



Governing Body

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TENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference

Oral report of the Chairperson of the Working Party

1. The Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference (WP/GBC) met on Monday, 25 March 2013. As Chairperson of the Governing Body, I chaired the sittings, while Mr Funes de Rioja, Employer Vice-Chairperson, and Mr Cortebeeck, Worker Vice-Chairperson, spoke on behalf of their respective groups. The Working Party had before it document GB.317/WP/GBC/1, which contained an overview (table 1) of all the issues discussed so far in the Working Party. For ease of reference, each issue was listed separately under the three following categories: A. General issues; B. ILC structure; and C. Working methods of ILC committees. A second table (table 2) referred to the issues identified in table 1 as requiring change to the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference, and listed the Standing Orders provisions that may be affected by the current proposals. Appendices I, II, III, IV and V provided further information on several issues mentioned in table 1 on which the Office had been requested to elaborate new proposals or scenarios.
2. I opened the discussion by proposing that the Working Party discuss the document section by section, focusing on identifying within each section the proposals or requests that had already received tripartite support, based on the comments in the second column, as well as proposals that could be tested at the next session of the Conference in June 2013. I also invited the members of the Working Party to indicate the areas or proposals that they felt could be developed further for the Working Party's next discussions. In line with the practice followed in recent discussions, the Government members spoke first, followed by the Employer and Worker spokespersons.

A. General issues

3. The members of the Working Party confirmed their support for the guiding principles and objectives of the reform process, as reflected in sections A.1 and A.2. The representative of

the Government group recalled the importance her group attached to respect for the principles of transparency, objectivity and predictability in the work of the plenary and the committees, as well as the discussion of topical issues that could enhance the relevance of the International Labour Conference in the current context of the world of work. The Employers' group reiterated its conviction that adjustments were necessary to enable the Conference to fully perform the functions listed in section A.2 and discharge its constitutional mandate properly. The Workers' group expressed the view that it was still too early to affirm that the reform process would be completed in June 2015.

B. ILC structure

4. During the discussion of the second section, entitled "ILC structure", the members of the Working Party concurred that there was tripartite agreement in principle on a number of proposals related to the structure of the Conference (B.2), side events (B.3), the non-reactivation of the Resolutions Committee (B.5), the importance of standard-setting activities (B.6), the agenda-setting role of the Governing Body (B.7), the agenda-setting process (B.8), the origin of the proposed agenda items (B.9), the cycle of recurrent discussions under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (B.12), the plenary structure (B.14), the shortened opening sitting (B.14.1), the definition and function of plenary period II (B.14.2), and in particular the discussion of the Reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body (Option 1), the World of Work Summit (B.14.3) and plenary period IV (B.14.4).
5. Reservations were expressed, however, on the formulation of those issues and the need for further discussion, in particular on the appropriate forum for the discussion of draft resolutions not related to agenda items, the role of the Office in the agenda-setting process (B.8), the review of the recurrent discussions at the end of the first seven-year cycle, and in particular the better use of those discussions to improve the agenda-setting process (B.12), the preparatory stages of standard setting, in particular the format of preparatory meetings (B.6), and the continuous plenary running in parallel with the work of the technical committees (B.14.2). A number of questions were also raised on the amendments to the Standing Orders that might ensue from the various proposals (Appendix II) and on the methods of voting in plenary (Appendix III). On the last point, the Legal Adviser provided clarification on the definition and use of consensus, as well as on the provisions of the Standing Orders applicable to the different voting methods.
6. Many speakers raised the issue of the length of the Conference. The Employers' group and several regional groups were of the view that the relevance of the Conference as the supreme body of the Organization required a reduction in the length of its sessions. While thanking the Office for having presented a two-week Conference scenario, several members of the Working Party nonetheless expressed reservations in that regard. Other groups, such as the Workers' group, were opposed to such a reduction, while recognizing the need to seek innovative solutions to gain time during the third week and to accelerate the finalization of reports to be adopted in the plenary.

C. Working methods of ILC committees

7. The Working Party carefully examined the proposals concerning the working methods of the committees and reiterated its tripartite support for the proposal to reinforce the principles of transparency, predictability and objectivity in the working methods of all ILC committees (C.1.). Furthermore, all members recognized the need to select the committee chairpersons as early as possible to allow them time to familiarize themselves with the

procedures of the ILC (C.9.), and to better manage the time available (C.13.) by avoiding planned evening sittings for non-standard-setting discussions (C.11.).

8. A broad discussion took place concerning the various proposals, which were explained in detail in the appendices and required further discussion, without a tripartite agreement being reached. The representatives of several regional groups reiterated their desire to continue discussing the working methods of the general and recurrent discussions, the composition of the drafting groups, the systematic use of modern technology, such as screens for the discussion of amendments and subamendments, and the finalization of a policy for printing and distributing Conference reports that took into account the real needs of delegations. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries recalled its proposal for the question of improving the working methods of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards to be discussed by the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference, but the Employers' group, the Workers' group and a number of other Government groups did not agree with that proposal, stating that, at that stage, the question should be discussed in a different context.
9. There was widespread support for the tentative plan of work proposed in Appendix VII, and for the first scenario in Appendix IV. The proposal to defer the translation and production of the *Provisional Record* also received tripartite support and was accepted as one of the proposals that could be tested next June.
10. At the end of the discussion, the Deputy Director-General for Management and Reform recapitulated all the proposals contained in sections B and C that could be tested at the next ILC, namely:
 - (1) Side events (B.3.): The number of side events should be kept to a minimum and should be approved by the Director-General in consultation with the Officers of the Governing Body prior to the ILC, or with the Officers of the ILC during the ILC.
 - (2) Plenary structure (B.14.): The plenary should be divided into four broad sections:
 - I. Opening sitting.
 - II. Continuous plenary session for the discussion of the reports of the Director-General and Chairperson of the Governing Body.
 - III. The World of Work Summit.
 - IV. Formal plenary (adopts reports, votes).
 - (3) The opening session of the plenary should be shortened and simplified to allow the committees to start their work immediately after (B.14.1.).
 - (4) Discussion of the reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body (B.14.2., Option 1): The Director-General's Report should at each session address a social theme. The report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body should cover the programme implementation aspect. Plenary period II would run in parallel with the committees' meetings and the delegates would each have five minutes to address the ILC on the topic of these reports and other issues.
 - (5) World of Work Summit (B.14.3.): The one-day World of Work Summit will be scheduled following the work of the technical committees. The Director-General will select the theme for the event. The Summit would be representative of the tripartite nature of the Organization and would involve the participation not only of Heads of

State and Government, but also of leaders of employers' and workers' organizations. Appropriate representation across regions should be ensured. This Summit would help give the ILC the appropriate profile within the international community.

- (6) Plenary period IV (B.14.4.): Plenary period IV will include the adoption of all committees' reports and outputs as well as votes as necessary. Time limits will be strictly enforced.
- (7) The principles of "transparency, predictability and objectivity" will remain paramount in all ILC committees (C.1.).
- (8) Workplans of general discussion committees (C.6.): The general discussion committees will endeavour to complete their work by the Saturday of the second week.
- (9) Committee chairpersons (C.9.): Chairpersons of the various ILC committees should be selected early, taking into account a high level of familiarity with the ILO and the procedures used in ILC committees, as well as with the topic discussed by the committee. Once appointed, they should be appropriately briefed and assisted by the Office. Effective support from the Office in the conduct of the committee discussions is also required.
- (10) Time management (C.13.): All sessions of the ILC should start on time to maximize the use of time available.
- (11) *Provisional Record* (C.16.): The translation and production of the *Provisional Record* would be deferred until after the ILC. Each speech in the plenary would be posted on the Web. In such a case where a delegate needs to exercise their right to reply, a written translation in one of the official languages of the ILO would be provided upon request.

11. *The Working Party, having analysed the information provided by the Office on the cost and legal implications of the proposed reforms, recommends the Governing Body:*

- (a) *to propose to the Conference to implement in June 2013, on a trial basis and subject to certain derogations of its Standing Orders, the changes on which a tripartite consensus has been reached, as listed in paragraph 10;*
- (b) *to request the Office to prepare for its 319th Session (October 2013):*
 - (i) *a detailed analysis of the trial implementation of those reforms;*
 - (ii) *a first set of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the Conference on the issues identified as those on which a tripartite consensus has been reached but which require, for their implementation, amendments to the Standing Orders at the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference (2014); and*
 - (iii) *additional information on pending issues requiring further consultations and discussion.*