

THE ILO

A VISION STATEMENT BY GUY RYDER, CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The 10th Director-General of the ILO will lead the Organization towards its centenary in conditions of far-reaching change in the world of work. The challenge will be to equip the ILO to deliver on its established mandate of promoting social justice against this background of deep and rapid transformation.

There can be no doubting the relevance of that mandate. The stability of our societies, the sustainability of the global system which binds them ever more closely, and ultimately peace itself depend on its realization. The global crisis that broke in 2008 was a sharp reminder of that. It has left millions in the world of work in situations of acute hardship, swelling the ranks of those already suffering the indignity of poverty, unemployment and increasing employment insecurity. The ILO must lead in beating the global jobs crisis, with priority for youth whose social exclusion constitutes a time bomb of enormous destructive potential.

Yet the global economy is also opening opportunities for countless millions in the emerging economies in particular, opportunities unknown to previous generations. It is dispensing its benefits and its costs unevenly within and between countries. There is widespread recognition of the need for rebalancing at multiple levels. For the ILO the task is to shape change to meet the imperatives of fairness including the pressing needs of the developing world.

But the manifest relevance of its mandate is no guarantee of the relevance of the ILO as an institution; that it must secure by the quality, relevance, and usefulness of its work. To be successful in the future the ILO must:

- Be guided by its founding values, and the practice and promotion of tripartism. The more they are questioned or opposed the more resolute the Organization must be in their defence. This is one area where compromise is a mistake;
- Strive for the technical excellence within its mandate which, alone, will make it the recognized authority in all matters to do with work;
- Be acutely conscious of its obligation to work with maximum efficiency and to provide the best services and return on the resources available to it;
- Ensure permanent contact with its tripartite constituents, not only to respond quickly to their needs and views, but because as the key actors of the real economy they are a source of knowledge and insight available uniquely to the ILO.

The next Director-General will have the responsibility of uniting the ILO's constituents behind a programme which draws on these elements and the established international support for the decent work agenda. International labour standards will be central to that mission. That, and the commitment of a highly qualified and motivated staff, is indispensable to leadership which can carry the Organization forward with real conviction and decisive influence. The notion that the ILO should act as the "social conscience" of the international system is misplaced. The ILO must be a determined actor not a moral commentator.

Globalization: Change, Fairness, Influence

In recent years the ILO has assumed the responsibility of developing the much needed social dimension of globalization. That work has not been without controversy, but is essential to fulfilment of the Organization's mandate in today's world of work. Presence in the G-20 has given it visibility and a voice at the highest level of policy making, and real opportunity to make a difference.

The question is, how successful has the ILO been in making that difference and how can it improve on its record so far? Whatever assessment is made, two considerations should guide its continuing work on globalization and its interaction with other international organizations.

Firstly, its added value lies in what it brings to the table from its own mandate. It should not seek to do the job of other organizations, but must influence them by contributing what nobody else can – the voice and perspectives of the world of work, informed by the Organization's values and objectives. This applies to its growing cooperation with the IMF as it does to the G-20 and to intensified work in the UN system.

Secondly, it will be listened to, and have influence, only if its inputs are of the highest technical quality, able to stand the stress test of rigorous political and intellectual scrutiny.

Focus and Excellence in the World of Work

Being the world authority on all matters falling within its mandate is a precondition for real ILO influence, relevance and usefulness. Such authority does not come merely from the possession of a mandate. It can only be the result of making technical excellence an organizational priority and devoting the resources and effort required for its achievement.

That task is multi-faceted. It will need to involve appropriate recruitment practices and office organization, and the development of the ILO's knowledge management strategy. Research capacities must be built up, and priorities established to provide the information products that constituents want and which are the credible basis for policy advocacy within a broadly supported normative framework. The ILO already has much expertise. But it needs to be marshalled and reinforced for much greater effect. The International Institute for Labour Studies must be an integral part of meeting that challenge.

Serving Constituent Needs: Responsiveness, Relevance, Tripartism

To be the global market leader in the world of work, the ILO needs to know its constituents. Ministries of Labour and employers' and workers' organizations must have the means and opportunity to make their needs and expectations known to the Office and access to the ILO staff whose responsibility it is to respond.

Mechanisms are in place for this. Indeed, the move to results-based management in the ILO is designed to respond to constituents' expressed demands. This is the right course. At this juncture there is need to assess progress in implementing these arrangements. Do they effectively capture key priorities and address them effectively? Are ILO responses sufficient in scale and duration to bring lasting change? Taken together, do they reflect an ILO truly in touch with breaking events in the world of work and agile in meeting the needs they generate? The answers should inform ILO action in two areas.

The first is the respective responsibilities and interaction of the ILO headquarters and its field offices. Distribution of staff and financial resources, and structural arrangements in the field, have been given repeated attention. Experience suggests the need for particular focus on the Geneva-field relationship: the ILO cannot allow any distance or dysfunction to grow up between the two. The role of the Turin Centre needs to be better defined as an integral and valuable component in the ILO's division of tasks and responsibilities.

The second is how best to make use of tripartism as a resource for the ILO. It has everything to gain from harnessing the expertise and insights of its constituents – the frontline actors of the real economy – as inputs to its work. Office arrangements should ensure that that potential is exploited fully.

Building Consensus: International Labour Standards

The right ILO approach to issues on which views differ – sometimes markedly – is to tackle them, not ignore them. The next Director-General will need to lead the search for tripartite consensus, particularly where continued division runs the risk of weakening the credibility of the organization.

That is particularly evident in respect of international labour standards. Nobody disputes that standards are crucial and defining for the ILO. But there is real disagreement, forcefully expressed, about central aspects of the ILO's standard setting and supervisory functions and the utility – indeed validity - of some instruments. Such differences of opinion are legitimate consequences of the representation of interests at work. But that does not mean the current impasse should stand.

Some instruments are to hand to find the way forward. There is no divergence on the fundamental rights Conventions for which the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work provides solid ground for consensus. Moreover, the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization embodies a common commitment to enhance the relevance of standard-setting policy to the world of work.

That commitment must be acted upon urgently. What is at stake is the Organization's capacity to have a body of standards commanding the broadest possible support which express concretely what an appropriate regulatory framework should be for today's world of work, a framework that encourages employment creation, sustainable businesses and decent work.

Reaching the Most Vulnerable

The ILO's mandate requires it to reach out to those who are most vulnerable, who face great insecurity and for whom the denial of social justice is most cruel. They are often hard to reach, and yet they are great in number. The example of domestic workers shows what can be done. The ILO must also give priority to three further categories of workers;

- Rural workers, still the bulk of the world's workforce;
- Workers in the informal economy who outnumber their formal economy counterparts in many countries and must be enabled to change their status;
- Migrant workers.

This work – and all else at the ILO - must have full regard to its gender dimension, building on the ILO's record of achievement.

ILO Management: Efficiency, Transparency, Merit

The ILO needs to understand that the resource constraints facing most public budgets apply to it too. The need to give value for money must be paramount in the culture of the organization at all levels.

In addition to rigour in expenditure control, efficiency improvements need to be sought through simplification of procedures, without compromising effectiveness. The ratio of support and administrative staff to those delivering services to constituents must be in line with best practice.

The new Director-General will need to review senior management practices and structures thoroughly and assign specific responsibilities for internal management. Teamwork in senior management needs to be activated and initiatives taken to prevent compartmentalization between sectors.

Evaluation mechanisms have to be embraced as a management tool. An Organization which understands that its future depends on its relevance and usefulness cannot but make impact assessment central to its learning strategy as well as its commitment to transparency.

The ILO should be an employer which understands that success depends on motivated and highly skilled staff. Employees and constituents should expect of the ILO human resource policies which are coherent and equitable. Proper industrial relations procedures are core ILO values and a guarantee of fairness and efficiency at work.



To the challenges facing the ILO I can bring three decades of experience in the world of work, the bulk of it international, and a significant part spent in positions of leadership at the world level.

That has involved the practice of tripartism in all regions. I believe that the representation of interest at work is most effective through negotiation and compromise. It has also meant extensive interaction with each of the ILO's tripartite constituents and given me understanding and respect of their objectives.

Leadership of an international confederation representing more than 300 organizations in over 150 countries required me to exercise management responsibilities in a highly complex setting. That included bringing about an unprecedented unification of historically divided world organizations which required intractable organizational as well as political obstacles to be overcome. During that time I oversaw a major staff reorganization and maintained a balanced budget in circumstances of significantly reduced income.

My past responsibilities as Director of the Office of the Director-General and my current ones as Executive Director have allowed me to exercise comparable skills and build deeper relationships with governments, employers and workers in the specific context of the ILO.

I have enjoyed and learned from working in multicultural environments. It has taught me to appreciate that contributions of equal value can be delivered in very different ways. I speak French and Spanish as well as my mother tongue, English.