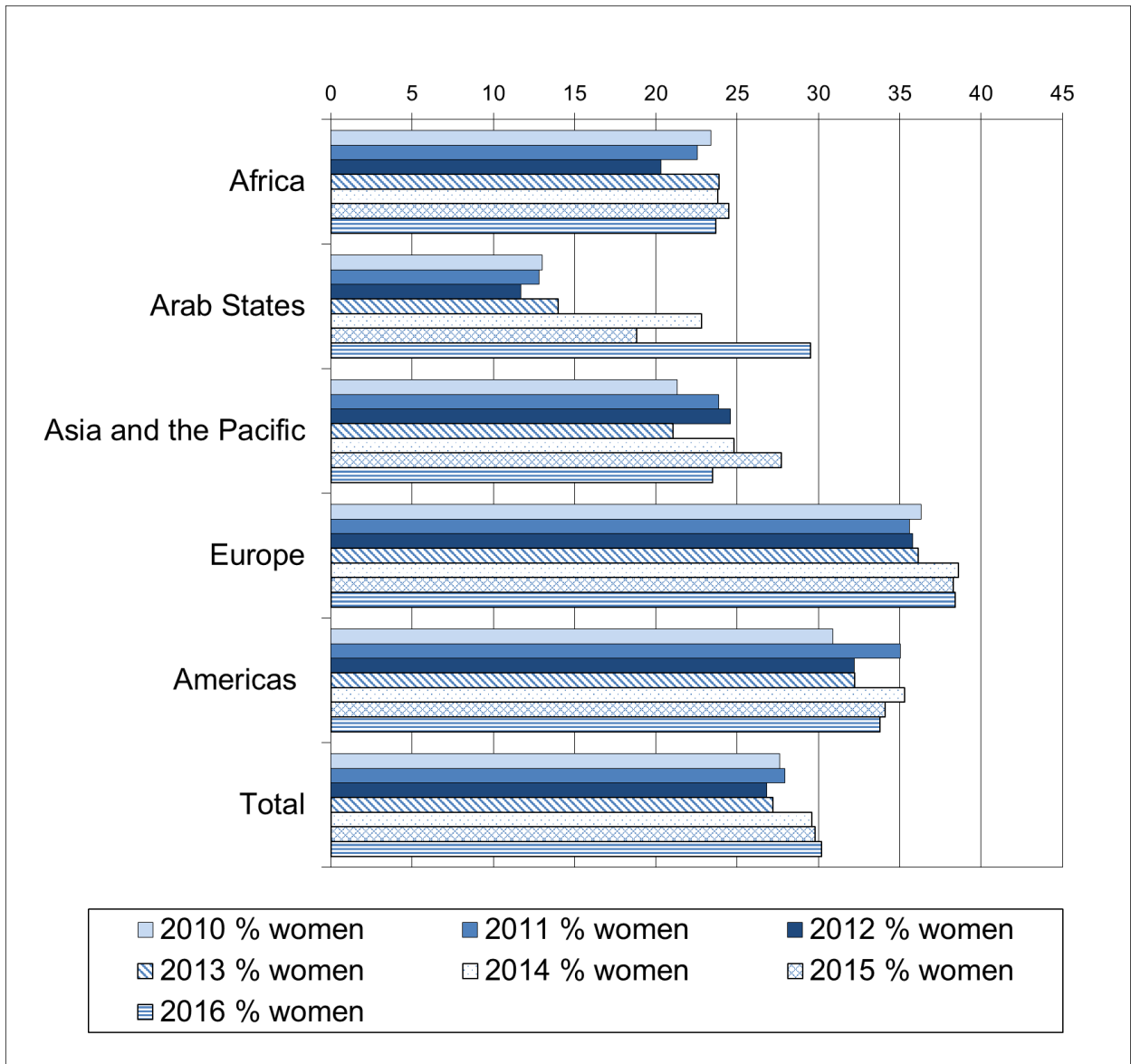


Figure 3(a). Percentage of women participants (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers) at the ILC by group (2010-2016)

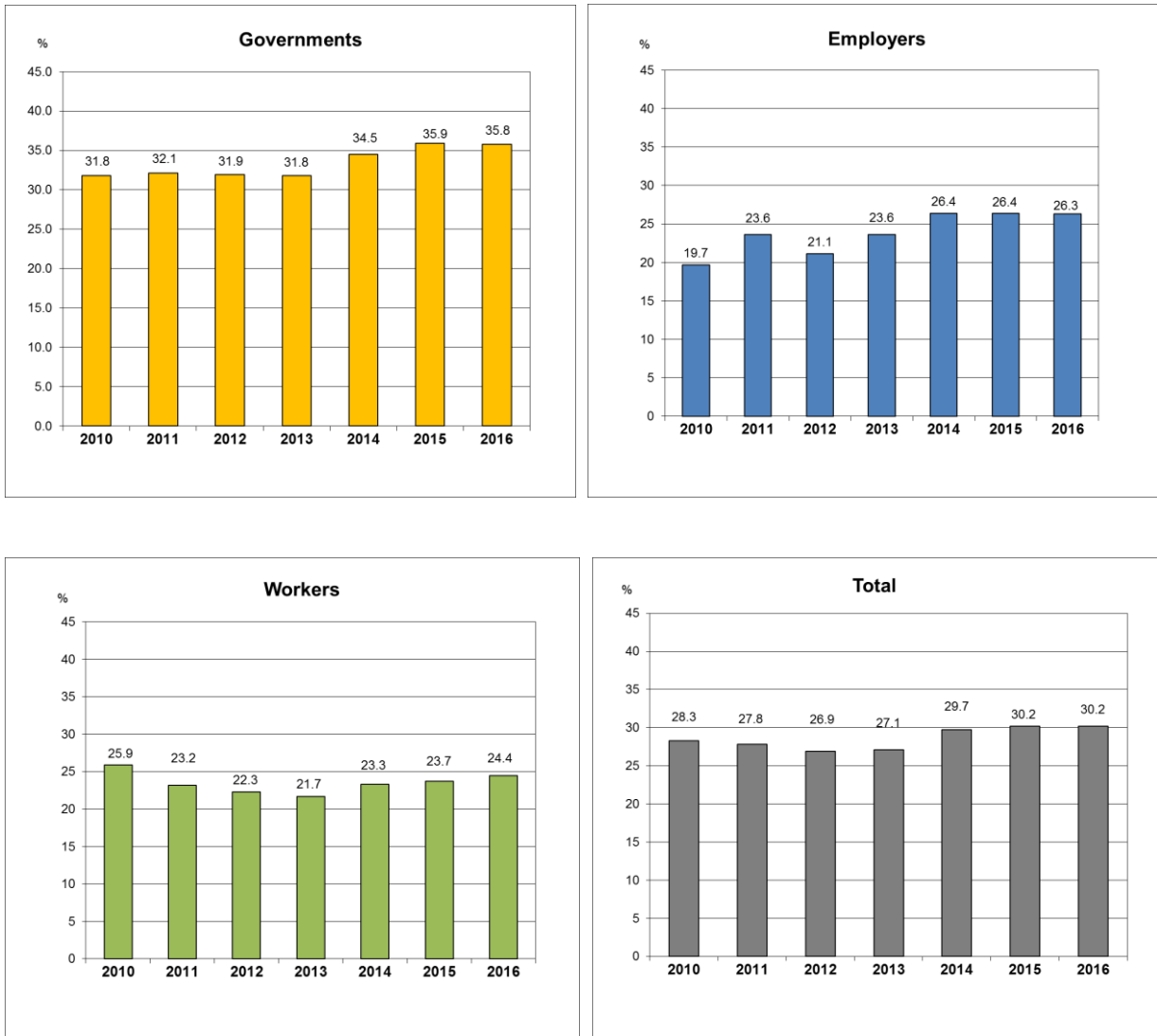
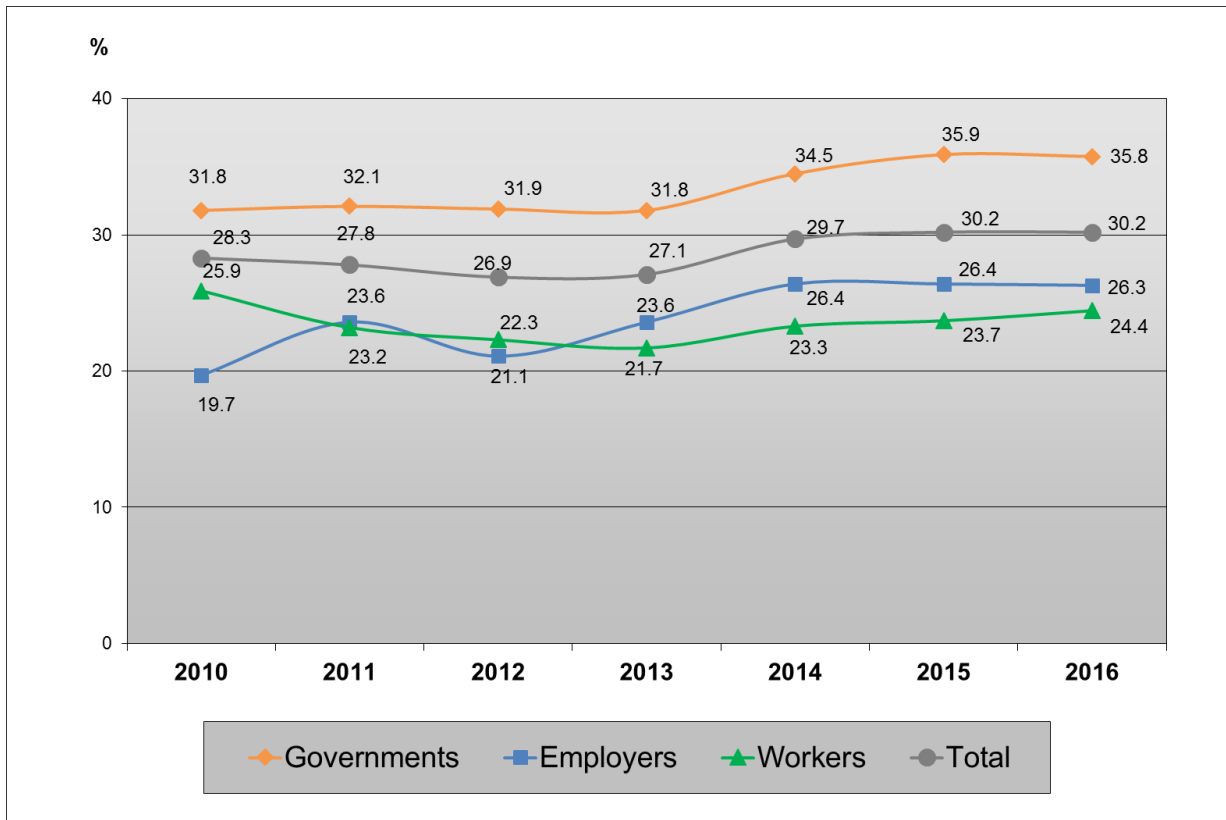


Figure 3(b). Percentage of women participants (delegates, substitute delegates and advisers) at the ILC by group (2010-2016)





Governing Body

316th Session, Geneva, 1–16 November 2012

Legal Issues and International Labour Standards Section

Legal Issues Segment

LILS

Date: 3 October 2012

Original: English

Decision on the first item on the agenda: Composition of the International Labour Conference: Proportion of women and men on delegations

The Governing Body:

(a) invited the Credentials Committee of the International Labour Conference (ILC) to consider more detailed reporting on the proportion of women and men accredited in Conference delegations, taking into account the views expressed in the discussion by the Governing Body at its 316th Session (November 2012);

(b) further invited the Credentials Committee to consider contacts with ILC delegations with consistently low female participation in order to receive information about the reasons and include the results in its report, with a view to improving the situation;

(c) requested the Director-General to send letters after every Conference to Members which have not reached a 30 per cent level of participation of women in ILC delegations, and to periodically report to the Governing Body on any obstacles encountered, as well as any measures taken to achieve gender parity;

(d) invited the Office to continue to collect relevant information and encourage and give assistance to concrete measures to be taken by governments, employers' and workers' organizations with a view to achieving gender parity in delegations to ILO meetings.

(Document GB.316/LILS/1, paragraph 13, as amended by the Governing Body.)

Strategies to increase the representation of women in the International Labour Conference

Concerning the ILO Director-General's inquiry about steps taken to remedy the under-representation of women in Conference delegations, in 2015 responding Governments described a range of strategies including the following.

- Using a comprehensive approach based on formal national mechanisms and institutions that aimed to break down barriers to, and enhance, women's participation and roles in decision-making at all levels of political, economic and social life. Most described their national gender equality policy and plan, many of which included the aim of gender parity in all international fora, as well as in both private employment and the public sector.
- Explicitly linking women's empowerment – including equal treatment and opportunities in the labour market – to the success of the national development strategy. Among examples was a growth plan for driving the nation's domestic and overseas economic policies, which included women's empowerment as a pillar and a guiding principle.
- Anchoring gender equality and women's empowerment, including in decision-making, within the national Constitution and legislation. Among examples were legal provisions and measures including policies and affirmative action programmes to redress discrimination; legislation and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of members of elective or appointed bodies should be of the same sex; and providing that at least 30% of candidates for election to the Parliament and local representative bodies should be women. One respondent described how the ILO Governing Body's decision on the proportion of women and men in Conference delegations was used as a model for similar political, economic and social initiatives at the national level.
- Other strategies included encouraging women candidates for Government and leadership positions; prioritizing women for training opportunities including at the ILO International Training Centre; putting the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of efforts to increase women's political and economic participation; and appointing women to key and visible posts such as Speaker of the Legislative Chamber, Deputy Chairperson of the Senate, Ombudsperson, and as Minister and Deputy Minister of "non-traditional" areas such as the economy.

Additional strategies advocated by the Office to increase women's equitable representation in social dialogue, as well as placing gender equality on such dialogue agendas, include the following.

- Ratify and effectively implement the key ILO Conventions that address freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as gender equality and non-discrimination.
- Put in place mechanisms to increase women's participation and representation in trade unions and employers' organizations, as well as in social dialogue institutions such as national Labour Committees or Economic and Social Councils.
- Promote education, skills development and training for women thus providing the tools to effectively participate in social dialogue processes.
- Strengthen the voice of women in the informal economy and in non-standard forms of employment through organizing their adherence to them.
- Sensitize, raise awareness and advocate through media and other advocacy campaigns the advantages of gender equality in the world of work.
- Organize trainings and sharing of best practices on mainstreaming gender issues into the agenda of social dialogue and collective bargaining.

The ILO Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch

The Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch (GED), part of the Conditions of Work and Equality Department of the International Labour Office, is responsible for promoting equality, inclusion and respect for diversity in the world of work.

GED expertise focuses on issues related to equal opportunities and treatment for all women and men in the world of work, and eliminating discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, indigenous identity, disability and HIV status. The Branch provides policy advice, tools, guidance and technical assistance to constituents including with respect to promoting more inclusive workplaces, and ensuring that policies, programmes and institutions are gender-responsive.

GED coordinates the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality, which is the results-based tool for operationalizing the 1999 policy on gender equality and mainstreaming in the International Labour Office.

The Branch oversees the ILO global Gender Network comprised of headquarters-based Gender Coordinators and field-based Senior Gender Specialists, along with gender focal points in all units and offices.

GED participates in United Nations inter-agency initiatives that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as decent work for persons with disabilities, and the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. The Branch also liaises with civil society groups and academic institutions.

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