



Governing Body

341st Session, Geneva, March 2021

Institutional Section

INS

Date: 18 March 2021

Original: English

Third item on the agenda

Agenda of the International Labour Conference

Agenda of future sessions of the Conference

Purpose of the document

To initiate consideration of proposals for the Conference agenda for 2022 and beyond, including the strategic approach to be followed (see the draft decision in paragraph 37).

Relevant strategic objective: All four strategic objectives.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

Policy implications: Implications for the Conference agenda for 2022 and beyond.

Legal implications: Those arising from the application of the Standing Orders of the Conference and Standing Orders of the Governing Body.

Financial implications: Those arising from the placing of items on the Conference agenda and from any preparatory meetings proposed that might be approved by the Governing Body.

Follow-up action required: Any implications relating to follow-up will be submitted to the Governing Body for consideration at its 343rd Session (November 2021).

Author unit: Departments in the Policy Portfolio and in the Field Operations and Partnerships Portfolio.

Related documents: [GB.334/INS/2/1](#); [GB.334/INS/PV](#); [GB.335/INS/2/1](#); [GB.335/INS/PV](#); [GB.337/INS/2](#); [GB.337/INS/2\(Add.1\)](#); [GB.337/INS/3/2](#); [GB.337/INS/PV](#); [GB.340/INS/PV](#).

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► A. Overview of the Conference agenda-setting process

1. The applicable rules concerning the agenda of the Conference are set out in the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference and the Standing Orders of the Governing Body.¹ The agenda of the Conference consists of standing and technical items.
2. The following standing items are required to be included by the Governing Body in the Conference agenda each year:
 - reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General;
 - financial and budgetary questions; and
 - information and reports on the application of Conventions and Recommendations.
3. In accordance with established practice, the Conference agenda includes three technical items (each requiring a technical committee at the Conference), generally with a view to standard-setting, a general discussion or a recurrent discussion. In the context of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM TWG) discussions, some Governing Body members raised the possibility of including a standard-setting item on the Conference agenda dedicated to the SRM TWG follow-up, and possibly allowing for two standard-setting items at a single session of the Conference.² Other items which may be included by the Governing Body are items which can usually be dealt with in a plenary sitting, by the Selection Committee or by other technical committees holding a limited number of sittings.³ For standard-setting items, while a double discussion remains the norm, the Governing Body may decide to hold a single discussion.⁴ Proposals to place an item on the Conference agenda are considered at two successive sessions of the Governing Body unless there is unanimous consent to place a proposed item on the agenda when discussed for the first time by the Governing Body.⁵
4. At its 328th Session (October–November 2016), the Governing Body adopted a five-year cycle of recurrent discussions of the four strategic objectives under the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (Social Justice Declaration) with the following sequence: social dialogue and tripartism in 2018; social protection (social security) in 2020; employment policy in 2021; social protection (labour protection) in 2022 and fundamental principles and rights at work in 2023. In addition, the Governing Body provided guidance on a framework for recurrent discussions to ensure that they fully achieve their specific purpose under the Social Justice Declaration.⁶
5. At its 338th Session, the Governing Body decided through a vote by correspondence to defer the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference from June 2020 to June

¹ See [Constitution, arts 14\(1\) and 16\(3\)](#); [Standing Orders of the Conference](#), arts 7, 7 *bis*, 8 and 12; [Standing Orders of the Governing Body](#), sections 5 and 6.2.

² [GB.337/LILS/PV](#), paras 18 and 19.

³ See Appendix II for an overview of the selection of technical items for the Conference agenda (2010–30). See [GB.328/PV](#), para. 16 (Workers' group).

⁴ In recent times, the Conference adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, on the basis of a single discussion.

⁵ See para. 5.1.1 of the Standing Orders of the Governing Body.

⁶ See [GB.328/INS/5/2](#) and [GB.328/PV](#), para. 102.

2021.⁷ Members of the Governing Body generally supported maintaining the cycle of recurrent discussions and including the recurrent discussion on social protection (social security) on the agenda of the Conference in 2021. The Governing Body may wish to confirm whether the recurrent discussions on employment; social protection (labour protection) and fundamental principles and rights at work should equally be deferred to 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively, so as to complete the cycle of recurrent discussions established by the 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work.⁸

The strategic and coherent approach

6. At its 322nd Session (October–November 2014), the Governing Body approved the concept of a strategic and coherent approach to the setting of the Conference agenda for the 106th (2017), 107th (2018) and 108th (2019) Sessions of the Conference. The intention was to respond to constituents' comments on the setting of the Conference agenda and the role of the Conference as the ILO supreme policy organ. The approach is based on two main elements: (i) a strategic focus in the setting of the Conference agenda, using the momentum created by the commemoration of the ILO Centenary to place emphasis on institutional coherence and flexibility; and (ii) full tripartite engagement in the agenda-setting process.⁹
7. The Governing Body has selected the technical items for the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 sessions on the basis of this approach. It has kept under review the coordination between the outcomes of previous discussions at the Conference and the consideration of proposals for future sessions. It has made linkages between the setting of the Conference agenda and other institutional processes and strategic discussions such as the ILO Strategic Plan for 2018–21.¹⁰ Further, the Governing Body has taken steps to ensure that the agenda of the Conference reflects the ILO's actions to ensure it has a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards that respond to the changing patterns of the world of work, for the purpose of the protection of workers and taking into account the needs of sustainable enterprises. Thus, the review by the SRM TWG of the ILO body of standards, together with the implementation of article 19, paragraph 9, of the Constitution concerning the procedure of abrogation of obsolete Conventions in force, have already informed the Conference agenda.
8. The Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work has reaffirmed that the setting of international labour standards, together with their promotion, ratification and application is of fundamental importance to the Organization, and highlighted the work of the SRM TWG in that regard.¹¹
9. The establishment of appropriate and effective linkages between recurrent discussions and the topics of the General Surveys prepared by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations on the basis of reports requested under article 19 of the Constitution provides a further element of a strategic and coherent approach, as envisaged by the 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through

⁷ *Minutes of the meetings of the Screening Group held in preparation of decisions made by correspondence by the Governing Body between March and October 2020*, para. 101.

⁸ 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work, para. 15.1.

⁹ See GB.322/PV, para. 17, and GB.322/INS/2, paras 11–19. The strategic and coherent approach was acknowledged in the context of the work of the Working Party on the Functioning of the Governing Body and the Conference; see GB.322/INS/12(Rev.), para. 4.1.

¹⁰ GB.328/PFA/1.

¹¹ ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, Part IV(A).

Decent Work that had followed the evaluation of the impact of the 2008 Social Justice Declaration.¹² The current practice is to select instruments related to a particular topic in time for the ensuing General Survey to be discussed at the Conference session preceding the session at which the Conference discusses the related recurrent item. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), some Governing Body members expressed support for enhanced links between General Surveys, the Standards Review Mechanism and the recurrent discussions.¹³

10. A procedural road map for the implementation of the strategic and coherent approach up to 2019, regularly updated by the Office, has been provided to the Governing Body at each of its sessions to improve the transparency and inclusiveness of the process.¹⁴ The Centenary Declaration has underlined the importance of such transparency.¹⁵

▶ B. Decisions taken by the Governing Body between October 2019 and October 2020

11. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), the Governing Body decided to:
 - (a) place on the agenda of the 109th Session (2020) of the Conference an item related to skills and lifelong learning (general discussion);
 - (b) place on the agenda of the 110th Session (2021) of the Conference an item related to the withdrawal of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933 (No. 34);
 - (c) defer to the 338th Session (March 2020) of the Governing Body the decision to place on the agenda of the 110th Session (2021) of the Conference an item related to:
 - (i) decent work and the social and solidarity economy (SSE) (general discussion); or
 - (ii) a just transition of the world of work towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (standard-setting discussion or general discussion); or
 - (iii) any other item based on the discussion at the 337th Session;
 - (d) place on the agenda of the 119th Session (2030) of the Conference an item on the abrogation of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 96); and
 - (e) request the Office to take into account the guidance provided in preparing the paper for the 338th Session (March 2020) of the Governing Body.¹⁶
12. Furthermore, the Governing Body, further to its earlier decisions, requested the Office to:
 - (a) initiate the preparation of proposals for possible standard-setting items on the topics of biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, chemical hazards and

¹² 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work, para. 15.1.

¹³ GB.337/LILS/PV, paras 47 and 50.

¹⁴ See GB.328/INS/3, paras 7–15, for more detailed elements on the implementation of the strategic and coherent approach. An updated road map up to 2022 is presented in Appendix III.

¹⁵ Centenary Declaration, Part IV(A).

¹⁶ GB.337/INS/2(Add.1)/decision.

guarding of machinery, for consideration at its 338th Session (March 2020) for inclusion in future agendas of the International Labour Conference;

- (b) be guided by the recommendations of the SRM TWG regarding the thematic integration approach and the process of standard-setting in preparing those standard-setting proposals for inclusion in the agenda of the Conference at the earliest dates possible and as a matter of institutional priority.¹⁷
- 13.** At its 338th Session, the Governing Body decided through a vote by correspondence to defer the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference from June 2020 to June 2021.¹⁸
- 14.** On 22 October 2020, recalling its [decision of 3 April 2020](#) to defer to 2021 the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference, the Governing Body:
- (a) decided by correspondence to approve the following adjustments to the agenda of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference (2021):
 - (i) under item I (Reports of the Chairperson of the Governing Body and of the Director-General), the Conference will consider: the Director-General's programme implementation report for 2018–19, the report of the Director-General (devoted to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis), the reports concerning the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories for 2019 and for 2020, and the report of the Chairpersons of the Governing Body covering the 2019–20 and 2020–21 periods of office;
 - (ii) under item II (Programme and budget and other questions), the Conference will consider: the draft Programme and Budget for 2022–23, the audited and consolidated financial statements for 2019 and for 2020; and other administrative matters, including the composition of the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO and of the ILO Staff Pension Committee;
 - (iii) under item III (Information and reports on the application of Conventions and Recommendations), the reports as specified in its earlier [decision of 10 June 2020](#);
 - (iv) under items IV (a general discussion on Inequalities and the world of work), V (a recurrent discussion on the Strategic objective of social protection – social security – under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization) and VI (a general discussion on Skills and lifelong learning), the reports will be updated to reflect the developments emerging from the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the world of work; and
 - (v) under item VII, the Conference will consider the withdrawal of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933 (No. 34), in addition to the abrogation of 8 international labour Conventions and withdrawal of 9 international labour Conventions and 11 international labour Recommendations.

¹⁷ [GB.337/LILS/1](#), para. 5

¹⁸ *Minutes of the meetings of the Screening Group held in preparation of decisions made by correspondence by the Governing Body between March and October 2020*, para. 101.

- (b) requested the Office to prepare proposals on arrangements for the 109th Session (June 2021) of the Conference, including a programme of work for the plenary and committees, for consideration at its 341st Session (March 2021).¹⁹
- 15.** At its 340th Session, the Governing Body requested the Director-General:
- (a) to develop proposals, taking into account the guidance provided by the Governing Body, for a global response for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is sustainable and resilient, through the accelerated and focused implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration; and
- (b) to organize tripartite consultations to identify possible alternatives for consideration by the International Labour Conference at its 109th Session (June 2021), and with a view to presenting to the Governing Body at its 341st Session (March 2021) appropriate proposals on the content and format of such response, as well as on the process to reach a tripartite agreement.²⁰
- 16.** Proposals on the content and format of a global response for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis are set out in a separate document presented to the Governing Body for consideration at its current session.²¹
- 17.** At its present session, the Governing Body is also considering proposals for arrangements for the 109th Session (June 2021) of the International Labour Conference.²² These proposals include various options for dealing with any items the Governing Body may decide not to retain on the Conference agenda for 2021. Depending on the decisions taken by Governing Body on the Conference agenda for 2021, it may need to revisit the Conference agenda beyond 2021 at its 343rd Session (November 2021).

► C. Agenda of the Conference beyond 2021

Consolidating a strategic approach

- 18.** In accordance with the initial elements outlined for the consideration of the Governing Body in October–November 2016,²³ constituents have continued to express their support for the coherent and strategic approach to setting the agenda, with support for its continuation after 2019.²⁴ In pursuing its examination of a strategic approach beyond 2019, the Governing Body may wish to take the following considerations into account.
- 19.** The Governing Body has taken steps to integrate two of the initial elements identified in October 2016 into its decision-making process on the Conference agenda: (i) the follow-up to recommendations made by the SRM TWG and approved by the Governing Body;²⁵

¹⁹ See GB.340, [Decision concerning the agenda of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference \(June 2021\)](#).

²⁰ [GB.340/HL/2/decision](#).

²¹ GB.341/INS/4.

²² GB.341/INS/3/2.

²³ See GB.328/INS/3, paras 38 and 39.

²⁴ See GB.328/PV, [GB.329/PV](#), [GB.331/PV](#), [GB.332/PV](#), [GB.334/INS/PV](#), [GB.335/INS/PV](#) and [GB.337/INS/PV](#).

²⁵ In addition to the recommendations of the SRM TWG concerning the abrogation of Conventions which have led the Governing Body to place a corresponding item on the agenda, the Governing Body requested the Office to prepare a proposal for a possible standard-setting item on apprenticeships, on the basis of the regulatory gap identified by the SRM TWG for consideration at its 329th Session (March 2017). See Appendix I, section 1(B); GB.328/PV paras 16 (Workers' group) and 22 (Republic of Korea). In examining the report of the second meeting of the SRM TWG, the

- and (ii) ways in which the work of the ILO's governance structure might contribute to the follow-up and review activities at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in the context of the 2030 Agenda.²⁶ The Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work has added to this a call for the ILO to “carry forward into its second century with unrelenting vigour its constitutional mandate for social justice by further developing its human-centred approach to the future of work, which puts workers’ rights and the needs, aspirations and rights of all people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies”.²⁷
- 20.** The general elements of the strategic and coherent approach, such as the need to ensure institutional coherence, a balance between the adequate time for preparation and adequate flexibility, full tripartite engagement ensured through transparency and inclusiveness, continue to remain valid.²⁸ In line with the Social Justice Declaration and the 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work, recurrent discussions remain a key driver of the streamlining of the Conference agenda at least until 2024.
- 21.** As the most recent example, the standard-setting discussion on violence and harassment at work at the Centenary session of the Conference may provide valuable lessons on ways the Conference can optimize its standard-setting work in the context of a two-week session.²⁹ This would be consistent with the call of the Centenary Declaration that the setting of standards is of fundamental importance and that “social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation, provides an essential foundation of all ILO action”.³⁰ Additionally, the Governing Body may wish to provide further guidance on the immediate and ongoing impact of the SRM TWG’s recommendations on the agenda of the Conference, notably in light of the Centenary Declaration’s call that international labour standards “need to respond to the changing patterns of the world of work”,³¹ and the second evaluation of the functioning of the SRM TWG to be discussed at its present session.³²

Subjects under consideration for possible inclusion in future sessions

- 22.** The agenda of the 110th Session (2022) currently includes a recurrent discussion on employment and a standard-setting item on apprenticeships (first discussion). One slot remains in the agenda of that session and could include a general discussion on a technical item. Should the Governing Body decide on a standard-setting item to be placed

Governing Body also noted the decision of the SRM TWG to follow up on the regulatory gap on the topic of shift work in its later discussion, at a date to be decided on working-time instruments; GB.328/PV, para. 581(d).

²⁶ In line with the 2016 resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work (see para.15.2(c)(vii)) the Governing Body took its decision on the five-year cycle of recurrent discussions and their sequence taking into account the themes and selected SDGs to be reviewed at the HLPF. See GB.328/INS/5/2, paras 6, 10 and 18; see also GB.328/PV, paras 84 (Employers’ group), 86 (Workers’ group), 91 (ASPAG) and 93 (IMEC). The Governing Body also decided to make use of its 2017, 2018 and 2019 March sessions as a platform for tripartite discussion of the ILO contribution to the HLPF annual review (para. 130(a)).

²⁷ Centenary Declaration, Part I(D).

²⁸ See GB.329/INS/2, para. 21.

²⁹ In October–November 2016, different views were expressed as regards the possibility of including two standard-setting items on the agenda of the Conference (GB.328/PV, paras 16 (Workers’ group), 18 (ASPAG), 21 (India) and 23 (Brazil)).

³⁰ Centenary Declaration, Part II(B).

³¹ Centenary Declaration, Part IV(A).

³² GB.338/LILS/3.

- on the agenda of the 2023 session of the Conference in accordance with the double discussion procedure, this decision should be taken at the 341st Session (March 2021).³³
23. Since March 2019, the Governing Body has examined five subjects for inclusion on the agenda of future sessions,³⁴ among which one general discussion item related to skills and lifelong learning was already selected for inclusion on the agenda of the Conference at its 109th Session (2021).
 24. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), the Governing Body identified two items with a view to considering their inclusion on the 2021 session of the Conference agenda:
 - *A just transition of the world of work towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (standard-setting or general discussion)*³⁵ – This agenda item has been proposed for standard-setting or general discussion on a number of occasions in recent years. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), the Governing Body decided to retain it for consideration at 338th Session (March 2020). The proposal has elicited a wide diversity of views with some members supporting a standard-setting discussion and others more inclined towards a general discussion.³⁶ Given that the Centenary Declaration calls on the ILO to “direct its efforts to: (i) ensuring a just transition to a future of work that contributes to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions”³⁷, the Governing Body may wish to consider if it retains the item for standard-setting or general discussion on the Conference agenda. If so, the 2023 session of the Conference would provide the earliest opportunity for the first of a double standard-setting discussion unless the Governing Body decides on reduced intervals. Alternatively, the item could be considered for a general discussion on the agenda of the 2022 or 2023 session of the Conference. At the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit 2019, 46 countries made commitments to place jobs at the heart of ambitious climate action. To turn this human-centred agenda into concrete action, the UN Secretary-General announced a Climate Action for Jobs initiative. The UN Secretary-General identified the ILO to spearhead the implementation of the initiative.³⁸

³³ See Appendix I to assist in determining a possible timing for the selection of the proposed items currently before the Governing Body. The inclusion of a standard-setting item should occur in the present March 2021 Governing Body (for the 2023 session) or in March 2022 (for the 2024 session). The inclusion of items with a view to a general discussion should occur at the latest in March 2021 (for the 2022 session) or March 2022 (for the 2023 session). In response to questions raised in the October 2017 discussion, it may be noted that these deadlines are due to the fact that, under the Conference Standing Orders, for standard-setting items the Office needs to send, not less than 18 months before the opening of the Conference, a report on law and practice and a questionnaire to Member States. Thus, in principle, for the June 2022 session of the Conference a report needs to be sent no later than the end of October 2020 (18 months before) – hence it needs to be decided at the present March 2020 Governing Body (allowing for time to prepare these documents). However, exceptionally, a programme of reduced intervals can be approved by the Governing Body upon proposal by the Officers. General discussions are not subject to the same requirements – the Conference Standing Orders provide that when a question has been placed on the agenda for general discussion, the Office shall communicate a report on the question to the governments, so as to reach them not less than two months before the opening of the Conference. In this regard, time is needed to prepare the report. It is thus highly advisable for the Governing Body to have taken a decision by March of the preceding year at the latest.

³⁴ See GB.329/INS/2, paras 23–27.

³⁵ See Appendix I, section 1(B), para. 11, for the views expressed at the 337th Session (October–November 2019) of the Governing Body.

³⁶ See GB.334/INS/PV, GB.335/INS/PV and GB.337/INS/PV.

³⁷ Centenary Declaration, Part II(A).

³⁸ See GB.338/POL/1.

- *The social and solidarity economy (SSE) for a human-centred future of work* emerges from the Centenary Declaration's call for a human-centred approach to the future of work and would benefit from the guidance provided by a Conference general discussion. The private sector-led SSE has the potential to generate decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all provided it is supported by an enabling environment.³⁹ A Conference discussion could highlight measures to support sustainable enterprises in the SSE. At the 337th Session (October–November 2019) of the Governing Body, this item received wide support for inclusion on a future session of the Conference. Some members of the Governing Body expressed the view that the focus of a discussion should be broader and encompass the role of sustainable enterprises as a principal source of full and productive employment.
- 25.** Three other subjects require further work and/or discussion in other tripartite forums before they can be considered to give rise to full proposals for inclusion on the agenda of the Conference. An update of the follow-up undertaken in relation to these subjects is provided in Appendix I, section 3. The three subjects are:⁴⁰
- resolution of individual labour disputes;
 - decent work in the world of sport;
 - independence and protection in public service (fight against corruption).
- 26.** One subject has been added in light of a resolution and conclusions adopted by the Conference at its 107th Session (May–June 2018),⁴¹ the support of some members of the Governing Body in March 2019 and the call of the Centenary Declaration for “policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection, and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work, including platform work”.⁴² A discussion scheduled at one of the next Conference sessions would be timely in light of the anticipated continued expansion of work in the platform economy, and the related opportunities for job creation and economic growth and challenges to decent work. Several members of the Governing Body expressed support for a future Conference discussion on decent work in the platform economy.⁴³ The pandemic is highlighting the timeliness of such discussion as platform workers have often been in the frontline of providing essential services during mobility restrictions yet have found themselves excluded from labour and social protections and government measures mitigating the impact of the pandemic. The Governing Body may wish to consider requesting the Office to convene a tripartite meeting of experts on the issue during the second half of 2021. The results of this meeting should draw on all relevant tripartite discussions, potentially including the general discussion on “Inequalities and the world of work” to take place at the 109th Session (2021) of the Conference and inform the recurrent item discussion on social protection (labour protection) to be held at the 111th Session (2023) of the Conference. It would subsequently inform a possible general

³⁹ Centenary Declaration, Part II(A)(ix).

⁴⁰ See GB.328/PV, paras 17 (Workers' group), 19 (Africa group) and 20 (IMEC).

⁴¹ Reports of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Social Dialogue and Tripartism, Resolution and Conclusions submitted for adoption by the Conference, *Provisional Record No. 6A*, International Labour Conference, 107th Session, May–June 2018, para. 6(e) of the conclusions.

⁴² Centenary Declaration, Part III(C)(v).

⁴³ GB.337/INS/PV, paras 17, 26, 31, 38, 42 and 43.

- discussion or standard-setting item on this subject, should the Governing Body decide to place such an item on the agenda of the 112th Session (2024) of the Conference.
27. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), the Governing Body held a first discussion on proposals for including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work as a follow up to the resolution on the ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work. The Governing Body decided to “approve the procedural road map as a planning tool, which can be reviewed and modified by the Governing Body based on progress made, for the consideration of proposals for including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO’s framework of fundamental principles and rights at work set out in paragraph 21 of document GB.337/INS/3/2, taking into account the guidance provided during the discussion”.⁴⁴ In this framework, the Governing Body will hold a discussion at its present session⁴⁵ on various elements of the procedural road map including “consideration of substantive questions resulting in the identification of possible building blocks”. Depending on the Governing Body’s consideration of these proposals, there could be an impact on the number of technical items available on the agenda of future sessions of the Conference.
 28. At the 337th Session (October–November 2019) of the Governing Body, one of the constituent groups called on the Office to prepare proposals on the possible inclusion of the care economy as the subject of a general discussion at a future session of the Conference.⁴⁶ Another constituent group proposed the following as possible subjects for future sessions: harnessing the fullest potential of technological progress; ensuring that education and training systems were responsive to the labour market needs of today and tomorrow, with an emphasis on employability; expanding choices and optimizing opportunities for all workers; and supporting the role of the public sector as a significant employer and provider of quality public services.⁴⁷ The Governing Body may wish to provide guidance on these calls for proposals.
 29. The Governing Body may also wish to provide guidance on any possible implications for agenda items for future sessions of the Conference of the recently held Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport and the Technical Meeting on Achieving Decent Work in Global Supply Chains.⁴⁸

Follow-up to the recommendations of the SRM TWG

30. At its fifth meeting in September 2019, the SRM TWG discussed the follow-up to be given to its earlier recommendations, as approved by the Governing Body in 2017 and 2018, calling for standard-setting on the topics of biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, chemical hazards and guarding of machinery. The SRM TWG’s recommendations stated:⁴⁹

⁴⁴ GB.337/INS/3/2decision.

⁴⁵ GB.341/INS/6.

⁴⁶ GB.337/INS/PV, para. 18.

⁴⁷ GB.337/INS/PV, para. 24.

⁴⁸ A report of the Technical Meeting on Achieving Decent Work in Global Supply Chains (Geneva 25–28 February 2020) was presented to the 340th Session (November 2020) of the Governing Body for information only (see GB.340/INS/18/2) and is submitted to the 341st Session (March 2021) for discussion (GB.341/INS/13/2).

⁴⁹ GB.337/LILS/1, Annex I (recommendations of the SRM TWG), para. 9.

The SRM TWG discussed two working papers,⁵⁰ with a view to giving effect to the 2017 and 2018 Governing Body decisions calling for the Office to prepare proposals for possible standard-setting items on the topics of biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, chemical hazards and guarding of machinery.⁵¹ It recommends to the Governing Body that it requests the Office to initiate the preparation of proposals for possible standard-setting items for consideration at its 338th Session (March 2020) for inclusion in future agendas of the International Labour Conference. Based on its discussion, the SRM TWG recommends to the Governing Body that the Office is guided by the following elements in preparing those standard-setting proposals for inclusion in the agenda of the Conference at the earliest dates possible and as a matter of institutional priority:

- 9.1. To implement the *thematic integration approach*. Consideration could be given to combining binding and non-binding elements in the same instrument and to using appropriate approaches, so that instruments can be easily updated in particular with respect to technical provisions to ensure the continued relevance of the standards, taking into account national circumstances.
- 9.2. The *process of standard-setting* should be flexible, address the four specific topics, and ensure optimum time efficiency, cost-effectiveness and inclusivity. This may include deciding to have a standard-setting item on the Conference agenda dedicated to the SRM TWG follow-up and it may include also the possibility of two standard-setting items in a given Conference, to maintain the flexibility to respond to developments in the world of work, should the Governing Body so decide. Recognizing the high degree of technical expertise required in relation to occupational safety and health, inclusive preparatory technical activities should be customised to support efficient tripartite standard-setting discussion.

31. At its 337th Session, the Governing Body approved this recommendation, requesting the Office to:
 - (i) initiate the preparation of proposals for possible standard-setting items on the topics of biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, chemical hazards and guarding of machinery, for consideration at its 338th Session (March 2020) for inclusion in future agendas of the International Labour Conference;
 - (ii) be guided by the recommendations of the SRM TWG regarding the thematic integration approach and the process of standard-setting in preparing those standard-setting proposals for inclusion in the agenda of the Conference at the earliest dates possible and as a matter of institutional priority.⁵²
32. Accordingly, the Office has prepared proposals for standard-setting items on the topics of biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, chemical hazards and guarding of machinery. These are included in Appendix 1, section 2, of this document for the consideration of the Governing Body as it determines the agenda of future sessions of the Conference. As requested by the Governing Body, the Office's proposals have been guided by the SRM TWG's recommendations regarding the thematic integration approach.
33. Secondly, the Governing Body will consider the modalities for the standard-setting discussions implementing the SRM TWG's recommendations, noting the SRM TWG's consensus that this should be flexible, address the four specific topics, and ensure

⁵⁰ See SRM TWG/2019, [Working paper 1](#) and [Working paper 2](#).

⁵¹ GB.331/PV, para. 723(f): "requested the Office to prepare, for consideration for inclusion at the earliest dates possible in future agendas of the International Labour Conference, proposals for possible standard-setting items: (i) on biological hazards and ergonomics, recognizing the regulatory gaps identified in that regard; (ii) on the consolidation of the instruments concerning chemical hazards; (iii) on the revision of the instruments concerning guarding of machinery; and requested to be kept up to date in that regard".

⁵² GB.337/LILS/1, para. 5(a).

optimum time efficiency, cost-effectiveness and inclusivity. In considering the desirability of a standard-setting item on the Conference agenda dedicated to the SRM TWG follow-up, the Governing Body will recall that most recently the established practice has been that the three technical items on the agenda of the Conference include a standard-setting discussion, a general discussion, and the recurrent discussion.⁵³

34. Guided by the SRM TWG recommendations regarding the standard-setting process, the Governing Body may wish to consider the desirability of including a standard-setting item on the Conference agenda dedicated to the SRM TWG follow-up for the number of years necessary to conclude the four standard-setting items. Any such dedicated standard-setting item could be the sole standard-setting item on the agenda of the relevant sessions of the Conference or it could be agreed that additional standard-setting items be added to the agenda of those sessions, so that the Conference has two standard-setting discussions in a given year. Such an additional standard-setting item could either replace the general discussion technical item or be in addition to it. For each item, the Governing Body will decide whether it is better suited for a single or double discussion, taking into account the complexity of the subject matter and the feasibility of reaching a global consensus in the two-week session of the Conference.⁵⁴
35. Finally, the Office proposes to maintain the schedule of abrogation or withdrawal of outdated standards by the Conference in accordance with the recommendations of the SRM TWG and to adjust the numbering of the relevant sessions of the Conference accordingly. Appendix II illustrates the adjusted schedule.

▶ D. Procedural road map

36. The updated proposal for the procedural road map is as follows:
 - 341st Session (March 2021): The Governing Body would revisit the agenda of the 109th Session (2021) of the Conference in light of:
 - (a) arrangements for the 109th Session of the Conference; and
 - (b) the possible inclusion of an item related to the global response to the impact of the pandemic on the world of work.

It would consider the agenda of the 110th Session (2022) of the Conference in light of the possible inclusion of an item related to bringing safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work and take a decision regarding the four standard-setting proposals on occupational safety and health (OSH) that are based on the SRM TWG's recommendations, including the modalities by which they are placed on the agenda of the Conference. It would continue to provide guidance on the agenda of the Conference within the strategic approach.

- 343rd Session (November 2021): The Governing Body would consider the placement of the above-mentioned item related to bringing safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work at the 110th Session (2022) of the Conference, complete the agenda of the 111th Session (2023) of the Conference if the agenda has not yet been completed at the 341st Session, and consider a technical item for the agenda of the 2024 session of the Conference if it chooses a

⁵³ GB.337/INS/2, para. 3.

⁵⁴ GB.337/INS/2, para. 3.

standard-setting item to be governed by the normal double discussion adoption procedure. It would continue to provide guidance on the agenda of the Conference within the strategic approach.

- 344th Session (March 2022): The Governing Body would decide on a technical item for the agenda of the 2024 session of the Conference if it chooses a standard-setting item to be governed by the double-discussion adoption procedure. It would complete the agenda of the 111th Session (2023) of the Conference with a technical item for a general discussion if the agenda has not yet been completed at previous Governing Body sessions, and would provide guidance for later sessions of the Conference. It would continue to provide guidance on the agenda of the Conference within the strategic approach.

▶ Draft decision

37. The Governing Body decided:

- (a) to place on the agenda of the 110th Session (2022) of the Conference an item related to decent work and the social and solidarity economy (general discussion);

OR

- (b) to place on the agenda of the 110th Session (2022) of the Conference an item related to a just transition of the world of work towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (general discussion);
- (c) to place on the agenda of the 111th Session (2023) of the Conference an item related to occupational safety and health protection against biological hazards (standard-setting);
- (d) to place on the agenda of the 113th Session (2025) of the Conference an item related to the consolidation of the instruments concerning chemical hazards (standard-setting);
- (e) to place on the agenda of the 115th Session (2027) of the Conference an item related to occupational safety and health protection in the area of human factors/ergonomics and manual handling (standard-setting);
- (f) to place on the agenda of the 117th Session (2029) of the Conference an item related to the revision of the instruments concerning guarding of machinery (standard-setting);
- (g) to request the Office to convene a tripartite meeting of experts on the issue of “decent work in the platform economy” during the second half of 2021;
- (h) to request the Office to take into account the guidance provided in preparing the paper for the 343rd Session (November 2021) of the Governing Body; and
- (i) in view of the deferral of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference and its decision to confirm the inclusion of the recurrent discussion on social protection (social security) on the agenda of the Conference in 2021, to defer accordingly the remaining part of the five-year cycle for recurrent discussions adopted at its 328th Session, and confirm the following sequence:
- (i) employment in 2022;
 - (ii) social protection (labour protection) in 2023;
 - (iii) fundamental principles and rights at work in 2024.

▶ Appendix I

Items for the agenda of future sessions of the Conference

1. Two possible items for the agenda of future sessions of the Conference

A. The social and solidarity economy (SSE) for a human-centred future of work (general discussion)

Source, nature and context of the proposed item

1. The proposal seeks to generate guidance for the ILO following the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019, and the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which calls for a “strong social economy”. In particular, the Centenary Declaration notes the supporting role of the SSE in generating decent work, productive employment and improved living standards for all. SSE enterprises, including cooperatives, are increasingly being recognized as forms of sustainable enterprises. They are major job creators and play an increasingly valuable role towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2015 the social economy provided over 13.6 million paid jobs in the European Union, representing 8 per cent of the EU’s gross domestic product.¹ Cooperatives alone employing an estimated 279 million people in 2017 – close to 9.5 per cent of the world’s employed population.² The top 300 cooperatives and mutuals reported a total turnover of US\$2.1 trillion in 2017.³
2. Despite the rising importance of cooperatives and the wider SSE, important questions remain regarding the definition, measurement, size, impact, potential, and limits of the SSE. The ILO’s Cooperatives Unit, which is responsible for activities on cooperatives and the wider SSE, was established in 1920. As it celebrates its Centenary, a discussion around cooperatives and the wider SSE is timely.
3. The ILO has been a leader in the promotion of the SSE within the UN system. The ILO co-founded, in 2013, the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (TFSSE) which comprises 19 UN agencies, the European Union and the OECD as members and ten civil society organizations as observers, and has been its Chair since 2014. The ILO is also co-founder and current Chair of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), which includes the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO). Formal relations between the ILO and the ICA have continued uninterrupted since 1919, with the ICA having general consultative status, and most recently with the signature of an MoU in June 2019.

¹ European Economic and Social Committee, *Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*, 2017.

² CICOPA, *Cooperatives and Employment: Second Global Report – 2017 – Contribution of cooperatives to decent work in the changing world of work*.

³ ICA and Euricse, *Exploring the Cooperative Economy*, 2018.

Constituents' needs and realities in light of the ILO strategic objectives

4. As mentioned above, some members of the Governing Body expressed the view that the focus of a discussion should be broader and encompass the role of sustainable enterprises as a principal source of full and productive employment. Should this option be decided upon, the title of the item should be changed accordingly in the draft decision.⁴
5. Calls are growing for new models of development. As value driven enterprises, cooperatives and SSE enterprises, associations and organizations emerge with innovative solutions to creating and sustaining jobs. They hold great potential in advancing decent work and achieving SDG 8 in formalizing the informal economy, integrating women and youth into work, and eliminating child labour. The Abidjan Declaration adopted at the ILO's 14th African Regional Meeting in December 2019 calls for promoting cooperatives and the SSE. The 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted *Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives* in October 2018. A growing number of countries are developing or have adopted measures to advance the SSE in the past two decades. Such measures include:
 - legal or policy frameworks on the SSE adopted in Brazil, Canada (Quebec), Djibouti, Ecuador, France, Mexico, Philippines, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay;
 - cooperative policies have recently been adopted in Sri Lanka and the Occupied Palestinian Territory with support from the ILO. Egypt, Ghana, Guyana, Jordan, Trinidad and Tobago and United Republic of Tanzania are among the countries developing new cooperative policies with support from the ILO;
 - SSE policies were passed in Djibouti and Uruguay in the last year; South Africa and Tunisia are developing social economy policies with support from the ILO;
 - ministries or departments of the SSE established in Colombia, France, Luxembourg, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Republic of Korea;
 - national and local programmes promoting the SSE launched in Colombia, India, Nicaragua, Republic of Korea, Spain and Uganda; and
 - sectoral programmes (for example, health) developed on the SSE in West Africa.
6. The ILO has a dynamic and growing portfolio of development cooperation projects, research and training initiatives on cooperatives and the wider SSE. Since 2009, the ILO has organized 11 SSE academies with the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin with the participation of over 1,500 policymakers, practitioners, experts and scholars from ILO constituents and cooperatives and wider SSE movements.

Implementation of the strategic and coherent approach and added value of an examination by the International Labour Conference

7. The growing global interest in cooperatives and SSE enterprises coupled with the 2019 Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, calls for an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises, including for cooperatives and the SSE. Recent ILO standards such as the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), and the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), have also reflected the importance of

⁴ See para. 24 of the present document.

cooperatives and the SSE. Cooperatives constitute the largest and most organized segment of the SSE. The ILO's Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193), provides a very solid basis for national policies on cooperatives. The debate on the SSE is, however, much broader than cooperatives and it will be timely to fully discuss its value added and the role that the SSE can play in fulfilling the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

Expected outcome

8. The expected outcomes are conclusions and a resolution to provide further guidance for the ILO to:
 - (a) provide a universal definition of the term “social and solidarity economy”, including its associated principles and values;
 - (b) assess the contribution of the SSE to managing and promoting the overall support for people through the transitions they face throughout their working lives;
 - (c) provide policy guidelines for Member States wishing to establish a conducive environment for the national SSE;
 - (d) equip the Office with guidance on how to engage in the promotion of the SSE worldwide, including through development cooperation;
 - (e) encourage the Office to establish and maintain a wide range of partnerships with institutions, organizations and agencies representing the SSE, or involved in the promotion of the SSE.

B. A just transition of the world of work towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (standard-setting or general discussion)

Source, nature and context of the possible item ⁵

9. In 2013, the 102nd Session of the Conference adopted conclusions concerning achieving decent work, green jobs and sustainable development, including a proposal to convene a meeting of experts to provide further normative guidance on issues related to the greening of economies, green jobs and a just transition for all. ⁶ At its March and June 2014 sessions, the Governing Body mandated a meeting of experts to adopt in particular draft guidelines. In October 2015, the Meeting of Experts unanimously adopted *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. At its 325th Session (October–November 2015), the Governing Body requested the Director-General to use the *Guidelines* as a basis for activities and outreach. ⁷
10. The Workers' group has expressed support for a standard-setting process throughout, calling in October–November 2015 “for the development of an instrument on a just transition with a view to sustainable development”, and viewing “the Guidelines as a first step towards such a standard”. A new ILO instrument would provide guidance to ILO constituents on how to engage through social dialogue, in the design and implementation

⁵ For the previous discussion in the context of the agenda of the Conference, please see [GB.316/INS/4](#), paras 88–90; see also [GB.316/PV\(&Corr.\)](#), paras 12 (Employers' group), 18 (Workers' group), 23 (Africa group) and 31 (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); [GB.319/INS/2](#), Appendix VIII, paras 6–9; [GB.319/PV](#), paras 7 (Workers' group), 11 (Denmark on behalf of the Netherlands, Switzerland and the Nordic countries, Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Denmark), 18 (China), 19 (Canada) and 29 (Brazil).

⁶ See *Conclusions concerning achieving decent work, green jobs and sustainable development*, paras 19(d) and 24.

⁷ See [GB.325/PV](#), para. 494(b). See also [GB.335/INS/PV](#), para. 21.

of sustainable development policies towards a low carbon economy and with decent jobs for all. The Employers' group expressed reservations about having a standard-setting discussion on just transition. The scale of disruption to enterprises that this transformation will cause should not be underestimated and would be in favour of a general discussion about the economic implications of the just transition for enterprises, in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and emerging countries. The Employers' group has also pointed out that for the transition not only to be just but also sustainable, it is key to devise a global economic strategy for enabling enterprises to implement resource-efficient production processes and progressively shift to a low-carbon economy, including policies to enhance green productivity, innovation, knowledge transfer and technology diffusion, and sustainable investment. The position of Government members has varied over time, most recently suggesting support from Africa for a reconsideration of a standard-setting item on just transition in the wake of the Centenary Session.⁸ However, certain Government members, including Japan did not see added-value in standard-setting, and found a general discussion to be more appropriate for 2021, which would allow more time to consider different options. IMEC expressed support for a deferral of the decision on either a general discussion or a standard-setting discussion on just transition to the 341st Session of the Governing Body (March 2021).⁹

11. The current proposal is made for a standard-setting or a general discussion on a just transition to a future of work that contributes to sustainable development. It seeks to generate new guidance for the ILO following the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019. The Centenary Declaration provides that the ILO enter into its second centenary at a time of transformative change in the work marked among others, by environmental and climate change, which have profound impacts on the nature and future of work.

Constituents' needs and realities in light of the ILO strategic objectives

12. Recent research by the ILO highlighted that over 1 billion jobs depend on a sustainable environment and healthy ecosystems, making environmental degradation a serious risk for decent work. Communities and groups including indigenous and tribal peoples, which are already vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion, and sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which employ well over 1 billion people, are the most threatened by climate change. Developing countries are hit the hardest in sectors essential for economic growth and employment.¹⁰ In the absence of adequate guidance to address the implications of climate change on enterprises, workers and communities and respond to the needs of the world of work, social justice could be compromised with serious risks of widening inequalities. On the other hand, a well-managed transition guided by appropriate labour standards, institutional frameworks, coherent economic, social and environmental policies and practices, including social dialogue, fully taking into consideration the imperative of decent work, could create many new decent jobs, protect workers and enterprises while providing remedies for those affected by changes.

⁸ See GB.335/INS/PV, para. 27.

⁹ See GB.337/INS/PV, paras 42 (Japan) and 36 (IMEC).

¹⁰ See the statement made by the Government representative from Bangladesh at the 326th Session (March 2016) of the Governing Body: "... climate change hindered labour mobility and access to employment, and such challenges required specific interventions" (GB.326/PV, para. 318).

13. A recent ILO study ¹¹ shows that micro- and small enterprises create over 70 per cent of total employment worldwide. However, in developing and emerging countries most micro- and small enterprises are precarious economic units that face sluggish productivity and low profitability and at times operate in the informal economy. In this context, it is key to devise a global economic strategy to support such enterprises to enhance productivity. Increased productivity enables capital formation through increased earnings, which may then be invested in, for instance, clean technology, sustainable production systems, and workforce skills development, which would lead to a low-carbon economy.
14. Another recent study examining the prospects for jump-starting a green recovery found that the transition to a net-zero carbon economy in Latin America and the Caribbean would end 7.5 million jobs in fossil fuel electricity, fossil fuel extraction, and animal-based food production. However, these lost jobs would be more than compensated for in new employment opportunities: 22.5 million jobs are created in agriculture and plant-based food production, renewable electricity, forestry, construction, and manufacturing. ¹²
15. At its 340th Session, the Governing Body adopted a decision on “The role of the ILO in addressing climate change and a just transition for all” (GB.340/POL/1). The Governing Body decision provides further guidance for the work of the Office, including to advance the application of the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*.

Implementation of the strategic and coherent approach and added value of a standard-setting discussion by the International Labour Conference

16. The ILO Centenary Declaration notes that the setting of international labour standards is of fundamental importance to the ILO and that standards need to respond to the changing patterns of the world of work, protect workers and take into account the needs of sustainable enterprises. It also notes that in discharging its constitutional mandate, the ILO must direct its efforts to ensuring a just transition to a future of work that contributes to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. The vision enshrined in the Centenary Declaration appears to be resonating with ILO Member States. At the recent Climate Action Summit convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2019, through the impulsion of the Office, 47 countries committed to formulate national plans for a just transition to place jobs and livelihoods at the heart of climate action. ¹³ ILO standards on just transition would develop international law in this area; ensure that nationally determined contributions to the global response to climate change take into account the “imperative” of decent work creation, ¹⁴ and thus put the ILO at the forefront of action-oriented debate around climate change. Importantly, ILO guidance would provide a shared and international definition of just transition, which

¹¹ ILO: *Small matters: Global evidence on the contribution to employment by the self-employed, micro-enterprises and SMEs*, Geneva, 2019.

¹² Catherine Saget, Adrien Vogt-Schilb and Trang Luu (2020), *Jobs in a Net-Zero Emissions Future in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Inter-American Development Bank and International Labour Organization, Washington, DC and Geneva).

¹³ See results of the [United Nations Climate Action Summit](#) of September 2019. See, in particular, the [Report of the Secretary-General on the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the Way Forward in 2020](#), 28.

¹⁴ The [Paris Agreement](#) aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change “taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities” (preamble).

- would ensure the inclusion of decent work as the ILO's tripartite constituents have defined it.
17. The Paris Agreement recognizes just transition and employment as essential parameters of the global response to climate change. However, a policy and guiding framework responding effectively and comprehensively to the needs and realities of the world of work are not likely to emanate from the current climate change governance structures. It must originate from the ILO as the only tripartite UN agency mandated to provide appropriate guidance to promote sustainable development, productive employment and decent work for all women and men.
 18. The UN climate talks in Madrid (COP25) in December 2019 reached a rather weak compromise agreement on stepping up the global response to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. These response measures should go some way towards addressing just transition and the creation of decent work and quality jobs. Nationally determined contributions to cut carbon emissions should be enhanced through a package of just transition measures which are applied by all Member States. A genuine global regulatory framework in the form of international labour standards on just transition, accompanied by a global economic strategy to enable enterprises implement resource-efficient production processes would create a level playing field in active labour market transition management. The tripartite social dialogue, on which the development of such standards rests, would increase the commitment and responsibilities of all constituents to accelerate action in this field.

Expected outcome

19. Consideration may be given to standard-setting that builds on the policy areas in the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* as a basis to create a coherent legal and policy framework for a just transition. This may build on existing instruments, including those in the annex of the ILO *Guidelines*, as well as legislation and practice developed in a number of countries. The new standard may call on ratifying States to adopt, implement and periodically review a national policy on just transition aiming at improving the linkages between economic, social and environmental opportunities and challenges. It may also encourage consultations with representative organizations of employers and workers in implementing the nationally determined contributions and address issues related to decent work.
20. An expected outcome of a general discussion would be conclusions and a resolution to provide further guidance for the ILO to advance the integration of decent work dimensions in the pursuit of environmental sustainability and design a global economic strategy enabling enterprises to embark on a just transition course, including in the context of UN reforms and country support. It will enable Member States to pursue an inclusive approach to the governance of sustainable development, placing labour, social and economic issues at the core, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference discussion would represent an important milestone following the Centenary Declaration and a global context of urgency to tackle environmental and climate change and prevent unavoidable damage to economies and societies.

Preparation of the Conference discussion

21. The Conference discussion would benefit from the results of the 2013 Conference general discussion and the work of the tripartite Meeting of Experts held in October 2015. The Conference would draw on the ILO Centenary Declaration 2019, which illustrates an

enhanced understanding of decent work and climate change issues by ILO constituents and readiness to provide informed policy guidance in this area.

2. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group

22. Upon the recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group (SRM TWG) the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017) requested the Office to prepare, for consideration for inclusion at the earliest dates possible in future agendas of the International Labour Conference proposals for possible standard-setting items on biological hazards, ergonomics and manual handling, recognizing regulatory gaps, on the consolidation of the instruments concerning chemical hazards, and on the revision of the instruments concerning guarding of machinery.¹⁵
23. Proposals to consider standard-setting items to the International Labour Conference should be guided by the concept of a strategic and coherent approach to the setting of Conference agendas as decided by the Governing Body at its 332nd Session based on the need to ensure institutional coherence, as well as the need to ensure a balance between the adequate time for preparation and adequate flexibility.
24. The agenda for the International Labour Conference in 2023 and beyond regarding standard-setting items on occupational safety and health (OSH) as identified above should be guided by the need to ensure a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards with respect to certain occupational hazards.
25. At its 337th Session (October–November 2019), the Governing Body requested the Office to be guided by the recommendations of the SRM TWG regarding the “thematic integration approach”. As was discussed by the SRM TWG, regulation through thematic integration would, *prima facie*, involve customized standard-setting processes for the four thematic sub-topics as decided by the Governing Body. Variations could be on the basis of decisions, whether the standard-setting action should result in a Protocol, a Convention or a Recommendation, or a Convention and a Recommendation. Alternatively, new instruments to complement the existing up-to-date instruments could combine binding and non-binding provisions into a single instrument. A further alternative could be to complement the existing up-to-date instruments through the adoption of a new integrated instrument on OSH risks in general; this could integrate all instruments concerning specific risks – other than those that are already up to date – to provide an umbrella framework that is applicable to all risks, noting that, while the possibility of regulating biological and chemical hazardous substances together has been proposed, a later meeting of experts considered that biological substances should be considered separately from other hazardous substances.¹⁶
26. Based on these considerations, and taking into account available resources, the Office proposes a road map to include standard-setting items on OSH on the agenda of the International Labour Conference as follows:
 - standard-setting discussions on biological hazards at the 111th (2023) and 112th (2024) Sessions of the Conference;

¹⁵ GB.331/LILS/2, annex, paras 17(i), 19(ii), 27 and 31.

¹⁶ ILO, *Background Information for Developing an ILO Policy Framework for Hazardous Substances*, MEPFHS/2007, 2007, para. 7; SRM TWG 2019/Working paper 1, paras 14 and 16.

- standard-setting discussions on the consolidation of instruments concerning chemical hazards at the 113th (2025) and 114th (2026) Sessions of the Conference;
 - standard-setting discussions on ergonomics and manual handling at the 115th (2027) and 116th (2028) Sessions of the Conference;
 - standard-setting discussions on machine safety at the 117th (2029) and 118th (2030) Sessions of the Conference.
27. The earliest opportunity to include a standard-setting item on OSH on the agenda of the International Labour Conference would be at the 111th Session (2023). The complexity of the topics to be addressed would favour a double-discussion procedure.

Standard-setting item on the protection against biological hazards

28. In 1993, the International Labour Conference supplemented its adoption of the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention (No. 174) and Recommendation (No. 181), 1993, with a resolution concerning exposure to and safety in the use of biological agents at work.¹⁷ In this resolution, the Governing Body requested the Director-General to take steps to address the question of exposure to and safety in the use of biological agents at work and to consider the need for new international instruments in order to minimize the risks to workers, the public and the environment.¹⁸
29. At its 270th Session (November 1997), the Governing Body considered that hazards associated with the biotechnology industry were a cause for concern and that the ILO had a leading role in promoting and addressing biosafety with respect to OSH. It also noted Office plans to prepare a code of practice on biological hazards and their prevention and to submit this code to a tripartite meeting of experts for discussion.¹⁹ These considerations were reaffirmed at the 276th Session (November 1999) of the Governing Body. It was further stressed that a comprehensive approach to standards in this area should be examined. The purpose of the code of practice was to provide for the scope, coverage and provisions for possible standards on the prevention of biological hazards at work.
30. The Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health adopted by the 91st Session (2003) of the Conference again emphasized that the development of a new instrument on biological hazards should be given the highest priority.
31. In 2007, a Meeting of Experts, convened to examine tools with a view to developing a policy framework for hazardous substances, specifically refrained from addressing biological hazards, as the complexity of the subject in terms of the diversity of hazards, types of exposure and assessment and prevention methodologies meant that they should be dealt with separately.²⁰
32. Diseases are the cause of the great majority of work-related deaths in comparison to fatal occupational accidents.²¹ Biological hazards have been the cause of devastating outcomes in the world of work in recent years. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic,

¹⁷ ILO, *Provisional Record No. 23*, Record of Proceedings, International Labour Conference, 80th Session, Geneva, 1993, 23.

¹⁸ GB.276/2.

¹⁹ GB.270/2.

²⁰ MEPFHS/2007, para. 7.

²¹ ILO, *Safety and Health at the Heart of the Future of Work: Building on 100 years of experience*, 2019.

- many regions struggled to contain the spread of infectious diseases that became public health emergencies like the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), influenza A (H1N1) and Ebola. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the strategic relevance of closing the regulatory gap identified by the SRM TWG. Promoting international policy coherence in the prevention of diseases caused by biological hazards will not only protect workers at risk of infection but also contribute to containing the spread of infection, including across borders, and sustaining the key services on which societies and economies rely and preventing business disruption during a pandemic. While health workers represent less than 3 per cent of the population in the large majority of countries and less than 2 per cent in almost all low- and middle-income countries, around 14 per cent of COVID-19 cases reported to the WHO are among health workers. In some countries, the proportion can be as high as 35 per cent.²² Occupational safety and health authorities around the world have issued industry-specific guidance also for sectors not typically associated with infectious diseases such as construction or mining. Meanwhile, Member States in all regions²³ are moving to recognize COVID-19 as an occupational disease, either for healthcare workers specifically or more generally for workers who are unable to telework or respect physical distancing.
33. A new standard on biological hazards would fill a gap in the ILO normative framework and be classified among the OSH instruments which provide for protection against specific risks.²⁴ Considerations providing a rationale for standard-setting would include: a long-standing concern on occupational exposures to biological hazards discussed on multiple occasions in the past; the need of a specific international framework to regulate biological hazards, in particular to assist Member States to prevent, prepare and build resilience to pandemics caused by exposure to biological hazards in work settings; the proliferation of biotechnology, including genetic engineering and infection control, and the resultant risks affecting an estimated 16 million workers already in 1997;²⁵ the only existing standard on biological agents being the Anthrax Prevention Recommendation, 1919 (No. 3), which is still relevant but focused on a single biological hazard; and particular relevance for workers in sectors such as healthcare services, sanitation, waste management and other key services, as well as sectors in which workers may be at risk of higher exposure to biological hazards (including, for example, agriculture and ship-breaking).
34. In a previous proposal on “Prevention of biological hazards in the workplace” it was stated that new standards could establish “general principles covering appropriate work methods and practices in the field of biotechnology, including risk assessment procedures and technical control, and organizational measures to safeguard the health of workers. ...

²² WHO, “Keep health workers safe to keep patients safe: WHO”, 17 September 2020.

²³ Examples include Belgium, Colombia, Malaysia, South Africa and United Arab Emirates.

²⁴ This would also take into account the decision Chapter 16 of *Agenda 21*, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 on the environmentally sound management of biotechnology. The informal consultation on recent developments and trends in biotechnology (Vienna, October 1995), held by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in its capacity as Task Manager for this chapter, requested the ILO to assume the leading role in promoting and addressing the biosafety issue with respect to occupational safety and health and to promote the safe use of biotechnology in the workplace. These activities fall under programme area D of Chapter 16, which deals with enhancing safety and developing international mechanisms for cooperation. The ILO has thus the principal responsibility in this respect and within the multilateral system.

²⁵ To put the 1997 employment figure into perspective, a total of 43.5 million health workers were directly engaged in the provision of health services in 2013, with over 200 million workers estimated to be contributing to the health and social sectors globally (including unpaid personal care workers, private sector providers, cleaners and caterers). WHO, *Working for health and growth: Investing in the health workforce. Report of the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth*, 2016, 24.

The texts would include elements such as objectives, coverage and scope, definitions, application to and exemption of economic activities, ways of assessing risks of exposure, the role of the competent authorities, the responsibilities of employers, the rights and duties of workers and information and training.”²⁶

35. The 337th Session (October–November 2019) of the Governing Body was informed that the work of the Office on the development of technical guidelines on biological hazards is advanced. Two meetings of experts on infectious diseases and agents were held in May and October 2019 in collaboration with the International Commission on Occupational Health, and with involvement of the World Health Organization. The technical draft of the guidelines is scheduled for submission to a tripartite meeting of experts for validation in the last quarter of 2021. The knowledge gained by the Office in preparing the guidelines will be beneficial to the standard-setting preparatory work. Other work in preparation for the Conference would consist of a report on law and practice based on information received from Member States.

Standard-setting item on the consolidation of instruments concerning chemical hazards

36. According to the latest available estimates (2017) 86.3 per cent of global work-related mortality is caused by diseases, many of these as a result of exposure to hazardous chemicals such as work-related cancers (26 per cent) and respiratory diseases (17 per cent).²⁷ In 2015, the ILO estimated that nearly 1 million workers died from occupational exposure to hazardous substances, including dusts, vapours and fumes (an increase of more than 90,000 workers compared to 2011).²⁸ Because of significant knowledge gaps in respect of the occupational health effects of exposure to the steady proliferation of chemical compounds as well as the latency between exposure and at least some known diseases, health effects including fatalities could well be vastly underestimated.
37. The urgency to revise the ILO’s normative framework on sound management of chemicals at work does not stem from a regulatory gap but from a need to pursue consolidation, coherence and regular updating of relevant standards. Protection against chemical hazards is currently covered by an instrument that focuses on key principles, the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), and is classified as up to date. Convention No. 170 governs the sound management of all risks relating to the use of chemicals at work. It requires a comprehensive national framework for the safe use of chemicals at work, including the formulation, implementation and periodic review of a coherent national policy, as well as defining responsibilities of employers and rights and duties of workers at the level of the undertaking. Convention No. 170 and Recommendation No. 177 are supplemented by an ILO code of practice on safety in the use of chemicals at work (1993). Five instruments that precede Convention No. 170 address specific chemical hazards such as white lead, benzene, lead poisoning, and white phosphorus.²⁹ The coexistence of these older instruments on specific chemicals and later principles-based Convention No. 170 affects the coherence of the ILO’s normative framework on chemicals and as recommended by the SRM TWG is in need of revision.

²⁶ GB.270/2.

²⁷ ILO, *Safety and Health at the Heart of the Future of Work: Building on 100 years of experience*, 2019.

²⁸ Päivi Hämmäläinen, Jukka Takala and Tan Boon Kiat (eds), *Global Estimates of Occupational Accidents and Work-related Illnesses 2017* (WSH Institute, 2017).

²⁹ Convention No. 13 on white lead; Convention No. 136 and Recommendation No. 144 on benzene; Recommendation No. 4 on lead poisoning; and Recommendation No. 6 on white phosphorous.

38. In order to ensure continued and future relevance of the ILO normative framework on chemical hazards, the third SRM TWG meeting recommended “follow-up involving standard-setting action” as a measure of “practical and time-bound follow-up action”³⁰ for the five instruments. The SRM TWG further recommended that these be revised in a consolidated manner, which could conceivably be realized through a Protocol to Convention No. 170.
39. The concerns raised as a reason for revising these instruments recognized that the practice of regulating, in detail, an individual hazardous substance in a single instrument is considered outdated; that there are concerns relating to the five instruments that are gender-related and the inappropriateness to include specific limits for exposure in standards (as is done in the Benzene Convention, 1971 (No. 136), for example); that provisions should be drafted in a manner that will ensure that ILO instruments are kept up to date with scientific and technological progress; and that to the extent that fixed limits should also be regulated, a system for easy updating of such limits should be provided for.
40. The World Congress on Safety and Health at Work held in Singapore (2017) called for concerted global action to address new and emerging OSH challenges. New challenges include the effects on occupational health of nanotechnology or e-waste management. Toxicological information of chemical substances trails the proliferation of mixtures of chemicals in workplaces around the world. It is now believed that work-related diseases such as occupational cancers and respiratory, circulatory and other disorders pose a much bigger but still largely undocumented threat to OSH than workplace fatalities. This threat, while preventable, causes significant human and economic cost.
41. A new instrument complementing Convention No. 170 and revising the five older instruments could ensure valuable prohibitions are maintained while facilitating the introduction of new prohibitions or exposure standards that are easily updated in line with scientific and technological development.³¹ It could ensure the ILO makes a strategic, tripartite contribution to policy coherence with a number of international treaties and initiatives that have gathered momentum since the adoption of Convention No. 170, such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Rotterdam Convention for Prior-Informed Consent, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). Such policy coherence could in turn promote the ratification and application of Convention No. 170.³²
42. The COVID-19 pandemic has fuelled an increase in chemical exposures due to more frequent and widespread use of disinfectants, hand sanitizers, and cleaning products and personal protective equipment (PPE). Unsafe use of these products can lead to toxic effects in people with healthcare workers and young persons in cleaning and health services most at risk.
43. A standard-setting item could be placed on the agenda of the 111th (2023) and 112th (2024) Sessions of the Conference.

³⁰ GB.331/LILS/2, para. 3.

³¹ Updating of exposure limits or “threshold limit values” (TLVs) could follow a procedure similar to the one set out in the List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194).

³² Convention No. 170 is currently ratified by 22 Member States, of which three have ratified in the past four years.

Standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling

44. A standard-setting item on ergonomics and manual handling could be included on the agenda of the 115th (2027) and 116th (2028) Sessions of the Conference. Human factors or ergonomics applies theory, principles, and data from many relevant disciplines to the design of products and work processes and systems, taking into account the complex interactions between the human and other humans, the environment, tools and equipment, and technology to enhance human performance and well-being in the world of work.³³ Ergonomic hazards include manual-materials handling causing overexertion; inappropriate lighting or selection and use of tools; continuous standing or sitting while working; slips, trips or falls; thermal discomfort, and office postures causing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The wide variety of MSDs renders an accurate estimate of direct and indirect costs particularly difficult but available evidence suggests that MSDs account for around a third of all injuries and illnesses, a higher than average absenteeism and significant health-care costs, informal care costs and production losses.³⁴ Attention to prevention of ergonomic risks and efforts to improve comfort and well-being at work also becomes more urgent as workforces age and workers are expected to work longer.
45. New standards could, based on the questionnaire sent to Member States in the course of the standard-setting process, clarify the defining role of human factors and ergonomics in the development of work processes and systems and help determine internationally recognized forms, challenges and opportunities with respect to human factors and ergonomics at the workplace. It could set out broad principles for addressing such challenges and for promoting health and safety through the management of high-quality human factors and ergonomics. The instrument could specify national policies and regulations on human factors and ergonomics at work, establish a defined system of rights, responsibilities and duties of governments, employers, workers and their organizations, and promote a holistic approach to the design, management and operation of work.
46. In accordance with the recommendations of the SRM TWG, the new standards would revise the Maximum Weight Convention (No. 127) and Recommendation (No. 128), 1967, and update the regulatory approach to manual handling.
47. The preparatory work would be informed by a detailed law and practice report, studies of good practices and data collection, as well as broad consultations with constituents, partners across the UN system and with professional bodies and other stakeholders. It is proposed that a tripartite meeting of experts be held as early as 2024 to advise the Office on the scope of the issues by standard-setting. Preparatory work would also be informed by the technical guidelines on ergonomic hazards being prepared by the Office, planned to be submitted for validation to a tripartite meeting of experts in 2022.

Standard-setting item on the revision of instruments concerning guarding of machinery

48. A standard-setting on safety and health in the use of machinery could be included in the agenda of the 117th (2028) and 118th (2029) Sessions of the International Labour Conference.

³³ ILO, *The Essential Contribution of Human Factors/Ergonomics to the Future of Work We Want*, 2019.

³⁴ See, for example, figures from the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention or the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2013, MSD cases accounted for 33 per cent of all worker injury and illness cases.

49. New standards would revise the Guarding of Machinery Convention (No. 119) and Recommendation (No. 118), 1963. It could set out broad principles for addressing safety and health issues in the use of machinery.
50. New standards in the form of a Convention could outline in definitional form the nature of safety and health in the use of machinery and define safety and health requirements and precautions applicable to governments, workers and employers, and also to designers, manufacturers and suppliers of machinery.
51. New standards in the form of a Recommendation (or non-binding provisions in a binding instrument), could provide further detailed guidance on more specific technical requirements and measures on the working environment, control systems, machinery guarding and protection against mechanical and other hazards, information and marking, and supplementary measures relating to specific machinery types.
52. A Conference discussion on safety and health in the use of machinery would be informed by a review of the code of practice on the same topic published in 2013³⁵ and a detailed law and practice report and be based on the questionnaire sent to Member States in the course of the standard-setting process.

Updating of new instruments on occupational safety and health

53. Standard-setting in the four areas would use appropriate approaches, so that new instruments can be easily updated in particular with respect to technical provisions to ensure the continued relevance of the standards, taking into account national circumstances.

3. Update as regards the follow-up envisaged in relation to subjects currently under preparation

A. Resolution of individual labour disputes

54. The Conference conclusions from the 2013 recurrent discussion called on Member States to ensure respect for the rule of law, including through the strengthening of dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms. They further called on the Office to expand its assistance to strengthen and improve the performance of labour dispute prevention and resolution systems and mechanisms, including for the effective handling of individual labour complaints. In turn, the Conference conclusions from the 2018 recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism call on members to establish, where appropriate, and develop with social partners dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms that are effective, accessible and transparent. They further call on the Office to assist Members and constituents to strengthen dispute prevention and resolution systems at various levels that promote effective social dialogue and build trust.
55. The Office is progressing in its research on mechanisms for resolution of labour disputes, in the framework of the plan of action to implement the Conference conclusions from 2013. This includes research to identify guiding principles for effective resolution of labour disputes, and analysis of global developments in the promotion of access to justice, in the context of the SDGs.³⁶ The Office has expanded its research to cover how mechanisms

³⁵ ILO, *Safety and Health in the Use of Machinery*, code of practice, 2013.

³⁶ Preliminary research findings suggest that individual labour disputes have been increasing worldwide. Causes include growing labour forces, particularly in high labour migration regions; an increased range of individual rights protections; a decrease in trade union density and/or collective bargaining coverage; and increased inequality as a

- for resolution of labour disputes have been affected by and have responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
56. The preliminary research findings suggest that the existing body of international labour standards could be enhanced. First, there is no single standard that directly and comprehensively addresses the issue of labour dispute resolution. Second, there is a relative lack of detail in the guidance in existing standards. Matters on which guidance could be valuable include: the role of the State in ensuring the effective application of the rule of law through access to labour justice; the role and operation of courts and non-judicial mechanisms in resolving labour disputes, including specialist labour courts; and the role of the social partners in effective labour dispute prevention and resolution. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Member States' responses, may provide insight into how to frame guidance on the use of technology to facilitate access to justice – at all times.
 57. Existing standards are set to be reviewed by the SRM TWG: four of the six instruments in set 12 relate to dispute resolution. This, together with ongoing research findings, will enable the Office to advise the Governing Body about the desirability of action, and the form that any such action may take. During the 2020–21 biennium, the Office will publish: (1) comparative research on individual labour dispute resolution systems in non-OECD countries; (2) an analysis of how international labour standards offer guidance on the promotion of access to justice; (3) a study on access to justice and the role of labour courts; and (4) a number of related policy briefs. Given the wide variety of national practices, the interconnections between different types of labour disputes, and the use of similar institutions and procedures for different types of disputes, a possible first next step would be a meeting of experts to be scheduled in the 2022–23 biennium. This meeting might then advise on subsequent action including either/or a general discussion and standard-setting.

B. Decent work in the world of sport³⁷

58. This subject is considered in the framework of the agenda of the Conference on the basis of a suggestion made by the Workers' group.³⁸ As it is an emerging and sectoral topic, the document submitted to the Governing Body in October 2016 suggested that it could be addressed first by a sectoral technical meeting or meeting of experts, which would allow constituents to examine the scope of the issues and its particular legal and policy framework. In January 2017, the sector advisory bodies considered the proposal and recommended that the topic be discussed at a Global Dialogue Forum under the programme of sectoral meetings 2018–19. This recommendation was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 329th Session (March 2017).³⁹ At its 334th Session (October–November 2018), the Governing Body decided that a "Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the world of sports" would be held in Geneva from 3 to 5 December 2019. The

result of segmented labour markets. It appears that the increase in individual labour disputes has contributed to challenges that can limit access to labour justice. These can include high costs and delays; a lack of independence and impartiality; insufficient capacity to address evolving forms of labour disputes; and reduced scope for social dialogue, including collective mechanisms. Member States have responded in a variety of ways including: the establishment of new or additional dispute resolution mechanisms and bodies; modified procedural rules and institutional structures; improved capacity of dispute resolution practitioners; specialized dispute resolution mechanisms for vulnerable groups of workers; and increased dispute prevention measures, including through the promotion of workplace mechanisms.

³⁷ See GB.328/INS/3, Appendix I, section 2(C), paras 39 and 40. See GB.328/PV, para. 17 (Workers' group).

³⁸ See GB.320/INS/2, para. 30.

³⁹ See GB.329/POL/4, Appendix II; GB.329/PV, para. 512.

meeting was rescheduled and held from 20 to 22 January 2020.⁴⁰ The Forum adopted points of consensus which, together with the report of the discussion, were submitted to the Governing Body at its 340th Session (November 2020). The Governing Body, by correspondence, took note of the report of the Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport and authorized the Director-General to publish the final report. It also requested the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for future work, the recommendations for future action by the ILO made by the Forum.⁴¹

C. Independence and protection in public service (fight against corruption)⁴²

59. The conclusions of the Global Dialogue Forum on Challenges in Collective Bargaining in the Public Service (Geneva, 2–3 April 2014) included references to the role of legislation, social dialogue and collective bargaining in the independence and protection of public servants, including anti-corruption legislation. The Workers' group also highlighted this issue in the sectoral advisory bodies in October 2014. The Governing Body was informed in October 2015 that a proposal from Public Services International had been received for an item on the Conference agenda with a view to standard-setting to ensure the independence, impartiality and protection of certain categories of public service workers, notably through the fight against corruption.⁴³
60. As this is an emerging topic and issues are still open, including whether ILO work should also address private sector workers, the document submitted to the Governing Body in October 2016 suggested that the topic be first examined by a meeting of experts. In the framework of their meetings from 11 to 13 January 2017, the sectoral advisory bodies have recommended that the Office undertake research on the topic as part of the sectoral programme 2018–19. As a result, the Office has published a working paper on national law and practice on protecting whistle-blowers in the public and financial services sectors.⁴⁴ The topic is now considered sufficiently mature for examination by a meeting of experts. To this effect, the Governing Body could consider including a meeting of experts in the programme of global sectoral meetings for the biennium 2020–21 using the resources kept in reserve for one additional meeting per biennium in accordance with decisions taken in the context of the review of the Sectoral Policies Department.⁴⁵ This proposal was considered by the Governing Body at its 340th Session (November 2020).⁴⁶ The Governing Body, by correspondence, decided that, should it be agreed to include an additional meeting in the programme of global sectoral meetings for the biennium 2020–21, the resources kept in reserve be used for a technical meeting or meeting of experts on either the protection of whistle-blowers (or independence and protection in the public

⁴⁰ See GB.334/POL/3, Appendix I; GB.334/POL/PV, para. 64.

⁴¹ See GB.340/POL/PV, para. 96.

⁴² See GB.328/INS/3, Appendix I, section 2(D), paras 41–43. See GB.328/PV, paras 17 (Workers' group indicating that the scope of the fight against corruption should include both public services and the private sector), 20 (IMEC stating that it was premature for the Governing Body to ask sectoral advisory bodies to take into account the inclusion of a meeting of experts in the proposals for 2018–19 as there was no need for the Governing Body to signal its preference on one of the four possible future subjects requiring further work).

⁴³ See GB.325/INS/2, para. 31.

⁴⁴ ILO, *Law and Practice on Protecting Whistle-blowers in the Public and Financial Services Sectors*, Working Paper No. 328, Geneva, 2019.

⁴⁵ GB.328/POL/8, Appendix II, recommendation on meetings as confirmed at the January 2017 session of the sectoral advisory bodies.

⁴⁶ See GB.340/POL/4(Rev.1), para. 18.

service – fight against corruption) or another sectoral issue.⁴⁷ As such a meeting was not possible to organize due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sectoral Advisory Bodies, at their meeting of January 2021, decided to propose to the current session of the Governing Body a technical meeting on the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service sector to be held during the 2022–23 biennium.

D. Decent work in the platform economy

61. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work directs the Office to ensure “that diverse forms of work arrangements, production and business models, including in domestic and global supply chains, leverage opportunities for social and economic progress, provide for decent work and are conducive to full, productive and freely chosen employment”. The question of whether diverse forms of work arrangements meet these objectives has been a recurring call in the Governing Body, especially since the February 2015 Meeting of Experts on Non-Standard Forms of Employment and the subsequent recurrent discussions on social protection (labour protection) at the 104th Session (2015) and on social dialogue and tripartism at the 107th Session (2018) of the Conference.
62. Online digital labour platforms, which have emerged over the past decade, are part of the growing diversity of work arrangements. Work on these platforms includes both “cross-border, web-based platforms” (also sometimes referred to as “crowdwork” or “online outsourcing”) and location-based applications (apps) which allocate work to individuals in a specific geographical area. For cross-border, web-based platforms, the work is outsourced through an open call to a geographically dispersed crowd or to individuals through freelancing platforms. Though some of these jobs entail the movement of work from the offline to the online economy, in other instances, they are new tasks that permit the smooth functioning of web-based industries or the advancement of artificial intelligence systems, such as content moderation on social media sites, or data annotation. Typical activities of location-based applications (apps) are transportation, delivery and home services.
63. Reliable estimates of the employment share of the platform economy are scarce. Figures for 14 EU States indicate that it concerns roughly 2 per cent of the adult population; an ILO estimate for Ukraine indicates that it is roughly 3 per cent of the labour force. An ILO survey of 3,500 workers on five major crowdwork platforms revealed there were workers from 75 countries, with strong representation from Africa, Asia and the Americas. Nevertheless, it is expected that work on digital labour platforms will continue to expand. According to the Oxford Internet Institute’s Online Labour Index, activity on the five largest English-language web-based labour platforms expanded by one third between July 2016 and March 2019. This number is likely to increase given the interest of Fortune 500 companies to scale up platform sourcing.
64. The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting both the employment opportunities platform work is generating in the recovery phase from job and income loss and the regulatory challenges to ensure platform workers’ safety and health is protected and they are covered by adequate social protection measures. A recent survey of delivery workers in Argentina during the pandemic⁴⁸ found that the increase in unemployment and the lack of opportunities turned work on digital platforms into an attractive sector, given the few obstacles to getting started in this activity and the increased demand for deliveries. On

⁴⁷ See GB.340/POL/PV, para. 96.

⁴⁸ Luis Beccaria et al., *Delivery Work during a Pandemic: Delivery Platform Workers in Argentina*, December 2020, ILO Country Office for Argentina. Full report available [in Spanish](#).

- the other hand, new risks arose, including not only an exacerbation of the precarious situation of these workers but also the possibility that they could become infected by the virus while free provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and access to safe bathrooms remained unavailable to the majority of platform workers. Some platforms established forms of coverage for illness to support the income of workers in the event that they are unable to perform their professional activity.
65. The platform economy is disrupting existing business models but also the employment model upon which these business models traditionally rely. Digital platforms are transforming drastically how organizations conceive business, interact with one another and create value for society. Work on digital labour platforms provides workers the opportunity to work from any place, at any time and is particularly attractive for countries with weak labour demand. Yet engaging in such work generates risks for workers with regard to their status of employment, employment and income security, social protection and other benefits, as most of this work is being performed outside the scope of labour law. Moreover, in the cross-border, web-based platforms, workers face difficulty in exercising their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining as the platform, and its clients, may be located in a different jurisdiction than the workers. This can also make it difficult for regulators to apply local labour laws.
 66. Understanding of mechanisms to ensure decent work for workers on digital labour platforms needs to be further enhanced. While the Office continues research on this topic, constituents have recognized the need for official discussions on this topic. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work calls on all Members, with the support of the ILO, to “respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work, including platform work,” and develop “policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection”. In addition, the 335th Session (March 2019) of the Governing Body recalled the discussion in October 2018, in which some governments proposed to prioritize action towards decent work in the platform economy. The discussion referred to the resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism (2018) calling for “(e) ... access to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining of digital platform and gig economy workers ...”.
 67. The Office proposes to hold a tripartite meeting of experts on ensuring decent work in the platform economy to help shape the necessary policy approach. At the 337th Session (October–November 2019) of the Governing Body more preparatory work on the issue of decent work in the digital economy received relatively broad support. Two groups were in favour of holding a tripartite meeting of experts on this subject matter, possibly followed by a general discussion or standard-setting discussion at the 112th Session of the Conference in 2024. This could be scheduled for the second semester of 2021, and could draw from the outcomes of the 2021 general discussion on inequalities at the 109th Session of the Conference, which will include references to developments in the platform economy as well as other forms of work arrangements, including temporary contracts. That tripartite meeting of experts could also enrich discussions at the 111th Session (2023) of the Conference on the recurrent item on labour protection, which will pay attention to the opportunities and challenges associated with the growing diversity of forms of work arrangements. Depending on the outcome of the tripartite meeting of experts, either a general discussion or a standard-setting item on decent work in the platform economy could be envisaged at the 112th Session (2024) of the Conference.

► Appendix II

Overview of the technical items selected for the Conference agenda (2010–30)

Session	Technical items			
99th (2010)	Decent work for domestic workers – standard-setting , double discussion (first discussion).	Elaboration of an autonomous Recommendation on HIV/AIDS in the world of work – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Review of the follow-up to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
100th (2011)	Decent work for domestic workers – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	Labour administration and labour inspection – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (social security), under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	
101st (2012)	Elaboration of an autonomous Recommendation on Social Protection Floors – standard-setting , single discussion.	Youth employment crisis – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of fundamental principles and rights at work, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration, and the follow-up (revised, June 2010) to the 1998 Declaration.	
102nd (2013)	Employment and social protection in the new demographic context – general discussion .	Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social dialogue, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Further review of remaining measures previously adopted by the Conference under article 33 of the ILO Constitution to secure compliance by Myanmar with recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on forced labour.

Session	Technical items			
103rd (2014)	Supplementing the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), to address implementation gaps to advance prevention, protection and compensation measures to effectively achieve the elimination of forced labour – standard-setting , single discussion.	Facilitating transitions from the informal to the formal economy – standard-setting , double discussion (first discussion).	Second recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Approval of amendments to the Code of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as adopted by the Special Tripartite Committee established under Article XIII of the Convention.
104th (2015)	Facilitating transitions from the informal to the formal economy – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	Small and medium-sized enterprises and decent and productive employment creation – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (labour protection), under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	
105th (2016)	Decent work for peace, security and disaster resilience: Revision of the Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71) – standard-setting , double discussion (first discussion).	Decent work in global supply chains – general discussion .	Evaluation of the impact of the Social Justice Declaration.	Approval of amendments to the annexes to the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185); and to the Code of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as adopted by the Special Tripartite Committee.
106th (2017)	Decent work for peace, security and disaster resilience: Revision of the Employment (Transition from War to Peace) Recommendation, 1944 (No. 71) – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	Labour migration – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of fundamental principles and rights at work, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Abrogation and/or withdrawal of Conventions Nos 4, 15, 28, 41, 60 and 67.

Session	Technical items			
107th (2018)	Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work – standard-setting , double discussion (first discussion).	Effective ILO development cooperation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social dialogue and tripartism, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Abrogation of Conventions Nos 21, 50, 64, 65, 86 and 104 and withdrawal of Recommendations Nos 7, 61 and 62.
108th (2019)	Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.	Organization of debates and events connected to the ILO’s Centenary.	
109th (2021)	Skills and lifelong learning – general discussion .	Inequality and the world of work – general discussion .	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (social security), under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration.	Abrogation of Conventions Nos 8, 9, 16, 53, 73, 74, 91 and 145 and withdrawal of Conventions Nos 7, 54, 57, 72, 76, 93, 109, 179 and 180 as well as of Recommendations Nos 27, 31, 49, 107, 137, 139, 153, 154, 174, 186 and 187. Withdrawal of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933 (No. 34).
110th (2022) (to be completed)	Apprenticeships – standard-setting , double discussion (first discussion).	To be decided at the 341st Session of the Governing Body.	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration. (tbc)	Withdrawal of the Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1923 (No. 20). (tbc)
111th (2023) (to be completed)	Apprenticeships – standard-setting , double discussion (second discussion).	To be decided at the 341st Session of the Governing Body.	A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of social protection (labour protection), under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration. (tbc)	

Session	Technical items
112th (2024) (to be completed)	<p>A recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of fundamental principles and rights at work, under the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration. (tbc)</p> <p>Abrogation of Conventions Nos 45, 62, 63 and 85. (tbc)</p>
113th (2025) (to be completed)	
114th (2026) (to be completed)	
115th (2027) (to be completed)	
116th (2028) (to be completed)	
117th (2029) (to be completed)	
118th (2030) (to be completed)	<p>Abrogation of the Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 96). (tbc)</p>
119th (2031) (to be completed)	

► Appendix III. Agenda of the ILO – Timeline (2018–22)

* SRM TWG – Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group

