

ILO Centenary Conference 2019

Outcome document on the Future of Work

The 2019 Centenary Conference of the ILO will take place on 10 – 21 June. The future of work will be a major topic at the Conference, and the ILO Governing Body has decided that the Conference should consider an outcome document, which is expected to be an ILO Declaration. The social contract is broken, and with the major challenges in the world of work relating to climate and new technology, a strong and relevant ILO Declaration is needed.

A key part of the preparations for the ILO Centenary was the High Level Commission on the Future of Work, the report of which was released on 22 January 2019 by the Co-Chairs of the Commission, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven. Three worker representatives took part in the work of the Commission – Luc Cortebeeck, Philip Jennings and Reema Nanavaty.

The [Commission's report "Work for a Brighter Future"](#) sets out a human-centred agenda for a decent future of work. It recognises that the acceleration of technological change and the challenge of climate change threaten to exacerbate the existing global challenges of 300 million working people in poverty, 190 million unemployed, inequality, informality, lack of social protection, modern slavery, excessive working hours, death, disease and injury at work and other major issues caused by the current economic model. It also recognises that almost half of the world's households are not yet connected to the internet, and thus are excluded from the enormous potential of digitalisation.

A first response to the report, by Philip Jennings, can be read [here](#).

The report contains a wide range of important recommendations, including on the following issues:

Investing in people's capabilities:

Including a universal entitlement to life-long learning; support for workers in situations of transition including in relation to climate change and to new technology; a transformative agenda for gender equality including public care services; and, providing universal social protection.

Investing in the institutions of work:

Including establishing a Universal Labour Guarantee (see below), the elements of which are already contained in the Philadelphia Declaration and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; time sovereignty with greater autonomy for workers over working hours, limits on maximum hours of work and guaranteed minimum hours; collective representation of employers and workers with social dialogue; and, harnessing and managing technology for decent work.

Investing in decent and sustainable work:

Including incentives for job creation, the rural economy and digital infrastructure; supporting long-term investment and supplementary indicators of human development and well-being to complement the GDP indicator.

The report also refers to the universality of the ILO's mandate, its normative role and the importance of all countries ratifying fundamental ILO Conventions, with all workers including the self-employed and those in informal work, having the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. In addition, it has a strong focus on rural workers, and on formalising informal work.

The Commission called for a revitalisation of the social contract as central to achieving a human-centred agenda, with the multilateral system cooperating to underwrite the social contract.

The Commission's report is extensive and detailed, and in large measure responds to the concerns of the international trade union movement. Some principal areas that were not in the ITUC's view adequately addressed in the report, despite the efforts of the Worker members of the Commission, are:

The impact of changing business models, including the "Uberisation" of employment and the increasing dominance of a small number of enormously powerful data companies;

The vital need for solutions which go beyond national borders and address supply chain issues in particular; The need for trade and investment policies to incorporate labour and environmental standards; and,

A clear call for businesses to stop anti-union practices.

The report provides useful guidance for the development of policies and programmes for a human-centred agenda, and all affiliates are urged to study it in detail. It also includes some key recommendations which should be reflected in the Declaration which it is expected will be adopted at the June International Labour Conference. Overall a new ILO Declaration should include:

Recognition of the social deficits of the current economic system and the need for a human-centred agenda based on revitalisation/renewal of the social contract, that inequalities are growing and the employment relationship is being eroded as well as other global challenges including climate change, new technologies, demographic trends and the impact of new forms of businesses.

Reaffirming the ILO's universal and normative mandate that was initiated in the founding Constitution of the ILO and developed in the Philadelphia Declaration and subsequent ILO Declarations.

Taking note of the Commission's report and calling for governments to follow its recommendations on developing a human-centred agenda.

Endorsement of the Universal Labour Guarantee, which applies to all workers regardless of the status of their employment relationship, including: freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and protection from discrimination and forced labour and the elimination of child labour; the right to safe and healthy work, an adequate living wage and maximum limits on working hours.

Reaffirming that full, sustainable and decent employment must be a central policy objective nationally and internationally.

Recognition of safety and health at work as a fundamental principle and right at work

Support for the development of an international governance system and standard(s) for digital labour platforms and for development of regulations to govern data use and algorithmic accountability in the world of work.

The renewed social contract should be further based on:

- Respect for workers' rights, recognising the enabling nature of freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- Gender equality;
- Universal social protection;
- Secure minimum hours guarantees and ensuring time sovereignty;
- Life-long learning;

- Just transition measures to support workers through transitions;
- Recognition of the employment relationship in providing legal protection to workers;
- Social dialogue and collective bargaining as key means to ensure that changes benefit all;
- Laws, regulations and institutions and public provision of quality services in support of economic and social development;
- Ensuring that the Universal Labour Guarantee is respected in the international operations of business, in particular throughout supply chains; and,
- Formalisation of activities of informal and rural workers into decent work and living incomes.

Actions for the ILO:

Reaffirmation of the Constitutional role of the ILO to examine all economic and financial policies in light of their contribution to the achievement of social justice and the new social contract;

Coordination of efforts by organisations of the multilateral system to realise the objectives of the Declaration;

Establishment of institutional arrangements to give effect to the objectives set out in the Declaration and provide the needed support to tripartite constituents in its implementation;

Development of and reporting on indicators that complement GDP to monitor progress in a human-centred economic agenda with an annual Global Outlook report;

Provide support and guidance to governments and employers' and workers' organisations, including at the sectoral and enterprise levels, in realising the human centred agenda for work set out in the report of the High Level Commission on the Future of Work;

Establish an authoritative ILO capacity for advice and technical support on digital technology and its impact on jobs and the workforce; and,

Reporting on national progress towards renewing the social contract and implementing a Universal Labour Guarantee.

We are hoping that the Employers' Group at the ILO will recognise that the standards and principles, such as those in the proposed Universal Labour Guarantee, have already been established in ILO decisions for many years, and that they will also recognise the need to renew the social contract. In this respect, it is important to note that the ILO Director General has issued a call for government to organise national consultations in the months prior to the ILO Conference. We urge all affiliates to engage in these consultations with a view to convincing governments of the key demands of the trade union movement for a Declaration, and suggest that you similarly engage directly with employer organisations and companies.

The ITUC would be happy to provide further information on request.