



International
Labour
Organization

► Collaboration with the United Nations

Extracts from the General report of the
2022 Report of the Committee of Experts
on the Application of Conventions and
Recommendations

D. Collaboration with the United Nations

- 129.** In recent years, the Office has engaged closely with the UN system in the area of human rights coordination with a view to ensuring that international labour standards remain part and parcel of human rights norms and standards which lie at the basis of the 2030 Agenda and are promoted through the repositioned UN Development System. These system-wide processes included notably the UNSDG Task Team on Human Rights, Leaving No-One Behind and the Normative Agenda, which concluded its work in March 2021, and the Interagency Working Group on the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights.
- 130.** The Call to Action for Human Rights was launched in February 2020 at the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the UN and has recently been linked to the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" presented to the UN General Assembly in September 2021. The Call to Action for Human Rights establishes a whole-of-system approach to human rights to the effect that no UN organization can any longer develop its action at country level without linking this to human rights in coordination with the UN system. It aims at creating enhanced synergies and impact on the ground, notably at country level, drawing on each organization's specificities and recognized strengths.
- 131.** In this context, the Committee would like to recall that labour rights are human rights. The ILO pioneered human rights through standard-setting, before the birth of the United Nations and the articulation of human rights. Ever since the ILO was created in 1919, its international labour standards have sought to set forth the aspirations, values and rights that were eventually expressed in the United Nations Charter (1945) and proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and determination to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Nowhere more than in the world of work – the sphere of human activity driving social and economic progress – must human rights be protected by the rule of law, including international labour standards, if "freedom from fear and want" is to be realized as "the highest aspiration of the common people".³⁴ International labour standards have become the touchstone for law and actions by governments, employers, workers and everyone actively engaged with human rights at work.
- 132.** International labour standards are not only the foundation of the institutions that permit labour markets around the world to deliver economic and social progress to billions of people. As precursors, they have inspired the core international human rights instruments to date, notably the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 133.** Today, international labour standards give expression to human rights in the civil and political sphere, such as the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right to freedom of expression; the right to freedom of association; the right of peaceful assembly; the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination; and the right to freedom from slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.
- 134.** In the economic, social and cultural sphere, international labour standards substantiate within the world of work human rights such as the right to work; the right to social security; the right to safe and healthy working conditions; the right to fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without

³⁴ Preamble, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

distinction of any kind; the right to rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay; or the right to maternity protection.

- 135.** International labour standards complement international human rights law by adding key dimensions that facilitate the duty of States to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights at work of individuals within their territory and/ or jurisdiction, notably:
- pursuing social dialogue at all levels (including labour dispute settlement mechanisms) as an essential means of realizing human rights at work, complementing laws or regulations;
 - establishing labour market institutions that make the protection or promotion of human rights at work a daily practice (examples include standards for labour inspection services promoting compliance with measures taken to realize the right to safe and healthy working conditions; or standards for public employment services pursuing the best possible organization of the labour market with a view to realizing the right to work without discrimination and “leaving no one behind”);
 - benchmarking or operationalizing human rights at work declared in UN instruments (examples include providing a system of minimum working ages to support children’s right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing hazardous or harmful work; or stipulating measures to prevent forced labour and trafficking of persons for forced labour).
- 136.** Respecting human rights and relevant international standards is also a corporate responsibility. The ILO has developed a close collaboration with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (UNWG) established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, to “promote the effective and comprehensive dissemination and implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” (Ruggie principles). This collaboration is based on the provisions of the ILO [Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy](#) which draws on relevant international labour standards and follows up on the Committee’s comments on the application of these standards in an implicit albeit important way. For example, the ratification and implementation of relevant international labour standards is taken into account when governments elaborate national action plans (NAPs), as requested by the UNWG, in order to provide a framework for the implementation of the UNGPs. The work of the ILO supervisory bodies, including this Committee, serves as the basis for identifying actions to be incorporated in NAPs in relation to the implementation of standards.
- 137.** The Committee invites the UN treaty bodies to a joint reflection over ways to strengthen synergies and complementarities with the Committee drawing on each body’s respective and distinct mandates. It also asks the Office to make available information on the relationship between international labour standards and human rights on the ILO website and to take all necessary steps within the limits of available resources in order to help build the capacities of a wide range of stakeholders across the UN system on this subject.