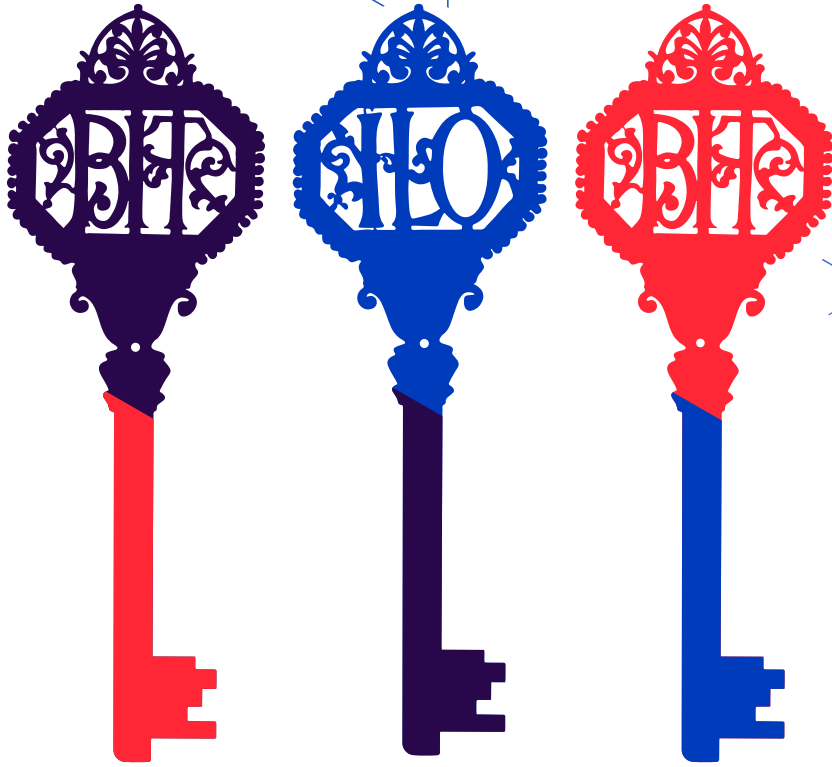




International
Labour
Organization

The International Labour Conference at a glance





The International Labour Conference at a glance

► Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	3
II. Role of the International Labour Conference	3
III. Composition	4
1. National tripartite delegations	4
1.1. Delegates	4
1.2. Advisers and substitute delegates	4
1.3. Persons appointed to replace advisers	4
1.4. Ministers	4
1.5. Other persons	4
2. Observers	5
IV. Structure and functioning	5
1. Sessions and agenda	5
2. Officers	6
3. Groups	6
4. Secretariat	6
5. Plenary	6
6. Committees	7
6.1. Standing committees	9
6.2. Technical committees	11
7. Decisions – Voting	13

I. Introduction

The International Labour Conference (ILC) is the supreme deliberative and decision-making body of the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) ([ILO Constitution, article 2](#)). The other two organs are the [Governing Body](#) (the executive body of the Organization) and the [International Labour Office](#) (the permanent secretariat of the Organization).

► **Figure 1. ILO governance structure**



The Conference meets annually, bringing together tripartite delegations from the Organization's 187 Member States and a number of observers to consider a series of topics related to the world of work.

II. Role of the International Labour Conference

The International Labour Conference's main functions include:

- crafting and adoption of international labour standards (Conventions and Recommendations);
- supervision of the application of standards through its Committee on the Application of Standards;
- approval of the biennial programme and budget of the Organization and the allocation of expenses among Member States;
- election of the members of the Governing Body;
- admission of new Member States which are not members of the United Nations;
- adoption of amendments to the Constitution;

- discussion on the reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body;
- adoption of resolutions that provide guidelines for the ILO's general policy and future activities.

III. Composition

1. National tripartite delegations

1.1. Delegates

Each national delegation has a minimal composition of two Government, one Employers' and one Workers' delegates (2-1-1). The Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates participate and vote independently.

1.2. Advisers and substitute delegates

Each delegate may be accompanied by advisers (including substitute delegates), who must not exceed two in number for each technical item on the agenda of the meeting.

1.3. Persons appointed to replace advisers

A limited number of persons may be appointed to occupy advisers' posts which may become vacant in their delegations, for example because of early departures. The maximum number of these persons cannot exceed one person for each technical item on the agenda (the half of the maximum number of advisers possible).

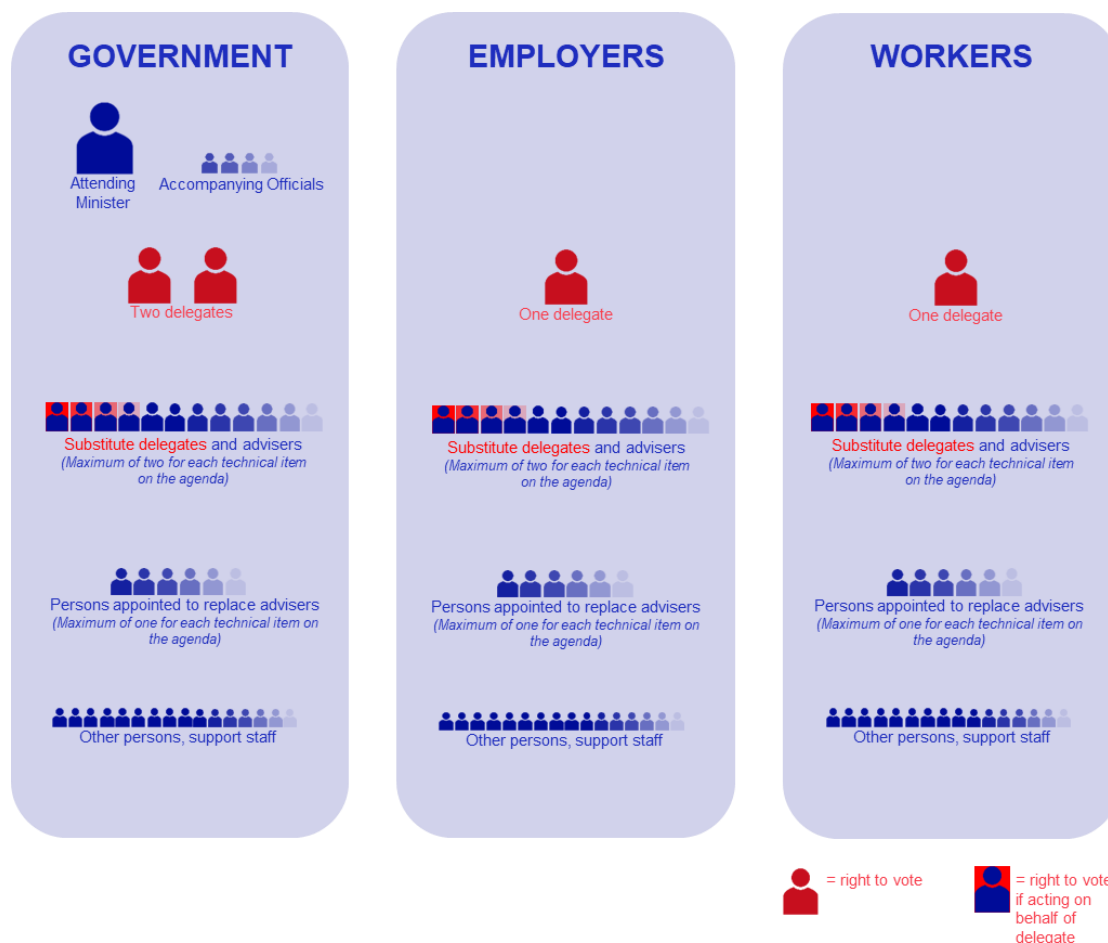
1.4. Ministers

Ministers not appointed as a delegate may attend and deliver statements before the plenary.

1.5. Other persons

Other persons may be appointed to accompany a delegation without actively participating in the work of the Conference.

► Figure 2. Composition of a national tripartite delegation



Only Governments may accredit a delegation. Governments have to nominate the Employers’ and Workers’ delegates and advisers in agreement with the most representative employers’ and workers’ organizations, as the case may be, of their respective country (see the [Explanatory note for national delegations – Submission of Credentials](#)).

With a view to achieving gender parity in delegations, Governments and employers’ and workers’ organizations are strongly urged to include a higher number of women in their delegations to the Conference, particularly as delegates (see [gender infographics](#)).

2. Observers

The Governing Body invites international intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and non-Member States to participate in the Conference as observers (for more information on INGOs’ participation, see [here](#)).

IV. Structure and functioning

1. Sessions and agenda

The ILC meets normally in June in Geneva in person. The agenda includes “standing” items (such as the programme and budget of the Organization) and “technical” items which are normally placed on the agenda by decision of the Governing Body.

2. Officers

The work of the Conference is directed by the Officers elected at the opening sitting. They consist of the President (a Government delegate or Minister) and three Vice-Presidents (one Government delegate, one Employers' delegate and one Workers' delegate).

3. Groups

The delegates and advisers to the Conference organize into Government, Employers' and Workers' groups. Each group elects a Chairperson and at least one Vice-Chairperson. The Employers' group and the Workers' group also elect their respective secretaries who may be drawn from persons outside the group. Each group, as a minimum, makes the nominations for the Vice-Presidency of the Conference and the members of Conference committees, and conducts elections for Governing Body membership. In line with the principle of autonomy of the groups, each group controls its own procedure subject to the observance of the Standing Orders of the Conference.

4. Secretariat

The Director-General of the ILO is the Secretary-General and the Office provides the secretariat of the Conference.

5. Plenary

The Conference works in plenary sittings and in separate committees established in the opening sitting of the plenary. The plenary convenes all tripartite delegations of the Conference. Plenary sittings are devoted to:

- discussion of the report of the Director-General and the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body;
- the World of Work Summit;
- the adoption of Committee outputs (resolutions, international labour standards and other texts) and the programme and budget of the Organization.

The rights to participate in the work of the plenary are spelled out in table 1 below. Persons without an institutional role (officials accompanying Ministers, support staff and other persons) do not have any participation rights.

► **Table 1. Plenary: Right to speak, to move amendments and to vote**

	Right to speak	Right to move amendments	Right to vote *
Attending Minister Article 2(2)(a), Standing Orders	Yes Articles 14(6) and 23(3), Standing Orders	No, unless appointed as delegate	No, unless appointed as delegate

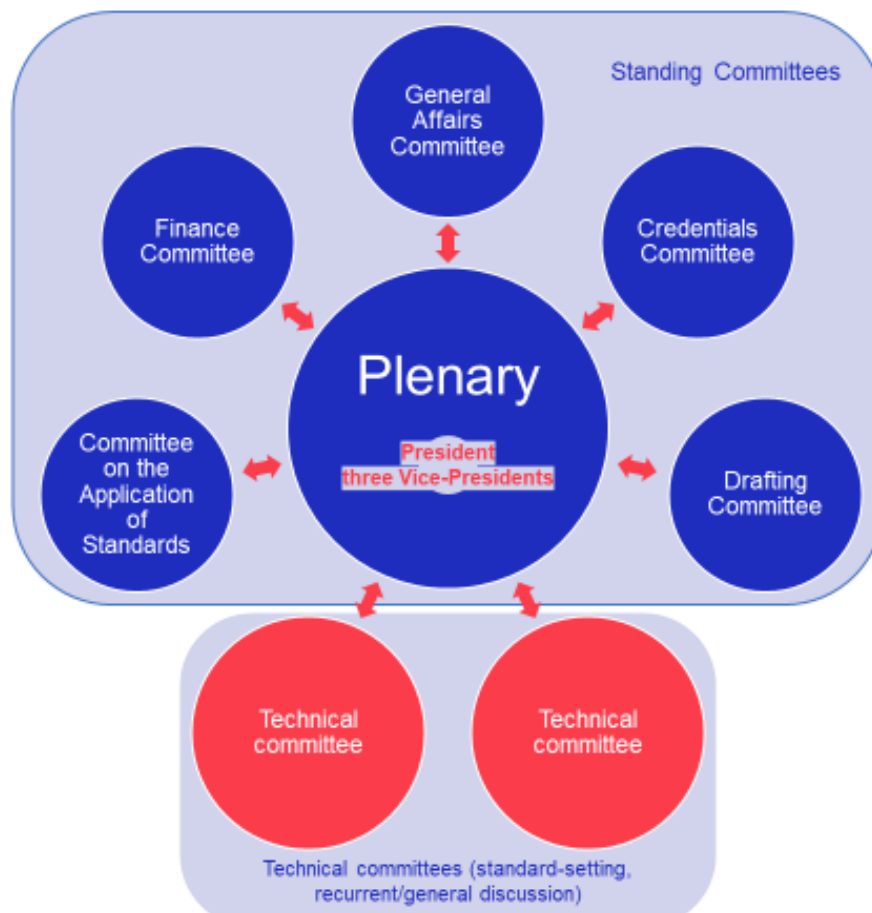
	Right to speak	Right to move amendments	Right to vote *
Delegates Article 3(1), Constitution	Yes Articles 14(1), 14(3) and 23(3), Standing Orders (in respect to the latter, for governments only one delegate or Minister)	Yes	Yes
Advisers and substitute delegates Article 3(2) and (7), Constitution Article 1(2) and (3), Standing Orders	Only if substitute delegate acting on behalf of delegate	Only if substitute delegate acting on behalf of delegate	Only if substitute delegate acting on behalf of delegate
Persons appointed to replace advisers Article 2(2)(i), Standing Orders	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers
Representatives of IGOs Article 14(7), Standing Orders	Yes	No	No
Observers from non-Member States Article 14(8), Standing Orders	Yes, with the permission of the President	No	No
Representatives of national liberation movements Article 14(8), Standing Orders	Yes, with the permission of the President	No	No
Representatives of INGOs Article 14(9), Standing Orders	Only with the permission of the Officers	No	No
* See section 6.7 below.			

6. Committees

Nearly all substantive work of the Conference is done in committees. The committees report to the Conference plenary upon completion of their work. Their outputs (resolutions, conclusions, instruments, etc.) are valid only after approval by the plenary which may at times require vote.

There are two types of committees: standing committees and technical committees.

► Figure 3. Structure of the Conference



Except for most of the standing committees that have a fixed membership, committees are composed of governments that register for them and of employers' and workers' delegates and advisers registered by their respective groups. Registration opens well before the opening of the Conference.

With the exception of the Finance and Drafting Committees, each committee selects its Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons, chosen from each of the three groups, as its Officers, and a Reporter. Following approval by the Officers of the committee, the Reporter presents the report of the deliberations to the Conference at its plenary sitting.

The rights to participate in the work of the committees are spelled out in table 2 below. Persons without an institutional role (officials accompanying Ministers, support staff and other persons) do not have any participation rights.

► **Table 2. Committees: Right to speak, to move amendments and to vote**

	Right to speak	Right to move amendments	Right to vote *
Attending Minister Article 2(2)(a), Standing Orders	No	No	No
Delegates Article 3(1), Constitution	Yes	Yes	Yes, if member of committee
Advisers and substitute delegates Article 3(2) and (7), Constitution Article 1(2) and (3), Standing Orders	Yes, if member of the committee or designated by delegate Article 36(4), Standing Orders	Yes, if member of the committee or designated by delegate Article 36(4), Standing Orders	Yes, if member of committee
Persons appointed to replace advisers Article 2(2)(i), Standing Orders	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers	Only if person occupies vacant adviser's post, under same conditions as advisers
Representatives of IGOs Article 36(5)(c), Standing Orders	Only with the permission of the Chairperson	No	No
Observers from non-Member States Article 36(5)(a), Standing Orders	Only with the permission of the Chairperson	No	No
Representatives of national liberation movements Article 36(5)(b), Standing Orders	Only with the permission of the Chairperson	No	No
Representatives of INGOs Article 36(6), Standing Orders	Only with the permission of the Officers	No	No
* See section 6.7 below.			

6.1. Standing committees

The following standing committees are established at the opening sitting of each session of the Conference:

6.1.1. Credentials Committee (Standing Orders, Article 8 and Part 3)

Fixed composition: one Government, one Employers' and one Workers' delegate.

Responsibilities:

- examination of the credentials, as well as of any objection relating to the credentials, of delegates and their advisers, or relating to the failure to deposit credentials of an Employers' or Workers' delegate;
- consideration of any complaint of Governments' obligation to pay for the expenses of their tripartite delegations or concerning delegates or advisers prevented from attending the Conference.

6.1.2. General Affairs Committee (Standing Orders, Article 7)

Fixed composition: 28 Government members, 14 Employer members and 14 Worker members.

Responsibilities: considers and reports on any matter referred to it by the Conference. These are usually matters which, due to their nature or the limited discussion they are expected to give rise to, do not justify setting up a full technical committee to deal with them (e.g. abrogation or withdrawal of standards; amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006); admission of new Member States).

6.1.3. Committee on the Application of Standards (Standing Orders, Article 10)

Open composition: unrestricted.

Responsibilities:

- (1) General discussion on the General Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR).
- (2) Discussion of the General Survey by the CEACR which concerns a different subject each year.
- (3) Discussion of cases of serious failure by Member States to respect their reporting obligations and their obligation to submit Conventions and Recommendations to competent authorities.
- (4) Measures taken by Member States to give effect to ratified Conventions. Based on the observations formulated in the CEACR report and taking into consideration certain criteria determined by the Committee, the Committee adopts at the beginning of the session a list of cases, generally 24, which are discussed individually. Following these discussions, the Committee adopts conclusions for each case in dedicated sittings.

6.1.4. Finance Committee (Standing Orders, Article 11)

Fixed composition: one Government delegate from each Member State.

Responsibilities: examines the programme and budget, the allocation of contributions among Member States, the audited financial statements requests for permission to vote from Members in arrears and other financial and administrative matters.

6.1.5. Drafting Committee ([Standing Orders](#), Article 9)

Composition: for each instrument submitted for review, up to three Government delegates or advisers, up to three Employers' delegates or advisers and up to three Workers' delegates or advisers, as well as the Reporter of the committee concerned and the Legal Adviser of the Conference.

Responsibilities: reviews the drafting of any instrument (mainly international labour standards but also solemn resolutions in the form of declarations) referred to it and ensures agreement between the texts of such instrument in the official languages of the Conference. Advises also on drafting questions that have been referred to it.

6.2. Technical committees

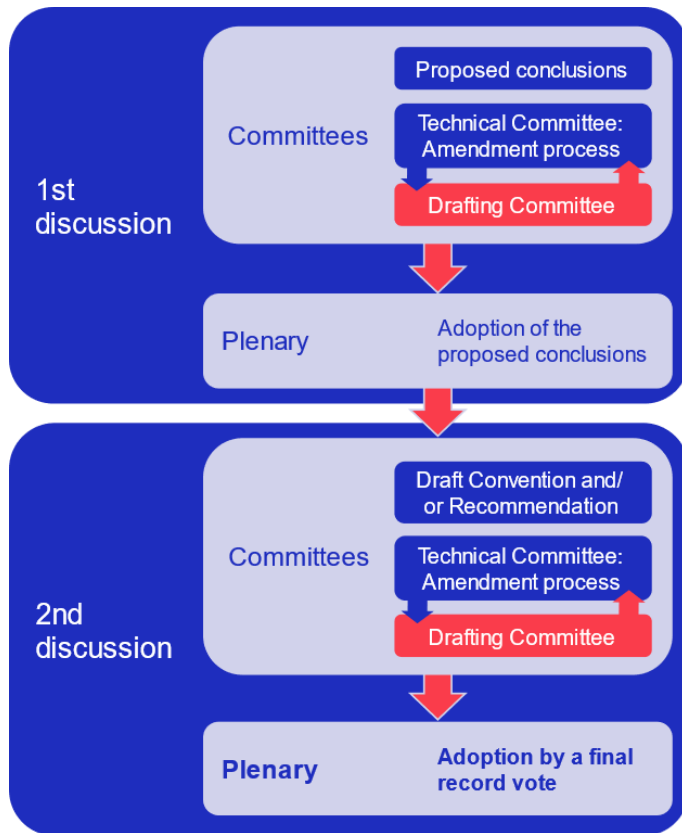
The Conference establishes committees to examine the technical items on its agenda. The number and purpose of these committees vary at each session of the Conference. These technical items can be for the adoption of an instrument (Convention and/or Recommendation) or for a general or recurrent discussion.

6.2.1. Standard-setting committees

The normal procedure for the preparation and adoption of Conventions and Recommendations is a double discussion – i.e. a proposed standard is discussed at two successive sessions of the Conference.

The first year, the discussion is based on the draft proposed conclusions set out in an Office report. The second year the draft instrument(s) form the basis of discussion. The Committee transmits the conclusions or the draft instrument(s), as amended during its discussion and after review by the Drafting Committee, to the Conference plenary for adoption. A two-thirds majority in a final record vote is required for an instrument to be adopted by the Conference (see [Manual for drafting ILO instruments: the Quick Guide](#)).

► Figure 4. Standard-setting process at the Conference



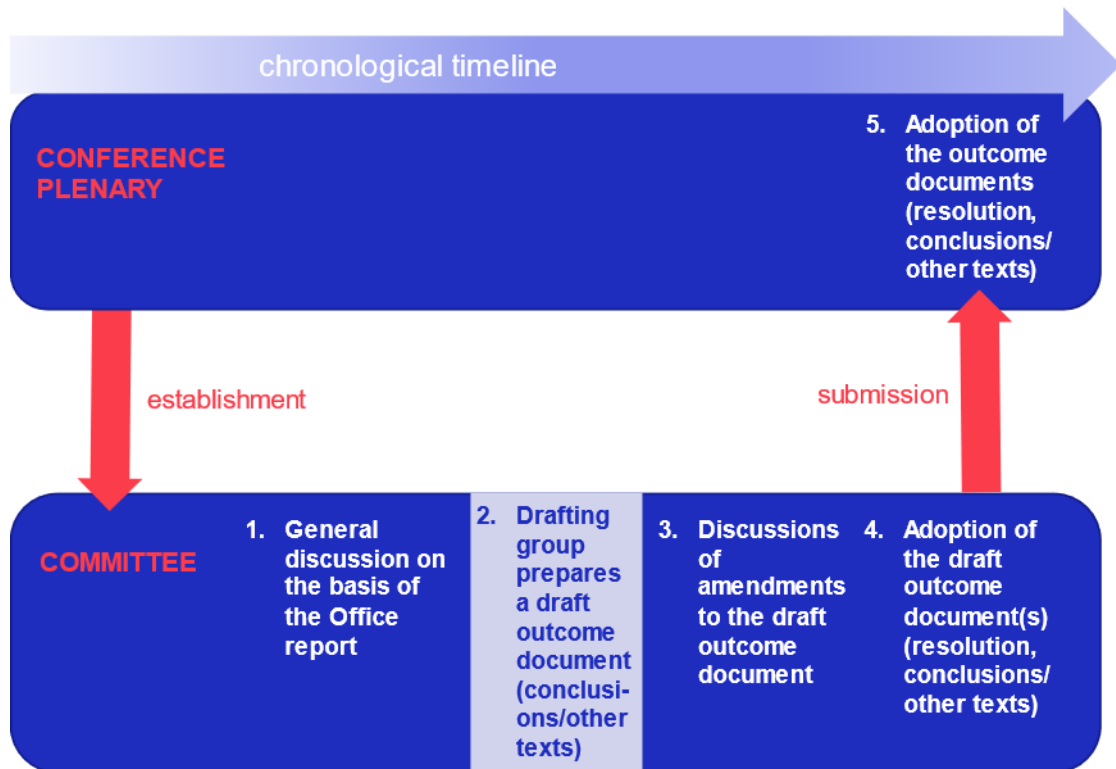
6.2.2. Other technical committees

Items placed for “general discussion” are also dealt with in technical committees. The usual procedure for such a committee is to:

- (1) hold a general discussion on the basis of an Office report;
- (2) appoint a tripartite drafting group to prepare a draft outcome document (draft conclusions or a draft resolution) on the question;
- (3) consider amendments to the draft text proposed by the drafting group and following its adoption by the Committee, refer it to the Conference for final adoption normally by a simple majority or by consensus.

“Recurrent discussions” introduced under the [ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization \(2008\)](#), as amended in 2022, are dealt with in a similar manner as general discussions.

► Figure 5. Work of a general/recurrent discussion committee



7. Decisions – Voting

The Conference makes every effort to take its decisions by consensus. Consensus is characterized by the absence of any objection presented by a delegate as an impediment to the adoption of the decision in question.

Voting in the plenary is required for certain decisions such as the adoption of new Conventions and Recommendations and the programme and budget. In committees, when a decision can only be adopted through a vote, votes are weighted so as to ensure that the group of Government members, the group of Employer members and the group of Worker members of the committee each have equal voting power.

The right to vote is suspended in the Conference plenary and in committees for delegates in the following cases:

Incomplete delegations (article 4.2 of the Constitution)	Arrears of contributions (article 13.4 of the Constitution, Part 8 of the Standing Orders)
If any Member State nominates only an Employers' delegate but not a Workers' delegate or vice versa the delegate who has been nominated (and their advisers or substitutes in committees) is deprived of the right to vote in the Conference and in its committees.	If any Member State is at least two years in arrears of its contribution to the ILO, the entire tripartite delegation of that country (Government, Employers' and Workers' delegates and advisers) is deprived of the right to vote in the Conference and its committees, unless the Conference , by a two-thirds majority, approves financial arrangements with the country concerned and permits its delegation to vote .