

# **International Labour Organization**

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## **Introduction**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations focused on promoting decent work for all, ensuring that everyone benefits from working conditions that offer freedom, equity, security, and dignity. It's the only tripartite UN agency, meaning governments, workers, and employers of member states all participate in setting labor standards and policies. The ILO's work centers around promoting fundamental rights at work, creating decent employment opportunities, enhancing social protection, and strengthening dialogue on work-related issues.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.

The only tripartite U.N. 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 ILO Works**

Underlying the ILO's work is the importance of cooperation between governments and employers' and workers' organizations in fostering social and economic progress.

The ILO aims to ensure that it serves the needs of working women and men by bringing together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes. The very structure of the ILO, where workers and employers together have an equal voice with governments in its deliberations, shows social dialogue in action. It ensures that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in ILO labour standards, policies and programmes.

The ILO encourages this tripartism within its constituents - [employers](#), [workers](#) and [member States](#), by promoting a social dialogue between trade unions and employers in formulating, and where appropriate, implementing national policy on social, economic, and many other issues.

## **Main bodies**

The ILO accomplishes its work through three main bodies which comprise governments', employers' and workers' representatives:

- the [International labour Conference](#) sets the International labour standards and the broad policies of the ILO. It meets annually in Geneva. Often called an international parliament of labour, the Conference is also a forum for discussion of key social and labour questions.

- the [Governing body](#) is the executive council of the ILO. It meets three times a year in Geneva. It takes decisions on ILO policy and establishes the programme and the budget, which it then submits to the Conference for adoption.
- the International Labour [Office](#) is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization. It is the focal point for International Labour Organization's overall activities, which it prepares under the scrutiny of the Governing Body and under the leadership of the [Director-General](#).

The work of the Governing Body and of the Office is aided by tripartite committees covering major industries. It is also supported by committees of experts on such matters as vocational training, management development, occupational safety and health, industrial relations, workers' education, and special problems of women and young workers.

- [Regional meetings](#) of the ILO member States are held periodically to examine matters of special interest to the regions concerned.

### **Standards supervisory system**

International labour standards are backed by a supervisory system that is unique at the international level and that helps to ensure that countries implement the conventions they ratify. The ILO regularly examines the application of standards in member states and points out areas where they could be better applied. If there are any problems in the application of standards, the ILO seeks to assist countries through social dialogue and technical assistance.

The ILO has developed various means of supervising the application of Conventions and Recommendations in law and practice following their adoption by the International Labour Conference and their ratification by States.

### **Labour Standards**

Since 1919, the International Labour Organization has maintained and developed a system of international labour standards aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. In today's globalised economy, international labour standards are an essential component in the international framework for ensuring that the growth of the global economy provides benefits to all.

International labour standards are first and foremost about the development of people as human beings. In the [Declaration of Philadelphia \(1944\)](#), the international community recognized that "labour is not a commodity". Labour is not an inanimate product, like an apple or a television set, that can be negotiated for the highest profit or the lowest price. Work is part of everyone's daily life and is crucial to a person's dignity, well-being and development as a human being. Economic development should include the creation of jobs and working conditions in which people can work in freedom, safety and dignity. In short, economic development is not undertaken for its own sake, but to improve the lives of human beings. International labour standards are there to ensure that it remains focused on improving the life and dignity of men and women.