



# Governing Body

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## Institutional Section

INS

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## Update on the United Nations reform

### Purpose of the document

This document reviews developments in the reform of the United Nations development system since the Governing Body's last discussion of this topic at its 341st Session (March 2021). It describes the current state of system reform and the ILO's engagement, with a specific focus on the reformed UN resident coordinator system. The Governing Body is invited to request the Director-General to take its views into account in the ILO's engagement in and implementation of the reform, in particular with regard to the resident coordinator system and capacity-building of ILO constituents, and to provide a further report on the UN reform process at its 349<sup>th</sup> Session (October–November 2023) (see the draft decision in paragraph 61).

**Relevant strategic objective:** All.

**Main relevant outcome:** Enabling outcome A: Authoritative knowledge and high-impact partnerships for promoting decent work.

**Policy implications:** Yes.

**Legal implications:** No.

**Financial implications:** No.

**Follow-up action required:** Yes.

**Author unit:** Multilateral Cooperation Department (MULTILATERALS).

**Related documents:** [GB.341/INS/7](#); [GB.341/POL/4](#); [GB.340/INS/6](#); [GB.340/POL/6](#); [GB.340/INS/18/6](#); [GB.343/INS/3/2](#); [GB.335/INS/10](#); [GB.346/PFA/11](#); [GB.346/INS/INF/5](#).



## ▶ Introduction

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1. It has now been over four years since the restructuring of the United Nations (UN) development system was officially launched.<sup>1</sup> The intention is to ensure that the architecture for collaboration and engagement among the over 40 entities that comprise the UN development system are fit for the purpose of delivering the rights-based, universal and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since then, elements such as the UN resident coordinator system, the regional architecture and global governance have been overhauled and implementation of the reform is now in full swing.
2. The Office has conscientiously engaged with the reform process throughout, recognizing the critical importance of ensuring that the Organization's values, including international labour standards and tripartism, are incorporated into the integrated work of the UN development system at all levels. The Governing Body has guided the Office in playing an active and leading role in the process.<sup>2</sup>
3. Fierce headwinds have thrown the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) off course and created tough challenges for the UN development system. As the UN Secretary-General remarked, we are no longer just trying to support the achievement of the SDGs, but to rescue them.<sup>3</sup> The global COVID-19 pandemic and recent food, energy and financial crises triggered or aggravated by the situation in Ukraine have put the reformed system to the test. Some positive lessons have been learned, however, particularly in demonstrating how UN entities can quickly adapt their programming and repurpose and mobilize funding. The Office is drawing on its experience in the UN system's response for socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>4</sup> as it takes the lead among key UN agency partners on the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, launched by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021, and its national implementation, which is intended to enhance integrated and accelerated policy action across the UN development system.

## ▶ I. State of UN development system reform

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### Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)

4. At the Operational Activities for Development Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in May 2022, Member States took stock of the restructuring and implementation of the resolution on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review adopted

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly, [Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system](#), resolution 72/279, 1 June 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See [GB.332/HL/1](#), [GB.335/INS/10](#), [GB.340/INS/6](#) and [GB.341/INS/7](#), and documents for information [GB.338/INS/9](#) and [GB.340/INS/6](#).

<sup>3</sup> UN, "Secretary-General's remarks to ECOSOC Segment on Operational Activities for Development [as delivered]".

<sup>4</sup> [GB.343/INS/3/2](#). For a summary of the high-level evaluation of the ILO response, see [GB.346/PFA/7](#).

in 2020,<sup>5</sup> and provided further guidance on implementation of the reform. In their remarks, the UN Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General (in her role as Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)) highlighted some of the successes to date.<sup>6</sup> They noted that information from evaluations and surveys showed that governments are very satisfied overall with the more integrated and collaborative UN country teams and the leadership role of the resident coordinators in supporting national plans and priorities. Over half of resident coordinators are now women and there is also greater disability inclusion in resident coordinator offices. Efficiency gains generated in 2021 were more than 50 per cent higher than the previous year (US\$195 million in 2021 compared with \$127 million in 2020). The introduction and scaling up of UN INFO, the data and results reporting platform, is improving tracking and reporting on progress under UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs or Cooperation Frameworks). The key elements of regional review, one of the most complex undertakings of the reform, are now in place. Regional collaborative platforms, issue-based coalitions and peer support groups are already enabling the regional assets to work more cohesively in support of countries. Implementation of one of the last elements of the reform – the establishment or strengthening of multi-country offices for small island developing States – had been very well received.

5. Member States appreciated the substantial progress made, while noting that some areas needed further work. These include continued improvements in efficiency, transparency and accountability for results and greater visibility for donors. Surge capacity at the regional level that draws on the expertise of individual agencies to provide rapid support to UN country teams and countries still needs to be developed.
6. Additional areas that will require further attention include: the resident coordinators' role in helping governments to expand and improve partnerships; financing and development solutions; better and more coherent collaboration between the UN humanitarian, development and security assets; and full delivery by both governments and the UN development system on commitments under the Funding Compact, notably adequate predictable funding to the UN development system. More progress is also needed on the alignment of country programme documents of entities in the UN development system with Cooperation Frameworks and on use of common premises, common back offices and global shared services.
7. Official development assistance from official donors rose to an all-time high of US\$178.9 billion in 2021 globally, up 4.4 per cent in real terms from 2020, as developed countries increased funding to help developing countries grappling with the COVID-19 crisis.
8. However, the outlook for official development assistance in the context of geopolitical crises and the ensuing socio-economic budgetary demands in partnership countries is of major concern, as is the continued underfunding of the Special Purpose Trust Fund of the resident coordinator system and the multi-partner trust funds to support entities of the UN development system in providing integrated policy support. Member States were reminded that efficiency gains generated by the reform were not available to the resident coordinator

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<sup>5</sup> UN General Assembly, [Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system](#), resolution 75/233, 30 December 2020.

<sup>6</sup> See "Secretary-General's remarks to ECOSOC Segment on Operational Activities for Development [as delivered]", and "Deputy Secretary-General's remarks to the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment – Presentation of the Report of the Chair of the UNSDG on the Development Coordination Office [as prepared for delivery]".

system or these trust funds, but were used to help individual entities in the UN development system deliver on their programmes.

9. Underfunding of the resident coordinator system may jeopardize further progress. Overall participation by Member States in the Special Purpose Trust Fund declined in 2021 and is off track for 2022 as well. As of September 2022, the Fund had contributions of US\$114 million, with both voluntary contributions and the results of the 1 per cent levy, which is far below budgeted levels. The ILO's annual share of the cost-sharing arrangement for the resident coordinator system for 2022 and 2023 is US\$4.2 million out of the US\$77.5 million raised directly from UN development system entities. This is less than that of the previous biennium (US\$4.4 million) due to a recalculation of shares and the inclusion of new entities in the UN development system.
10. The reformed UN development system now has the building blocks to provide coherent and integrated policy advice – one of the key objectives of the reform at the global, regional and country levels. The overarching framework is set out in the Report of the Secretary-General, Our Common Agenda, which contains 12 action areas. Of particular relevance for the ILO is the first action area, Leave no one behind. Also featured prominently is the need for increased impetus on sustainable social protection systems, employment, just transitions and a rights-based approach, all of which were brought to the fore by the COVID-19 crisis.
11. Building on its engagement and leadership in the process for socio-economic response plans, the ILO continues to lead in the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, which was launched as a country-oriented integrated building block to implement Our Common Agenda. In this context, the ILO coordinates with partner organizations the preparation of integrated policy responses to be rolled out in selected “pathfinder countries”.

## ► II. ILO participation in the reformed UN development system

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12. After more than four years of dynamic reform processes across the UN development system, the major elements of the reform are now in place. In parallel, the ILO has seized the opportunities offered by the reform, as guided by the Governing Body. Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) are being aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks, thus providing opportunities for enhanced uptake of the Decent Work Agenda and constituents' priorities. Issue-based coalitions have proved to be a useful platform for cross-agency integrated solutions to address decent work deficits. On the back of a wider recognition of the ILO mandate and technical expertise in the COVID-19 response, in particular in the areas of social protection, employment and enterprise development, the ILO is better positioned to advocate for the Decent Work Agenda in national and UN planning and programming processes.
13. One lesson learned is that, wherever possible and beneficial, the ILO should seek a central position in thematic groups at the regional and country levels, and also engage constituents in discussions of policy priorities and implementation modalities. One good example in this regard is the Uzbekistan Vision 2030 Fund, where the ILO co-chairs the results group on human development; this provides a unique opportunity to facilitate informed contributions from constituents on setting the Fund's priorities.
14. To support the engagement of ILO offices and staff in the discussions on and operations of the reformed UN development system, the Office updated its policy guidance on the reform in April 2022. The guidance note also includes all relevant UN and ILO reference documents and is backed up by a site with frequently asked questions in several languages.

15. The ILO fully engages with UN country teams to ensure that decent work aspects are taken into account. In general, this places significant demands on country offices, as UN country team meetings, associated working groups and requests for inputs into UN processes and documents multiply. Naturally, such engagement is easier in countries where the ILO has a physical presence, either through a country office, a national coordinator or a development cooperation project. To some extent, the increase in virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated the ILO's participation in UN country team meetings in countries where it has no physical presence.
16. In this regard, some good practices and innovative solutions have emerged in many regions. In the Arab States, specialists from the Decent Work Technical Support Team are assigned to participate in UN country team meetings in those Gulf Cooperation Council countries where the ILO is not present but which have a UN resident coordinator. In parallel, two specialists from the Decent Work Technical Support Team have been outposted to Amman and Baghdad, where the ILO has significant development cooperation programmes and where the specialists act as country coordinators. In both instances, specialists are assigned based on the technical areas of particular importance for the respective country, where they can contribute to substantive discussions while gaining experience in the UN coordination mechanisms.
17. In Asia and the Pacific, in countries where the ILO does not have a country office, it is often the development cooperation project manager present in the country who participates in UN country team meetings; alternatively, the deputy director of the regional office participates remotely. In addition, technical specialists and development cooperation project staff members participate in various results groups of the UN country team.
18. In the Europe and Central Asia region, the ILO often participates in UN country team meetings via national coordinators and, in some countries, via technical specialists, in particular in thematic subgroups. The new generation of UN resident coordinators recruited into the reformed system no longer distinguishes to the same extent between resident and non-resident agencies. This change has also been fostered by a focus in the UNSDCF guidance on the capacity rather than the presence of UN country teams.
19. In Latin America, in countries where the ILO does not have a country office, local development cooperation staff or staff from the responsible country or regional office participate in UN country team meetings, often remotely. In some of these countries, a designated officer, a specialist from the Decent Work Technical Support Team, a deputy director or an ILO country coordinator leads the ILO's participation under the supervision of the ILO country director or the director of the Decent Work Technical Support Team.

## Regional and global mechanisms

20. The regional collaborative platforms are now working well across the regions and the ILO is involved through regional directors and their deputies. The platforms offer the opportunity to promote ILO regional technical and policy initiatives and also to engage in UN processes with a regional scope. Involvement in these mechanisms can, however, be very resource-intensive and hence the Office needs to be selective and strategic with regard to furthering the Decent Work Agenda.
21. A good example is the regional collaborative platform for Europe and Central Asia and its focus on the situation in Ukraine and the UN's response, in particular through the UN Transitional Framework for Ukraine. Issue-based coalitions under the regional collaborative platform for Europe and Central Asia are a direct result of the reform process and provide regional assistance to UN country teams on demand. The ILO is active in coalitions on social protection,

health, statistics, and the environment and climate change. One successful example of inter-agency messaging and policy coherence from such a coalition was on social protection in the context of COVID-19.

22. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the ILO participates in four out of six issue-based coalitions: equitable growth (which it co-leads with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)); financing for development; governance and institutions; and human mobility. The ILO also participates actively in two regional thematic working groups, on gender equality and youth.
23. Issue-based coalitions also offer opportunities for the ILO to roll out innovative solutions and enhance cooperation across the UN development system. In Africa, the ILO is co-leading, with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the UN Task Force on knowledge management. The African Knowledge Management Hub has developed a repository, hosted by UNECA in Addis Ababa and due to be launched in 2022, which provides real-time, searchable data on the expertise available in different domains and duty stations. Its main objective is to increase agencies' capability to connect, collaborate and share expertise.
24. In the Middle East and North Africa region, coordination on skills and youth employment led to a Regional Summit on Young People's Learning, Skilling, Social Inclusion and Transition to Decent Work on 23–24 May 2022, co-organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the ILO. The ILO was able to secure strong participation from its constituents and thus influence both the outcome document and the follow-up to national commitments.
25. Also, in the Middle East and North Africa, the High-level Ministerial Forum on Social Protection, organized by the issue-based coalition on social protection and co-chaired by the ILO in December 2021, adopted a declaration – the first of its kind in the region – setting out key guiding principles for post-COVID-19 social protection that will inform policymaking for countries and international partners in the region.
26. The Office also engages actively in various global coordination groups of the reformed UN development system. The Director-General participates in meetings of the UNSDG Principals and the related UNSDG Core Group. There are also relevant subsidiary bodies at the level of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in particular the High-level Committee on Programmes, which was chaired by the Director-General until September 2022 and which has served as a think tank for the UN system to address key strategic topics and foster policy coherence.<sup>7</sup> The High-level Committee on Programmes also played a central role in developing the system-wide contribution on progress beyond gross domestic product.
27. Moreover, the ILO participates in the UN Secretary-General's flagship initiative, the Call to Action for Human Rights, launched in 2020, which is also a central element of Our Common Agenda. The Call to Action aims to place human rights at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the COVID-19 response and recovery. For the ILO, this is an opportunity to promote a mutually reinforcing relationship between UN human rights instruments and international labour standards, including in the context of the renewed global social contract called for in Our Common Agenda and at the country level via Cooperation Frameworks.

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, "A United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence", "UN system strategy on the future of work" and "United Nations system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all".



- 28.** In order to make international labour standards and the ILO supervisory system an integral part of international human rights standards and frameworks, the ILO is actively engaged in the work of the Inter-Agency Task Team on the Call to Action for Human Rights, in which 35 UN entities participate, and pursues this engagement through a network on international labour standards and human rights across headquarters and the field. This has entailed: enhanced cooperation with the UN Office of the High-Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); participation in the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund of the UN Sustainable Development Group;<sup>8</sup> delivery of training to resident coordinators and human rights advisers on the ILO and its normative framework; and participation in an inter-agency analysis on human rights mainstreaming in Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. In parallel, the ILO is pursuing its engagement with the OHCHR, UNDP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on business and human rights, while building a long-standing engagement with regional and multilateral development banks and the international financial institutions for the development and implementation of environmental and social safeguards for investment projects. Moreover, the ILO, in cooperation with its International Training Centre in Turin, is continuing to support the preparation of normative stocktaking reports which set out the relevance of international labour standards and comments of the ILO supervisory bodies to national development priorities. This is done through training delivered to constituents and ILO staff members in countries where Cooperation Frameworks are rolled out, notably in Asia and the Pacific and Africa.
- 29.** Finally, in the context of its increased engagement with the Call to Action for Human Rights, the ILO re-joined the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and assumed the lead of its Intersectionality Pillar. The Office led a task force developing a Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, which draws on relevant international labour standards and reports of the ILO supervisory bodies, resolutions of the International Labour Conference and relevant ILO tools and publications. It was launched at a side event during the September 2022 session of the UN Human Rights Council, with the participation of ILO constituents.

## UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Decent Work Country Programmes

- 30.** ILO country offices continued to develop DWCPs that are closely aligned with Cooperation Frameworks, following the revised guidance prepared in 2019. In 2021 and the first nine months of 2022, new DWCPs were developed in Bangladesh, Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, the Republic of Moldova, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.
- 31.** Progress has been made in the involvement of the social partners in the UNSDCF preparation processes. While there are some differences in the level of participation between regions, according to ILO country office reports, the social partners participated in around half of all active Cooperation Frameworks globally (as of May 2022); continuous efforts are being made to increase this proportion.
- 32.** Constituents' engagement in the processes for UN Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks varies from country to country. While significant challenges remain,

<sup>8</sup> The OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN Women participate in the Fund along with the ILO.



also due to the awareness and understanding of resident coordinators and UN country teams, the ILO's engagement at all levels with the resident coordinator system appears to be bearing fruit and the situation is broadly improving, albeit not yet at the desired pace. Sustained outreach and awareness-raising efforts will therefore continue to be required, including in the day-to-day interactions of ILO staff members at all levels with the UN development system.

33. Similarly, capacity-building efforts, in particular for the social partners, will need to be pursued, for example on the long and complex UN planning processes, which are sometimes perceived as an unnecessary burden by some social partner organizations.
34. Furthermore, in some countries, the processes of Common Country Analyses are considered to be very politically sensitive and the UN country team therefore emphasizes the UN-owned and technical nature of the analysis. In these cases, the ILO feeds constituents' views into the process via its country offices.
35. In the Europe and Central Asia region, alignment between DWCPs and UNSDCF outcomes has resulted in more active and informed participation of constituents. For example, constituents were fully engaged in the UNSDCF in Uzbekistan. Similarly, in Azerbaijan, DWCP priorities were discussed and agreed with constituents in the light of the integral connection with the priority areas of the Cooperation Framework. In Türkiye, constituents participated in consultations on the UNSDCF; however, the virtual nature of the meeting somewhat limited their contributions. Another modality, successfully applied in Ukraine, is to facilitate direct exchanges between UN country teams and the ILO social partners.
36. In Latin America, the engagement of ILO constituents yielded good results in Argentina and Peru, where decent work issues featured prominently in UNSDCF outcomes, reflecting economic, social and environmental development priorities. It also resulted in international labour standards being recognized as part of the national commitment towards the advancement of human rights and the creation of constituent-driven mechanisms to monitor the SDGs and UNSDCF outcomes. A strong political and technical presence of the ILO in these countries was a prerequisite for this process.
37. In June 2022, a training course for employers' and workers' organizations on engagement in UNSDCF processes was conducted in 11 Pacific countries. In the Arab States, social partners participated in discussions in setting priorities for Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks in Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
38. One successful example in Africa is the formulation of the DWCP in Nigeria, in which the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator participated; ILO constituents are also involved in programmes and activities of the UN, including on the SDGs. The UN Resident Coordinator also hosted a high-level conversation with the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria.
39. In 2021, the inter-agency network of human rights focal points reviewed 44 Common Country Analyses and 40 Cooperation Frameworks.<sup>9</sup> Key findings show that while the new generation of Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks incorporate human rights issues to a degree, drawing on the wealth of recommendations from human rights mechanisms and the ILO supervisory bodies among others, this is often not translated into programmatic

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<sup>9</sup> The network supports the strategic interventions on sustainable development under the Call to Action for Human Rights. The review involved 12 UN entities and includes analytical inputs from the [UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities](#). A sample of new-generation Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks developed and finalized between the early 2019 and mid-2021 were reviewed.

opportunities. Although 66 per cent of the Common Country Analyses examined address the most pressing human rights issues based on the most recent outcomes from the UN human rights system, only 40 per cent of the strategic priorities in Cooperation Frameworks do so adequately. On the narrower aspect of economic policy advice and programmatic work, 22 per cent of UNSDCFs included outputs that thoroughly connect to human rights obligations and recommendations from the human rights mechanisms and international labour standards. This indicates positive trends in the mainstreaming of international labour standards in the planning processes of the UN development system, but also shows that there is still significant potential for improvement.

## Reporting on results

40. The ILO provided substantive inputs for the UNSDG document “[Measuring the UN contribution towards the SDGs: Overview of key results on the UN contribution to advance the SDGs, including through the socioeconomic response to COVID-19](#)”, which was presented to ECOSOC in April 2022. It includes results achieved with ILO support in relation to social protection (including health protection), employment, gender equality, fundamental principles and rights at work, occupational safety and health, wages, and tripartism and social dialogue.
41. There has also been progress on closer engagement on the UN INFO digital platform. The ILO actively participated in an inter-agency working group that developed a menu of output indicators to measure the UN system-wide contribution to the achievement of the SDGs in countries, which was made available to UN country teams for the development of UNSDCFs and joint work plans and was included in UN INFO. The menu includes indicators on decent work that are closely linked to the output indicators of the ILO Programme and Budget for 2022–23. This will facilitate streamlined and simplified UN system-wide monitoring and reporting on progress on decent work.
42. Furthermore, the ILO carried out an analysis of the data requirements for reporting on country-level activities and results through UN INFO, with the purpose of revising its internal country programming systems and facilitating interoperability as from 2024–25.

## Capacity, partnerships and resource mobilization

43. The ILO was actively involved in the UNSDG’s recent refinement of its guidance on joint programmes to encourage catalytic development results and SDG-related policy change. According to the guidance, joint programmes should be anchored in the outcomes of Cooperation Frameworks and draw on the comparative advantages of one or more participating UN organizations, while allowing the organizations to share risk. Joint programmes should have governance and management arrangements that are unambiguous, practical and aligned with the Management and Accountability Framework and the Funding Compact. The revised guidance is a step forward for the ILO, as employers’ and workers’ organizations are specifically referred to as potential implementing partners for joint programmes. It also includes an enhanced recognition of the ILO’s normative mandate and associated treaties in the design and implementation of joint programmes. This provides a good basis for stronger engagement of ILO constituents in UN country planning and programming efforts.
44. The UN remains among the three largest contributors to the ILO. Contributions from the UN system accounted for the largest source of approvals in 2021, reaching US\$46.2 million – nearly US\$15 million higher than the average recorded over the past four years. The UN portfolio is marked by an increasing number of inter-agency contributions and of joint programmes

funded by multi-partner trust funds. Contributions often targeted COVID-19 response initiatives, social protection, employment promotion, enterprise promotion, skills development, the green economy, migration, and work quality issues. These partnerships included cooperation with UNAIDS, UNICEF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), among others. In addition, multi-partner trust funds were accessed in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Liberia and Yemen in 2021. The partnership with the UNDP under the joint Framework for Action has progressed, with the development of a joint global programme in fostering pathways to formality.

45. As of 2021, 14.5 per cent of ILO earmarked contributions were received through pooled funds via multi-partner trust funds and direct inter-agency funding partnerships, in line with the 15 per cent target under the Funding Compact for UN development system members. Multi-partner trust funds are a mainstay of ILO partnerships with the UN development system: there have been 47 of them since 2016. More recently, ILO engagement has shifted to the development of SDG trust fund windows, in partnership with the UN Development Coordination Office and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

## Recent trends in ILO constituents' engagement at the country level

46. In the context of the reform, significant progress has been made in positioning ILO constituents in the resident coordinator system: both the Management and Accountability Framework and the job description for resident coordinators task them with engaging and consulting with ILO social partners as groups distinct from civil society.<sup>10</sup> However, while awareness of the UN development system reform has generally increased among trade unions, there is still scope to improve workers' awareness of and involvement in UN processes at the country level, including in UNSDCF. In some countries, challenges persist in the full and timely inclusion of trade unions early in UNSDCF processes and, where they have been consulted, the incorporation of their inputs into the final documents. In this context, full implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework needs to be promoted, to ensure that trade unions are not subsumed under civil society as a whole by resident coordinators and UN country teams.
47. This underscores the need for greater capacity-building efforts and outreach by the Office to resident coordinators to enable constituents to participate effectively. One innovative and successful measure is the evidence-based policy position papers on Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks prepared by trade unions, for example in the Philippines and Morocco, with the support of the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). ACTRAV is also finalizing a booklet on lessons learned and emerging good practices of trade unions' engagement in UNSDCF and is developing briefing materials based on the findings.
48. Awareness and understanding among UN resident coordinators and UN country teams of the role, functions and added value of employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) has also improved, but could be enhanced. ILO offices with clear strategies for engagement with the UN are more successful in bringing the social partners to the table. In many cases, UN agencies prefer to engage through the UN Global Compact – which is positioned as the entry point for the private sector – through other ad hoc business networks or directly with multinational enterprises and large companies on corporate social responsibility initiatives. The multi-stakeholder forums, – which were designed to provide the main platform for

<sup>10</sup> GB.341/INS/7.

engagement with strategic non-governmental partners, including the social partners – are yet to be fully utilized.

49. Initial experience also shows that the overall capacity and representativeness of EBMOs, the strength and commitment of their leadership, and the openness and understanding of the UN agencies are often key to the success of the engagement. Nevertheless, opportunities remain for EBMOs to expand their engagement with the UN country teams and play a more prominent role in the preparation of UNSDCFs, and thereby achieve national sustainable development priorities. The economic transformation components of the Cooperation Frameworks are particularly aligned with the policy agenda of EBMOs.
50. This experience in the reformed UN development system at the country level shows, firstly, that continued and sustained capacity-building for constituents, in cooperation with the Turin Centre, needs to continue and, secondly, that awareness-raising for UN resident coordinators and UN country teams on the ILO and the role of constituents is a prerequisite for improved results of constituents' engagement in a reformed UN development system. Consequently, capacity-building of constituents is now an integral part of the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25 and progress is continuously monitored across Office activities.
51. The Office has therefore broadened its action on these two aspects. In Eastern Europe, for example, there has been increased demand from the social partners on better engagement with UN development system reform and UNSDCF processes, and from UN resident coordinators and the regional Development Coordination Office on increasing their understanding of the Decent Work Agenda. Consequently, a training webinar for the social partners was conducted, in cooperation with the Turin Centre, on 8–24 September 2021 in the Eastern European and Central Asia subregion. Subsequently, the ILO held a session with the regional Development Coordination Office and 18 UN resident coordinators, at which the directors of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and ACTRAV provided highlights of work with employers' and workers organizations.
52. In 2021 and 2022, ACTRAV delivered technical support and capacity-building activities on Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks to trade unions in 20 countries across the five regions.<sup>11</sup> Further, in collaboration with the Turin Centre, ACTRAV developed and delivered a self-guided e-learning course on UNSDCFs and decent work. Over 150 trade union officials have completed the course, which helps them to identify the main elements of the UN development system reform and key entry points for trade union participation and priority-setting in UNSDCFs, including through DWCPs. ACTRAV has also collaborated with the Turin Centre to develop and deliver global and regional digital academies on trade union policy and action on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
53. To develop the capacity and facilitate the engagement of employers in the UN planning processes and foster the relationship with the UN country teams, ACT/EMP has implemented a series of capacity development activities at the country level. Such programmes range from raising awareness among EBMOs on the Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks, establishing or facilitating dialogue with the UN resident coordinators and UN country teams, and providing technical support to develop inputs for Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. Notable examples include Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, where ACT/EMP supported the creation of private sector alliances to participate in the planning process and make submissions to the UN country teams on business priorities.

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<sup>11</sup> Algeria, Azerbaijan, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Botswana, Cameroon, Colombia, Ghana, Libya, Madagascar, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zambia.

In Lebanon and Peru, the ILO helped to create a dialogue space for constituents with the UN resident coordinator. In the Asia and Pacific region, briefing sessions were held for members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Confederation of Employers and EBMOs. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the ILO played a prominent role in the development of the UNSDCF, supported by the active involvement of the Association of Tanzanian Employers. In Central Asia, ACT/EMP collaborated with the Turin Centre, relevant units at ILO headquarters and field offices to conduct tripartite training programmes on the SDGs and UN reform. After the training, the Office facilitated meetings between the social partners and the resident coordinators in Kazakhstan and Georgia.

54. The Turin Centre conducted several courses, in cooperation with the Office, to bolster constituents' capacity to engage in various aspects of the UN development system reform: (i) "Making the voice of social partners count in UN processes", a training programme with a South-South Learning approach which was delivered in Latin America, English-speaking Caribbean countries, and Central Asia and Eastern Europe; (ii) "Business and decent work: How enterprises contribute to achieve decent work for all", a massive open online course; and (iii) four sessions of the "Financing decent work" course.
55. The main learning support tool of the ILO, the Decent Work for Sustainable Development Resource Platform, is being updated to align with the 2022–23 Programme and Budget and to include recent data, analyses and policy guidance on the COVID-19 response.

## Operational matters

56. The ILO also participated in the efficiency agenda for the reform through the Business Innovations Group. The Group has five work streams: (i) global shared services; (ii) common back offices/local shared service centres; (iii) business operations strategy; (iv) common premises; and (v) mutual recognition. In the business operations strategy workstream, reported efficiency gains in the UN development system were US\$127 million in 2020 and US\$195 million in 2021. The ILO also strives to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, and reports its results to the Development Coordination Office. For example, the ILO has made progress on common premises and is already co-located in a significant number of countries; as of 1 January 2022, 30 per cent of the ILO's leased accommodation was shared with another UN entity.
57. However, for some proposed work streams, the potential savings do not outweigh the costs of abandoning current practices and systems. The Office will therefore continue to engage fully in the efficiency drive and will undertake cost-benefit analyses to establish whether changes would indeed yield savings from the ILO's perspective.
58. The ILO continues to work on the requirement under the Management and Accountability Framework to arrange for UN resident coordinators to provide formal inputs for the performance appraisals of ILO members of UN country teams. This will require an amendment to the Staff Regulations<sup>12</sup> with the aim of rolling out the system in 2023.
59. Some ILO staff members are also being selected for UN resident coordinator assignments, most recently in Namibia with effect from December 2022. Furthermore, four ILO staff members are now at different stages in the pipeline for becoming a resident coordinator.

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<sup>12</sup> See document GB.346/PFA/11.

60. The ILO has an established practice of sending selected ILO field office directors to participate in the UN Country Team Leadership Course and the UN Leaders Programme organized by the United Nations System Staff College. These programmes were disrupted in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-related travel restrictions, but it is anticipated that they will resume in 2022.

## ▶ Draft decision

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### 61. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the current status of the reform of the United Nations development system and invited the Director-General to take into consideration the views expressed by the Governing Body in the ILO's continued engagement in and implementation of the reform and in supporting tripartite constituents in engaging in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses; and**
- (b) **requested the Director-General to provide a further report on the UN reform process and the measures taken by the Office at its 349th Session (October–November 2023).**