



Governing Body

328th Session, Geneva, 27 October–10 November 2016

GB.328/INS/5/2

Institutional Section

INS

Date: 4 October 2016

Original: English

FIFTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Matters arising out of the work of the 105th Session of the International Labour Conference

Follow-up to the resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work

Proposals relating to the modalities of recurrent discussions

Purpose of the document

In accordance with the decision taken by the Governing Body at its 327th Session, to submit detailed proposals relating to the modalities of recurrent discussions pursuant to the Conference resolution on advancing social justice through decent work (see the draft decision in paragraph 32).

Relevant strategic objective: All strategic objectives.

Policy implications: Implications for the next cycle of recurrent discussions.

Legal implications: None at this stage.

Financial implications: None at this stage.

Follow-up action required: Implement the next cycle of recurrent discussions and modalities based on the decision taken.

Author unit: Management and Reform, Policy and Field Operations and Partnerships portfolios.

Related documents: GB.328/INS/3, GB.328/INS/7; GB.325/PV, GB.325/INS/3, GB323/PV; GB.323/INS/3; GB.323/INS/2; GB.323/INS/1; GB.322/INS/PV; GB.322/INS/3; GB.322/INS/2; GB.320/PV; GB.320/INS/15/2; GB.319/INS/2; GB.304/PV; GB.304/7; GB.304/SG/DECL/1(Rev.); ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008; Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work adopted by the Conference at its 105th Session (2016).

Introduction

1. At its 325th Session (November 2015), the Governing Body decided to await the outcome of the International Labour Conference's evaluation on the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (Social Justice Declaration) before deciding on a new cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions.¹ The International Labour Conference evaluated the impact of the Social Justice Declaration at its 105th Session (2016), and adopted a resolution on "Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work" (the resolution). The resolution requests the Director-General to "submit to the Governing Body, in November 2016, detailed proposals relating to the modalities of recurrent discussions as outlined in subparagraph 15.2, with a view to better meeting their objectives and ensure a prompt transition from the current cycle of recurrent discussions to the next cycle".² At its 327th Session (June 2016), the Governing Body decided that "these proposals would be submitted under the item already included on the agenda for the 328th Session: Follow-up to the outcome of the evaluation of the impact of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008".³
2. This document addresses the modalities of recurrent discussions which constitute one specific priority area for action under the resolution.⁴ It recalls the objectives of recurrent discussions, submits options for decision on the next cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions, and sketches out a possible framework for future recurrent discussions.

A. The objectives and purpose of recurrent discussions

3. The Follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration refers to the introduction of a "scheme of recurrent discussions" based on modalities to be agreed by the Governing Body to: "(i) understand better the diverse realities and needs of its Members with respect to each of the strategic objectives, respond more effectively to them, using all the means of action at its disposal, including standards-related action, technical cooperation and the technical and research capacity of the Office and adjust its priorities and programmes of action accordingly; and (ii) assess the results of the ILO's activities with a view of informing programme, budget and other governance decisions".⁵
4. Under the resolution, the Conference noted that "recurrent discussions need to be improved to achieve a better understanding of the diverse realities and needs of Members and to realize their value as a tool for assessing implementation of the Social Justice Declaration and for informing future action".⁶

¹ GB.325/PV, para. 56.

² ILC105/PR13-1 para. 17(c)(ii).

³ GB.327/PV/draft, para. 19.

⁴ According to Part IV of the resolution, proposals for a programme of work to give effect to the outcome of the evaluation will be submitted to the Governing Body in March 2017.

⁵ Social Justice Declaration, Annex, Part II B(i).

⁶ ILC105/PR13-1, para. 8.

5. Subparagraph 15.2(a) of the resolution provides that appropriate modalities to be adopted need to better focus recurrent discussions and ensure that they are grounded in current realities and challenges so as to:
- (i) deliver a regularly updated review of Members' diverse needs and realities with respect to each strategic objective;
 - (ii) assess the results of the ILO's activities in respect of the strategic objectives to facilitate decision making on future priorities; and
 - (iii) inform ILO strategic planning and programme and budget discussions.

B. Cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions

Parameters

6. The determination of the cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions is guided by subparagraph 15.2(c) of the resolution, which refers to "the possibility of a shorter cycle of recurrent discussions of each of the four strategic objectives", taking into account the:
- (i) specific requirements pertaining to examination of each strategic objective;
 - (ii) two-year cycle of programme and budget and the four-year strategic plan;
 - (iii) streamlining of the process of setting the Conference agenda;
 - (iv) separate examination of social security and labour protection;
 - (v) possible grouping of strategic objectives;
 - (vi) timing of the next evaluation of the impact of the Social Justice Declaration; and
 - (vii) ILO's contribution to the follow-up and review by the United Nations of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
7. In applying the parameters set out above, the following specific elements should be borne in mind. In relation to (ii), preparation of the programme and budget as well as the Strategic Plan commences about 18 months before their implementation.
8. In relation to (iii), once the decision has been taken on the new cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions,⁷ the Governing Body could decide in the context of the setting of the Conference agenda to place an item concerning a recurrent discussion on the agenda of the corresponding sessions of the Conference corresponding to the whole cycle.⁷ Under this arrangement, the Governing Body could request the Office to submit, at later dates, specific proposals concerning the scope of each recurrent discussion and the related arrangements.
9. With respect to (vi), it would seem appropriate to have an evaluation after each cycle. An initial consensus would enable a time frame for the Office to prepare a programme of work to give effect to the resolution which is to be submitted to the Governing Body in March 2017.

⁷ GB.328/INS/3.

- 10.** In relation to (vii), themes and selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be reviewed at the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) each year, are as follows: ⁸
- 2018: *Transformation toward sustainable and resilient societies*; and in-depth review of SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Productions), and 15 (Life on Land); and
 - 2019: *Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*; and in-depth review of SDGs 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
- 11.** In considering the next cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions, further parameters have to be taken into consideration. These include:
- (i) the possible special arrangements to mark the centenary of the ILO at the International Labour Conference in 2019;
 - (ii) possible linkages with the theme of the General Survey to be discussed at the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) already determined by the Governing Body: occupational safety and health (2017); working time (2018); and social protection floor (2019). It should be recalled that consensus has emerged among constituents in the discussions at previous Governing Body sessions to keep the format of having the review of the General Survey one year in advance of the corresponding recurrent discussion; ⁹
 - (iii) time frames of action plans adopted by the Governing Body under the first cycle of recurrent discussions: fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW) (2012–16); social dialogue (2014–17); employment (2014–18); social security (2011–19); and labour protection (2015–22).

Options for the decision on the next cycle and sequence

- 12.** The current seven-year cycle of recurrent discussions will end in 2017. ¹⁰ It is proposed that the next cycle starts in 2018 to ensure a prompt transition.
- 13.** At the 323rd Session of the Governing Body, broad support was expressed by Members for the idea that a major part of the International Labour Conference in 2019 would be devoted to consideration of the issues arising from the Future of Work Initiative. ¹¹ It would therefore seem appropriate to plan the next cycle of recurrent discussions in such a way that it would start in 2018 and continue in 2020 with an interruption in 2019 to enable the possible special arrangements to mark the centenary of the ILO at the 2019 Conference.
- 14.** During the Conference's evaluation of the impact of the Social Justice Declaration and its preparation, preliminary proposals were made for a two-year, four-year and five-year cycle.

⁸ It should be noted that a separate item before this session of the Governing Body (GB.328/INS/7) discusses the possible interrelations between the HLPF and the International Labour Conference in greater detail.

⁹ GB.320/PV, paras 343–344.

¹⁰ The sequence in the first cycle is: employment (2010); social security (2011); FPRW (2012); social dialogue (2013); employment (2014); social protection (2015); and FPRW (2017).

¹¹ GB.323/INS/2, para. 29.

However, a two-year cycle was found too short to properly assess and address the trends that would manifest themselves over a longer time frame¹², and hence the Office has focused on developing four options for four- and five-year cycles as set out in the table below:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Option 1(a): 5-year cycle starting with strategic objective of social dialogue												
SD	CEN	SS	E	LP	FPRW	EV	SD	SS	E	LP	FPRW	EV
Option 1(b): 5-year cycle starting with strategic objective of employment												
E	CEN	SS	SD	LP	FPRW	EV	E	SS	SD	LP	FPRW	EV
Option 2(a): 4-year cycle starting with strategic objective of social dialogue												
SD	CEN	SS	E	FPRW	EV	SD	LP	E	FPRW	EV	SD	SS
Option 2(b): 4-year cycle starting with strategic objective of employment												
E	CEN	SS	SD	FPRW	EV	E	LP	SD	FPRW	EV	E	SS

E= employment; SS= social security; LP=labour protection; SD= social dialogue; FPRW = fundamental principles and rights at work; CEN= centenary; EV=evaluation.

15. With regard to option 1, a five-year cycle would allow each of the strategic objectives to be discussed once in a cycle, with a separate discussion of social security and labour protection (see also the annex). It would enable an evaluation after the cycle (if the Governing Body so decide) to inform the Strategic Plan 2026–30, which would be submitted to the Governing Body for pre-review and discussion in 2024. Furthermore, the proposed five-year cycle would coincide with the reporting cycle for ratified technical Conventions, thus facilitating the consideration of a possible streamlining of reporting obligations and the examination of reports by the Office.
16. With regard to option 2, a four-year cycle would under normal circumstances coincide with the cycle for the Strategic Plan and the two-year programme and budget cycle. However, the commemoration of the ILO’s Centenary in 2019 would disrupt this alignment. Two approaches were preliminarily discussed under a four-year cycle: group the recurrent discussion of social dialogue with the discussion of FPRW and in this way make social dialogue a cross-cutting objective to be dealt with at each recurrent discussion; or social security and labour protection to be discussed as separated items in two consecutive cycles of recurrent discussions. Most views from the initial consultations after the Conference held that the strategic objective of social dialogue should continue to be examined separately. It is therefore proposed to only cover this latter approach.
17. Under all options, it is proposed that the recurrent discussion in 2020 focuses on the strategic objective of social security, for two reasons: the recurrent discussion would then not only be informed by the General Survey discussion on the social protection floor at the CAS in 2019, but it would also be well aligned with the time frame of the action plan (2011–19).
18. In determination of the sequence, two major options were suggested: starting the cycle with strategic objectives of social dialogue or employment. Under options 1(a) and 2(a), social dialogue is proposed to be the first strategic objective for discussion in 2018. This would allow the International Labour Conference to assess the extent to which changes in the world of work have had an impact on social dialogue, and also assess and discuss action taken under this strategic objective in accordance with the action plan (2014–17).¹³ A recurrent discussion of social dialogue would also allow the ILO to contribute to the theme of “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, which was selected for the HLPF review in 2019, and which would provide an opportunity to discuss the role of tripartism and social dialogue in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recurrent discussion of social

¹² ILC105/PR13-2(Rev.), para. 77.

¹³ The strategic objective was examined only once in 2013 under the first seven cycle.

dialogue and its outcomes would also inform the discussions concerning the Future of Work at the International Labour Conference in 2019.

19. In contrast, starting the next cycle with the discussion of strategic objective of employment in 2018 would better follow the order of strategic objectives in the Social Justice Declaration and align with the action plan (2014–18). It could also contribute to the review of Goal 8, which is one of the SDGs selected for in-depth review at the HLPF in 2019.
20. For all options outlined above, the full synchronization of the General Survey and its debate at the CAS with recurrent discussions will not be re-established until 2020, unless labour protection is selected as the item for the first recurrent discussion in 2018 which would be informed by the General Survey on occupational safety and health discussed by the CAS in 2017. However, since labour protection was last discussed in 2015, this would result in a very close interval between the two recurrent discussions on this item and thus not proposed.

C. Major elements of a framework

21. The Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference contain no provision regulating the working methods of a committee for recurrent discussions. Under the current practice, recurrent discussions generally follow the modalities of general discussions. During discussions at previous Governing Body sessions, and in particular during the Conference's evaluation of the impact of the Social Justice Declaration, there was broad consensus on the need to differentiate recurrent discussions from general discussions so as to achieve more fully their specific purpose under the Social Justice Declaration. A framework for that purpose could consolidate good practices in the first cycle and provide guidance to the effective functioning of future recurrent discussions and follow-up of their outcomes. The framework could cover: the preparation of the report for the recurrent discussion; the organization of the recurrent discussion at the Conference; the outcome of the recurrent discussion and its follow-up; and linkage between General Surveys and recurrent discussions.

Preparation of the report for recurrent discussions

22. The preparation of reports for recurrent discussions requires consultations across the ILO and Office-wide collaboration between different departments and portfolios in headquarters and between the field and headquarters. It is proposed that a dedicated small working group made up of staff from relevant departments and portfolios be established to draft the report to be submitted to the Conference. A task team composed of representatives from both headquarters and the field would be formed to provide guidance and advice to the working group.
23. A common and yet flexible format for the report should be developed. Despite the fact that each objective has its own specificities that may lead to different ways of structuring or drafting the corresponding report,¹⁴ there should be certain similarities across all reports as they serve a common purpose. A comparable format or template for the report would further improve the quality of the reports. The structure of the report could comprise:
 - (i) a review and analysis of global trends and challenges and of the diversified needs of the constituents in relation to the strategic objective in question;

¹⁴ In 2010, the Conference adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work which provides in its Part III details for the report to be submitted for a recurrent discussion on the strategic objective on fundamental principles and rights at work." http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meeting_document/wcms_141677.pdf.

- (ii) an assessment of action taken by Members to date so as to identify good practice, gaps and needs;
 - (iii) an assessment of action taken by the Organization in terms of governance, standards, programming frameworks, including Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), knowledge development and capacity building, development cooperation and partnerships. In this respect, the conclusions and action plans following the previous recurrent discussion should serve as the baseline;
 - (iv) consideration of inter-relation between the actions undertaken or promoted by the ILO and those of other international organizations, with a view to assessing synergies and minimizing any contradiction and duplication;
 - (v) an evidence-based analysis on the integrated approach to Decent Work focusing on synergies between the strategic objective being examined and the other three. Particular attention should be given to social dialogue and FPRW, as well as to gender equality and non-discrimination also as cross-cutting issue; and
 - (vi) proposals for future priorities and activities.
- 24.** An addendum report could be prepared, where appropriate, for the Conference based on informal consultations with constituents following the publication of the Conference Report. Such a report should be concise and could include proposed points for discussion, working methods of the Committee, and preliminary text/building blocks for the outcome document. Since the addendum report is intended to facilitate delegates in their preparation for the recurrent discussion, suggested points for discussion should be concrete, based on the report, and focused on the way forward.
- 25.** An early, broad and intensive process of consultations with constituents and other stakeholders in advance of the recurrent discussion at the Conference has proven necessary and effective to ensure a high quality of the Office report and to build consensus. To facilitate such advance consultations, the Governing Body could decide to provide guidance as to the scope of the recurrent discussion and the proposed annotated outline of the Office report in the form of exchange of views.

The organization of the recurrent discussion

- 26.** Members have expressed support for future recurrent discussions to include interactive discussions with the participation of key stakeholders in addition to the tripartite constituents, including recognized experts and representatives from relevant national, regional and international organizations. The high-level exchanges respectively with an invited expert and with representatives from five international organizations at the Social Justice Declaration Evaluation Committee at the 105th Session of the International Labour Conference (2016) were greatly appreciated by constituents, since they contributed to better equipping delegates with further inputs and information for discussion at the Conference.
- 27.** Future high-level exchanges with representatives from relevant regional and international organizations could be organized in such a manner that they would enable the ILO to take a lead role in the implementation of decent work-related SDGs and provide a concerted contribution to the HLPF's annual reviews. Furthermore, high-level exchanges on good practices at country level, where appropriate, could also be organized to complement the exchanges with experts and representatives from other organizations. Such country-focused exchanges with representatives from relevant ministries and social partners would help anchor recurrent discussions in the diverse realities and needs of the constituents, and findings from voluntary peer reviews.

The outcome document and its follow-up

28. The outcome document should be concise, focused, action-oriented and based on the discussions and deliberation at the Committee.
29. Consideration should be given to any implications for the programme and budget in the process of drafting the outcome document. The outcomes of the recurrent discussion should feed into the programme and budget cycle and inform the priority setting, resource mobilization and allocation in the formulation and implementation of the biennial programme.
30. In addition to the discussion at the November session of the Governing Body following the International Labour Conference, the Governing Body could also decide to review the implementation of the recurrent discussion outcome document with a linkage to the ongoing practice of reporting to the Governing Body on the programme and budget outcomes.

Linkage between General Surveys and recurrent discussions

31. Under the resolution, the ILO should “adopt modalities to ensure that general surveys and the related discussion by the Committee on the Application of Standards contribute to the recurrent discussions as appropriate”.¹⁵ The modalities will have to be established in full consistency with the implementation of the two components of the Standards Initiative: the Standard Review Mechanism (SRM) and the functioning of the supervisory system, which is to be discussed by the Governing Body in its sessions in November 2016 and March 2017. Subject to the outcomes and progress under the Standards Initiative and in order for General Surveys to better inform the preparation of and follow-up to recurrent discussions, consideration could be given to specific aspects relating to the:
 - (i) scope of General Surveys to provide adequate information on the national legislation and practice in relation to the instruments pertaining to the strategic objective reviewed;
 - (ii) manner of collecting relevant information especially as regards non-ratifying Members under article 19, paragraphs 5(e) and 6(d) without increasing the reporting obligations;
 - (iii) discussions of the General Survey by the CAS and better ways to use the CAS debate and outcome as one of the sources to inform the corresponding recurrent discussion.
32. *The Governing Body is invited to:*
 - (a) *take a decision on the options for the next cycle and sequence of recurrent discussions outlined in paragraph 14;*
 - (b) *provide guidance on the framework outlined in paragraphs 21–31 and request the Office to prepare, in light of the discussion at the present session of the Governing Body, a revised framework for deliberation and adoption at the 331st Session of the Governing Body (November 2017), and to commence its preparation of the recurrent item selected for 2018 in the light of the framework.*

¹⁵ ILC 105/PR13-1, subpara. 15.2(b).

Appendix

Options for the cycle of recurrent discussions

Items/year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
Strategic Plan P & B		Start 07					Start 07					Start 07			
General Survey Discussion	OSH	Working time	Social Protection Floor												
Option 1(a): five-year cycle starting with social dialogue	FPRW	SD (Action plan 14–17)	Centenary	SS (Action plan 11–19)	E (Action plan 14–18)	LP (Action plan 15–22)	FPRW	EV		SD	SS	E	LP	FPRW	EV
Option 1(b): five-year cycle starting with employment	FPRW	E (Action plan 14–18)		SS (Action plan 11–19)	SD (Action plan 14–17)	LP (Action plan 15–22)	FPRW	EV		E	SS	SD	LP	FPRW	EV
Option 2(a): four-year cycle starting with social dialogue t	FPRW	E		SS	SD	FPRW	EV	E	LP	SD	FPRW	EV	SD	SS	
Option 2(b): four-year cycle starting with employment	FPRW	SD		SS	E	FPRW	EV	SD	LP	E	FPRW	EV	E	SS	
SDG follow-up	Goals: 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14	Goals: 6, 7, 11, 12, 15	Goals: 4, 8, 10, 13, 16												
ILC committee items	1. Revision R 71; 2. FPRW; 3. Labour migration	1. Violence at work	Centenary	1. Violence at work											

E= employment; SS= social security; LP=labour protection; SD= social dialogue; FPRW = fundamental principles and rights at work; EV = Evaluation

