

Report of the 2019 Africa International Labour Conference (ILC) preparation meeting

Introduction

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) conducted the preparatory meeting for the 2019 International Labour Conference (ILC). This year's ILC will mark the centenary existence of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Already, the ILO's Future of Work Commission's report has been published and being disseminated widely. It will form part of the documents for discussions by the different committees during the 2019 ILC. The Conference will run from 10-21 June 2019.

The Africa's preparatory meeting took place from 20-22 March 2019 was hosted by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in collaboration with the local unions, especially CESTRAR.

Overall Objective:

The social, political and economic human rights are increasingly adhered to worldwide.

Secondary objectives:

The system of international labor norms and social standards is further developed and implemented.

- (1) Build capacity and improve the knowledge of trade unionists of the ILO standards and monitoring mechanisms

Strengthen the regional network of trade union experts on human and trade union rights issues

Indicators

1. Member organizations of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have submitted conclusive reports to the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS).
2. Complaint- and conflict resolution mechanisms to address labor violations are used in at least five countries.
3. A tentative list of cases from countries in Africa region (excluding North Africa) is formulated for discussion during the meeting of the Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conference of 2019.
4. 25 trade union leaders from 14 countries, 1 sub-regional organisation and 3 Global Union Federations based in Africa have been trained and have their capacities on International Labour Standards enhanced. 6 of them women

5.

Participants

25 participants took place in the meeting. They are from Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Angola, Gabon, Ethiopia, Somalia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Burkina Faso and Rwanda. Others include representatives of Global Union Federations (GUFs) - IndustriALL; PSI; and ITF. Sub-regional trade union organisation such as East African Trade Union Confederation attended. Six of the participants were women and four were young workers.

Highlights

Presentations and discussions were made and had in relation to the work of the various International Labour Conference committee work, with focus on how the workers' group to the conference can effectively engage and contribute to the processes and outcomes of the conference.

There was also presentations on the work of the ITUC Human and Trade Union Rights engagement for the next four years as distilled from the conclusions of the 4th World Congress. Discussions on how trade unions can better use International Financial Institutes' policies and spaces to advance human and labour rights.

The cade of the effects of Chinese investment in Africa was also presented with the view of developing a campaign to tame it and make it responsive and responsible to delivering on the respect for human and labour rights. It was agreed that African trade unions will have to work more and urgently, too on the issue of unity so as to be able to muster sufficient opportunities to counter irresponsible investment behaviour on the continent.

The selection of cases based on the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) to be discussed during the conference by the Committee on Application of Standards, if eventually selected was done. The participants were divided into group work and report was taking in plenary. The plenary session focused on making the selection based on priorities/preferences. Attempts were made to suggest possible outcomes that African workers would like to see as conclusions. Of course, they were informed that outcomes are combinations of various processes, which include level of preparation and delivery of interventions during the conference; interests of the various ILO Constituents; good lobbying efforts; compromises between the Workers' Spokesperson and that of his Employers' counterpart, amongst others. At the end of the exercise, the following countries were identified that should be considered.

LIST OF African CASES FOR 2019 ILC preparatory meeting Kigali, Rwanda

NO	COUNTRY	CONVENTION	Priority preference	Anticipated conclusion
Special Note case	Ethiopia	138	Decided by the CEACR	Technical Assistance

1	Zimbabwe	87	Short list	Special paragraph
2	Cameroon	87	Short list	Special paragraph
3	Chad	151	Short list	Special paragraph
4	Burundi	105	Short list	High Level Technical mission
5	DRC	135	Long list	High Level Technical mission
6	Uganda	81	Long list	Technical Assistance
7	Liberia	98	Long list	High Level Technical Mission
8	Malawi	138	Long list	Technical Assistance
9	Rwanda	87	Long list	Technical Assistance
10	Ghana	182	Long list	Technical Assistance

It was noted that the two double footnoted cases (**) severely limited the regions' negotiation space and that there was a limited chance of achieving additional Africa cases agreed in the final list. The double footnoted cases highlight serious human rights issues (child recruitment into armed forces and sexual slavery by ISIS in Ethiopia and the sale of Sub-Saharan African workers as slaves as a serious case of discrimination in Libya) of major concern to unions. Nevertheless, participants worry about the limitation "Double Footnote" cases poses to better prioritisation of African cases given the growing egregious human and labour rights violations on the continent. It was agreed that the Workers' Spokesperson should be requested to, in his speech point to the issues contained in the other cases that will not make the "short list" of cases.

The point was made about better coordination so as to avoid the situation where workers' representatives will be speaking/making interventions at cross purposes. It was agreed that persons who that did not attend case coordination meetings, are as much as possible, prevented from taking the floor. It was also agreed that where worker delegates have divergent views, it must be sorted out during coordination meeting and workable compromises reached where possible.

In addition, it was noted that neither of the representatives of the countries with double footnoted cases were likely to be included by the government as worker delegates with speaking rights. The meeting therefore discussed tactics to overcome this problem by challenging the

credentials of the worker delegate identified by the government and speaking through a duly accredited worker delegate from another country.

Regional and global solidarity remain weak and the need to speak and act in support of workers and unions in other countries need to be stepped up. It was agreed that necessary efforts will be made to improve these concerns.

The need for written documentation was highlighted and affiliates were encouraged to send information to ITUC, in response to the survey questionnaire and beyond and encouraged to draft briefs to be distributed during the ILC.

Suggestions to undertake national and sub-regional preparations meant to improve the quality of interventions of African worker delegates to the ILC, as well as the discipline to sit in sessions were also highlighted.

The importance of getting trade unions to contribute to the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) was stressed. It was also agreed that publicizing the report at the national level can also help to put more pressure on governments to ensuring better application and enforcement of the standards instruments (Conventions and Recommendations). The same suggestion was made for CAS conclusions - trade unions need to do necessary and diligent follow-up of the conclusions.

Participants were reminded that **October 7** is the WDDW, offering an opportunity to organise actions in the framework of the global trade union call for a New Social Contract.

Way forward

The meeting noted that national preparations will help deepen the quality of African participation and contributions to the International Labour Conference. The meeting also advised that national centres must continue to make conscious efforts to get more women and young workers to the conference. Equally considered important is the need for African trade unions to engage and bring to the conference more technical hands that will help with inputs development, analyses and reactions.

Conclusion

The International Labour Organisation represents another space for furthering working class struggles. It must be consciously and effectively engaged and used to advance this cause.