

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

The ILO is a UN agency that sets international labour standards and promote social protection and work opportunities for all. The ILO has 187 member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO.

Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland

Founded in: 1919

Head: Guy Ryder

The only tripartite UN agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member states: to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

How it works: The unique tripartite structure of the ILO gives an equal voice to workers, employers and governments to ensure that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in labour standards and in shaping policies and programmes.

Mission and impact: The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

ORIGIN

The ILO was founded in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The ILO became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

STRUCTURE OF THE ILO

The ILO consists of

- i. The International Labour Conference (ILC)
- ii. The Governing Body
- iii. The International Labour Office (ILO)

These organs fulfill the main tasks of the ILO

1. ILC is the apex body of ILO which makes labour policies for international labour. The ILC holds its sessions at a frequency not less
 - a. than once in a year

- b. the delegates from three groups viz, the government, the employer's and the workers attend ILC sessions in the ratio of 2:1:1 respectively
- c. each representative has a vote
- d. the representatives from the government are mostly ministers, diplomats and officials.

The Conference is empowered to appoint Committees to deal with different matters relating to labour during each session. Examples of such committees are -

- the Selection Committee
- the Credential Committee
- the Resolution Committee
- the Drafting Committee
- the Finance Committee etc.

All committees except Finance Committee are tripartite in nature.

FUNCTIONS:

- Formulate International Labour Standards
- Fix the amount of contribution to be paid by the member states
- Decide budget and submit the same to the Governing body
- Study the labour problems submitted by the DG and assist in their solutions
- Appoint committees to deal with different problems during its sessions.
- Elect the president
- Select members of the Governing body
- Develop policies and procedures
- Seek advisory opinion from International Committee of Justice
- Confirm the powers, functions and procedures of Regional Conference

GOVERNING BODY

It is also a tripartite body. It implements the decisions of the ILC with

the help of the ILO. It consists of 56 members in the same ratios of 2:1:1, i.e. 28 representatives of the government, 14 of the employers and 14 of the workers. Out of the 28 representatives of the government, 10 are appointed by the members of the States of Chief Industrial Importance and remaining 18 are delegates of the governments.

Industrial population is the criteria for Chief Industrial importance.

India is one of the 10 states of Chief Industrial importance.

The tenure of the office of this body is 3 years.

It meets frequently in a year to take decisions on the programmes of the ILO.

FUNCTIONS:

- Coordinate work between ILC and ILO
- Prepare agenda for each session of the ILC
- Appoint the Director General of the office
- Scrutinize the budget
- Follow up with member states in regard to implementation of the conventions and recommendations adopted by the ILC
- Fix the date, duration, schedule and agenda for the Regional Conferences
- Seek as and when required, advisory opinion from the ICJ with the consent of the ILC.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

- This is the secretariat of the ILO in Geneva and is the third major organ of the ILO.
- The DG of the ILO is the Chief Ex. Officer of the Secretariat appointed by the Governing Body.
- He also serves as the Secretary General of the ILC.
- His tenure is for 10 years and extendable by the Governing Body.
- DG is assisted by two Deputy DGs, six Assistant DGs, one Director of the International Institute of Labour Studies and one Director of the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training, Advisors, Chief of Divisions from 100 nations.

FUNCTIONS:

- Prepare briefs and documents for agenda of ILC
- Assist the governments of the States to form labour legislation based on recommendations of the ILC
- Bring out publications relating to industrial labour problems of international nature and interest
- Carry out functions related to the observance of the conventions
- Collect and distribute information on international labour and social problems.

GLOBAL JOBS PACT (19-06-2009)

-> Faced with prospect of a prolonged global increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality and continued distress for enterprises, in June 2009, the I L Conference with the participation of government, employer's and worker's delegates from the ILO's member states, unanimously adopted a "Global Jobs Pact".

-> This global policy instrument addresses the social and employment impact of the international financial and economic crisis.

-> It promotes a productive recovery centred on investments, employment and social protection.

The Global Jobs Pact is a set of balanced and realistic policy measures that countries, with the support of regional and multilateral institutions, can adopt to ease the impact of the crisis and accelerate recovery in employment.

-> Guided by the Decent Work Agenda and commitments made by the ILO constituents in 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a fair globalization, the pact recalls that respecting

- I. fundamental principles and rights at work
- II. strengthening social protection
- III. promoting gender equality and
- IV. encouraging voice, participation and social dialogue are critical to recovery and development

-> It proposes a portfolio of policies aimed at:

- I. Generating employment

- ii. Extending social protection
- iii. Respecting labour standards
- iv. Promoting social dialogue
- v. Shaping fair globalization

WHY THE PACT?

- The damage to employment created by the financial and economic crisis has caused hardship to many working women and men, families and communities and has worsened poverty.
- It has threatened the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, weakened middle classes, heightened risks to social cohesion and eroded the confidence of decision makers.
- It is now widely recognized that the model of growth prevailing before the crisis needs to change, that we can not continue to overestimate the capacity of the market to self-regulate, undervalue the role of government etc. Support for the pact continues to grow with backing from global and regional organizations such as ECOSOC, G20 etc.
- Its successful implementation depends on national and international decisions, by governments, business, labour, parliaments, local authorities and civil society, as well as by donors and multilateral institutions.

APPRAISAL

- The ILO in many ways, has gained merits and won international recognition. Yet it has not been able to entirely fulfill its primary mission to create and implement universal labour and social standards for the protection and promotion of workers.
- Despite great progress in the ratification of the core ILO conventions, violations against the fundamental labour rights set out therein are still on the agenda in many member states of the ILO. Smaller still is the will to respect the technical labour standards.
- In this situation, the ILO needs new efforts to strengthen and to fully enforce its standards. Otherwise, new degradations in the labour world as well as social upheaval and strife would threaten to arise.
- Internal factors are responsible for the patchy track record of the ILO, such as inadequate legal means of punishing violations of

standards and the rather meagre resources compared with the international financial institutions.

- The unfriendly economic and socio-political environment around the ILO has often proved to be a serious obstacle to the implementation of international standards.
- Whereas in the early days of the ILO, fascism and National Socialism were the biggest adversaries of the organisation, in recent times neo-liberalism has become the most significant challenge.
- Underpinned by dogmatic neo-classical economic thought it has served as a recipe for the extensive deregulation of the labour market, which runs counter to the regulation of labour as a prerequisite for the implementation of the international labour standards.
- As agreed in the so-called Washington Consensus, neo-liberally-oriented policies of the World Bank and the IMF often stood in the way of effective development cooperation with the ILO.
- Also unfavourable for the observance and application of the I L code is the nationally and globally unequal power relationship between employers and workers in favour of the former.
- As the principal stakeholders of workers, the trade unions organise only a small portion of worldwide labour force. In the context of globalisation, they have themselves suffered losses in membership and lost fighting strength even in traditional welfare states.
- The history of the ILO suggests that rational and ethical justifications for IL standards - such as social fairness, justice and human dignity have not always been sufficient to repel social dumping and exploitation in its various forms and varieties.
- To implement the IL code requires political and social pressure to act. (To some extent after WWI and WWII importance of social peace and cross-border understanding gained upper hand over national and social egoism, and more-over, the ideological competition between East and West forced a policy of social balance.)

In the future, it is to be hoped that the principal creed of the ILO which rests on the link between peace and social justice will prove strong enough to guide policy makers to forestall new disasters.