



## FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Implementation of the Sectoral Activities Programme: Progress report****Introduction**

1. This paper is in two parts. The first summarizes progress with the seven sectoral action programmes to the end of September and identifies some of the issues to be considered in the light of experience to date. An oral report of the outcome of the Sectoral Steering Groups' meeting on 29 October will be provided. The document prepared for that meeting, which provides information on each of the seven programmes and thoughts on lessons learned to date, will be issued as an appendix to this paper.
2. The second part looks towards the preparation of a sectoral activities programme for 2006-07. Proposals will be discussed and agreed by the Committee at its meeting in March 2005. A range of policy and practical issues will need to be considered when the Office presents proposals for consideration by the Committee at that time. To the extent they can be discussed at this session, they can be taken into account when framing a viable programme in March.

**Action programmes**

3. The scope of and participation in the seven action programmes were agreed at tripartite planning meetings in February and May 2004. Each meeting reviewed a strategy document for the new approach to the Sectoral Activities Programme and a sectoral background document on the concept of each action programme, proposed methodologies for implementation, a preliminary list of participating countries and options for evaluating each programme's success. Two programmes that were agreed at this time – agriculture and health services – differed from the original proposals.
4. Headquarters units also took part in an information and planning meeting and extensive discussions were held with field offices. The latter has led to a substantial integration of headquarters and field activities in several programmes, and to the essential support of ILO offices in the organization of national-level activities.

5. It took far longer to obtain government agreement and then ascertain national employer and worker counterparts than had been anticipated. Consequently, progress to date has been less than expected.
6. An internal task force comprising the programme managers within SECTOR meets regularly to share information and plan common activities. A resource mobilization strategy has been developed. Although it has not yielded substantial new resources, with the notable exception of the HIV/AIDS programme for the health services sector, it has helped to guide efforts to achieve better cost sharing and the integration of some of the action programmes with other ILO activities, such as the Decent Work Pilot Programme. Also, aligning some of the action programmes' objectives with existing ILO programmes (e.g. agriculture and HIV/AIDS) has enabled significant resource sharing. But, in the light of different pressing issues in different sectors, especially at the national level, this might not always be possible.

## Preliminary evaluation

7. Extensive consultations were both necessary and beneficial at the start of a new approach to sectoral activities. They contributed to ensuring constituents' support and ownership, but they led to delays in getting the programmes off the ground. At this stage of the biennium, where governments have declined to take part, it has been decided not to seek a replacement in view of the time that has elapsed and the delays inherent in getting started. Instead, the resources will be redirected to the other programme elements. The important lesson to be learned is that social dialogue and tripartism take time; short cuts are neither desirable nor acceptable as they would endanger consensus on design and implementation of what national sectoral activities are.
8. Although many in the planning meetings felt that the resources for each action programme were already small, there was still a strong wish to have a regional approach as far as possible. This has meant that, for the most part, four or more countries are involved in each programme. It remains to be seen what will be achieved – each has its own objective – but the number of countries in any future action programme should be carefully considered in order to maximize impact.
9. Notwithstanding, concern from the start about properly evaluating each programme's impact, benchmarks or indicators remain to be fully elaborated. The programme task force continues to examine this question.

## Summary

10. Despite delays in obtaining agreement on constituent participation and start-up operations via national steering groups in the action programmes' priority countries, steering groups are operating and concrete activities have begun in at least three programmes (agriculture, construction, textiles, clothing and footwear, and in certain components of the cross-sectoral HIV/AIDS programme, i.e. education, health and transport). Firm timelines for the first meetings of the majority of National Steering Groups (NSGs) have been tabled in at least two other action programmes (education, and hotels, catering and tourism) with sufficient advance planning in some cases to implement rapidly action plans decided at such meetings. One programme (financial services) has experienced the most difficulties in securing the necessary commitment by governments and social partners to its agreed methodology, no doubt a reflection of the unique "twinning" requirements which involve labour-sending and receiving countries. Backup measures have been taken to resolve these

difficulties in the shortest possible time so as to launch concrete work in at least two sets of paired countries.

11. The first nine months of the action programmes reflect the problems inherent in introducing any new programme, particularly on the scale initiated here. The critical period is ahead, when all programmes will need to demonstrate an accelerated process of establishing NSGs where they do not exist, and the implementation of planned activities leading to demonstrable impact on policy, organization, decent work conditions and sustainable social dialogue in the concerned sectors. To this end, the Office considers that the following steps would aid the process:
  - through rapid responses to any remaining questions, constituents represented in the sectoral steering groups facilitate the final establishment of NSGs and definition of their work in the form of consensus-based national action plans;
  - the Office – sectoral specialists, the action programme task force and closely identified units, especially those within the Social Dialogue Sector – identify and resolve remaining barriers to country commitments and start-up operations so as to position programmes to make rapid progress delivering activities and outcomes useful to the tripartite constituents at national and sub-national level in programme countries over the next nine months;
  - the Office, supported by constituents, identify means of mobilizing additional resources to supplement regular budget funds for those programmes in need of such funding now and in the future; and
  - the constituents carefully evaluate and comment on overall programme direction and management, thereby assisting the Office to speed up quality programme delivery which meets constituents’ needs and the most pressing sectoral challenges in the year ahead.
12. The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues is invited to take note of the progress to date in the sectoral action programmes and to comment on lessons learned so far and implications for future programmes of this sort.

## Sectoral Activities Programme in 2006-07

13. In March 2005, the Committee will be asked to discuss and agree the programme of sectoral meeting and action programmes that will be undertaken in 2006-07. Clarification of several issues would greatly assist the Office in preparing a range of options for consideration.

## Rotation

14. At its 286th (March 2003) Session, the Governing Body agreed that the 22 sectors and the principle of rotation would remain for 2004-05. The maritime sector was not included in the list for 2004-05 in the light of the continuing special series of meetings. This situation has not changed and it is proposed not to include it in the sectors that form the focus of activities in 2006-07. The questions of the 22 sectors and rotation need to be resolved. If the 22 sectors were to remain and rotation continue in 2006-07 or beyond, the 11 sectors for consideration in the next biennium are:

- chemicals;
- commerce;
- food, drink and tobacco;
- health services;
- mechanical and electrical engineering;
- mining (coal; other mining);
- oil and gas production; oil refining;
- transport (including civil aviation, railways, road transport);
- postal and other communication services;
- public service; and
- utilities (water, gas, electricity).

15. If there is to be a change in the sectors and/or the principle of rotation, it will affect the preparation of proposals.

## Activities

16. Another issue is the type of activities and their cost. This biennium has comprised a mix of seven action programmes and four meetings of different sorts (traditional, small and short, meetings of experts). It is clear that traditional tripartite meetings of 20 or so employer and worker participants are much more expensive in terms of travel costs and allowances paid to delegates than was the case in the past. Estimates for the current meetings are almost 50 per cent more on average than in the previous biennium. This has meant that the cost of holding a typical sectoral meeting is significantly more than the budget of each current action programme. Smaller, shorter meetings are generally less expensive than action programmes. Moreover, for 2006-07, the allocation for meetings and action programmes has been cut by a total of about US\$108,000 (each action programme in 2004-05 had a budget of US\$157,500, with that for HIV/AIDS having a budget of US\$175,000).

## Questions

- Might there be scope for combining some sectors (initially just for 2006-07) for a meeting or an action programme, if similar issues could be discussed?
- Should there be a thematic approach to sectoral activities, taking into account the major thrust of the Office's activities as a whole? If so, what could it be and which sectors could be combined to address one or more themes?
- Could a sectoral meeting be a precursor to another ILO activity such as standard setting (e.g. leading to the revision of several chemicals-related Conventions into a Protocol to the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170))?
- Should the average size of "typical" sectoral meetings be reduced to 15 employers and workers or less and/or the meeting length reduced? For example, the transport

equipment meeting in January 2005 is for three days with ten participants from each of the social partners. It will be possible before next March to assess whether this type of meeting could be a model for the future.

- Should the outcomes from traditional sectoral meetings held in Geneva be other than conclusions and resolutions?
- Should there be fewer activities altogether in the next biennium in order not to spread the available resources too thinly? If so, for which sectors or combinations of sectors?
- Should some of the current action programmes be continued or expanded instead of undertaking new activities?
- If not, what should happen to the existing action programmes given that the amount on non-staff resources (normally used for follow-up activities) in 2006-07 is about half that for the current biennium?
- How can the preparation and implementation of action programme activities be accelerated?

***17. The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues is invited to give its views on the foregoing issues in the context of preparing proposals for a programme of sectoral activities in 2006-07 for discussion at the March 2005 session of the Governing Body.***

Geneva, 6 October 2004.

*Point for decision:* Paragraph 17.