INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

Governing Body

FOR INFORMATION

SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Developments in the United Nations and other international forums

Contents

Introduction

1. This paper is submitted each year to review the most significant developments in international forums of the previous year. It is not exhaustive, and is supplemented by more detailed information on the web site of the Bureau for External Relations and Partnerships. [1]

I. United Nations system

1. High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to review progress in fulfilment of commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2005 World Summit)

2. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005 [2] adopted an extensive Outcome Document which contains numerous commitments on key issues, including in particular its paragraph 47, which states:

> 47. We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies including poverty reduction strategies as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. These measures should also encompass the elimination of the worst forms of child labour as defined in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 and forced labour. We also resolve to ensure full respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work.

3. The World Summit and its follow-up are the subject of a separate paper before the Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization at the present session of the Governing Body.

2. United Nations General Assembly High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development (27-28 June 2005)

4. At its second High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development: "The Monterrey Consensus: Status of implementation and tasks ahead", [3] representing follow-up to the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development (2002), [4] the General Assembly reaffirmed their commitment to the Monterrey Compact. [5]

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[1] http://www.ilo.org/exrel .

[2] http://www.un.org/summit2005/ .

[3] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/HLD-2005.html .

[4] http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/exrel/events/ffd.htm and http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ .

[5] http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/HLD-President%27s Summary.doc .

3. Sixtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Autumn 2005)

5. The ILO participated in the ten-year review of the United Nations' World Programme of Action for Youth at United Nations headquarters in October, where employment was one of the eight core issues. The Secretary-General's report "Global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment" (A/60/133) was released in July. [6]

6. The ILO followed the work of the Second (Economic and Financial) and Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) Committees, as well as discussions on management issues in the Fifth Committee. Some of the resolutions adopted by the Committees are of particular relevance to the ILO and several explicitly mention the ILO. [7] These include:

Second Committee

- resolution on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence;

- resolutions on poverty eradication and women in development;

- resolution on women in development;

- resolutions on the eradication of poverty and globalization and interdependence.

Third Committee

- resolution on social development;

- resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. [8]

4. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

7. The ILO played a prominent role in the 2005 ECOSOC High-Level Segment entitled: "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: Progress made, challenges and opportunities". During the ECOSOC Coordination Segment, the ILO participated in a panel discussion on "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals: Improving the way the United Nations system works". [9]

8. The ECOSOC High-Level Segment in 2006 will have the theme of "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all and its impact on sustainable development".

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[6] http://www.developmentgateway.org/yen/rc/filedownload.do?itemId=1051645 .

[7] For the texts, see: http://www.un.org/ga/60/second/ and http://www.un.org/ga/60/third/ .

[8] A/C.3/60/L.53: http://www.un.org/ga/60/third/ .

[9] http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2005/index.html .

9. *Commission for Social Development.*[10] In February 2006 the Commission for Social Development, as part of its standing work on follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and WSSD+5, conducted a review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006).

10. *Commission on the Status of Women.*[11] The ILO held an information session on gender audits and co-sponsored two workshops during the Commission's meeting of March 2006, with global unions and with UNIFEM, and disseminated a document prepared especially for the review of women's employment – *Global trends and ILO responses.*[12] The ILO, along with UNDP, collaborated in the preparation of the UNIFEM 2005 report: *Progress of the world's women: Women, work and poverty*, launched in September 2005.[13]

5.   United Nations Security Council

11. In July the United Nations Security Council[14] adopted resolution 1612 (2005) on a comprehensive framework to address the protection of children affected by armed conflict,[15] based on a report by the Secretary-General.[16] In its resolution, the Council strongly condemned the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict, and welcomed the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict by the Secretary-General. The ILO participates in the inter-agency taskforce set up to consider this issue, and is involved in the follow-up mechanism, which will be reviewed by the Security Council in 2006.

12. Regarding a progress report by the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2005/86), the Security Council reaffirmed the urgency of finding lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups. It requested the Secretary-General to include in his next progress report practical recommendations on how best to tackle the problem of youth unemployment.[17] The ILO is closely involved in this work.

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[10] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/ .

[11] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ .

[12] See ILO web site: Link .

[13] http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=48 .

[14] http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm .

[15] http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2005.htm .

[16] S/2005/86: http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep05.htm ; A/58/546-S/2003/1053: http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep03.html .

[17] S/PV.5131 and S/PRST/2005/9: http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2005.htm .

6. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
(Second phase, Tunis, November 2005)

13. The ILO was represented at the Tunis phase of the World Summit. The Summit adopted the Tunis Commitment, [18] which acknowledged the relevance of information and communication technology to enterprise development and labour market policies:

> We emphasize that the adoption of ICTs by enterprises plays a fundamental role in economic growth. The growth and productivity enhancing effects of well-implemented investments in ICTs can lead to increased trade and to more and better employment. For this reason, both enterprise development and labour market policies play a fundamental role in the adoption of ICTs. We invite governments and the private sector to enhance the capacity of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), since they furnish the greatest number of jobs in most economies. We shall work together, with all stakeholders, to put in place the necessary policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that foster entrepreneurship, particularly for SMMEs. [19]

7. United Nations system Chief Executives Board (CEB)

14. At its spring meeting, executive heads discussed the United Nations system's approach to the 2005 World Summit, including the report of the CEB entitled "One United Nations – catalyst for progress and change: How the Millennium Declaration is changing the way the system works" which was a contribution of the system to the Summit. At its autumn meeting, CEB members discussed the implications of the 2005 World Summit outcome for their organizations.

8. United Nations Development Group (UNDG)

15. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) [20] remains the principal inter-agency forum for advancing the United Nations reform agenda on development cooperation and transforming policy decisions by the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the governing bodies of agencies into guidance for the United Nations system as a whole. UNDG's work in 2005 was particularly shaped by implementation of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, and by the World Summit Outcome Document. The work programme has focused on the role of the Resident Coordinator system, including the development of an accountability framework, linked to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) results matrix; on the simplification and harmonization of operational rules and procedures in line with national strategic frameworks; on monitoring and evaluation based on the MDGs and the goals and commitments of United Nations global conferences; and on such issues as working with civil society, mainstreaming human rights and gender, and the link between development and humanitarian affairs in special country situations. The ILO maintains its active participation in the UNDG and its specialized working groups.

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[18] http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/7.pdf .

[19] Paragraph 12: http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=2266|2267 .

[20] http://www.undg.org .

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9. UNEP Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (Nairobi, 15-17 January 2006)

16. The ILO was actively involved in the organization with UNEP of the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment (Nairobi, 15-17 January 2006), [21] held with the support of the United Nations Global Compact, the WHO, the ICFTU, the WCL, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (TUAC) and the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development (Sustainlabour). The Assembly discussed climate change and energy policies – mitigation and adaptation and their labour implications; chemical risks – hazardous substances in the workplace; trade union action for equal and sustainable access to resources and services; occupational, environmental and public health – asbestos and HIV/AIDS; corporate social responsibility and accountability.

17. The main goal was to reinforce the social and labour dimension of environmental conservation and sustainable development, to promote trade union action on the environment and sustainable workplaces, and to strengthen the relationship between trade unions, industry, other major groups, UNEP and other United Nations bodies to pursue the environment and sustainability agenda. The resolution adopted by the Assembly includes a number of references to opportunities for further action and follow-up by the ILO in cooperation with UNEP and the WHO. The ILO contributed papers and presentations on climate change and energy policies on mitigation and adaptation measures and their labour implications; chemical risks and hazardous substances in the workplace; trade union action for equal and sustainable access to resources and services, including access to water; occupational, environmental and public health – asbestos and HIV/AIDS campaigns; and corporate social responsibility and accountability.

10. Developments in other areas of interest to the ILO

18. *Indigenous and tribal peoples:* The ILO has actively participated in the work of the ECOSOC Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. [22] The International Decade of the World's Indigenous People concluded in 2004 with an assessment by the General Assembly of its achievements, and a second decade was launched for 2005-15. The mandate of the Working Group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to examine a draft declaration on indigenous rights [23] was renewed, and further efforts are under way to adopt a text after 11 years of discussion.

19. *Migration:* The Director-General continued his active involvement in the Geneva Migration Group (GMG); [24] the ILO hosted an extraordinary meeting of the Group in October 2005 on the humanitarian situation of African migrants in North Africa trying to reach Europe. At the Chief Executives Board (CEB), the Director-General participated in discussions on the effect to be given to the institutional recommendations of the report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). [25] The ILO was asked by the

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[21] http://www.will2006.org/ .

[22] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/4session/4session.htm .

[23] http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs9.htm .

[24] http://www.unhchr.ch/migration/gmg.htm .

[25] http://www.gcim.org/ .

CEB's High-level Committee on Policy to present a paper to its first session in February 2006 on reinforcing the effectiveness of the system's activities relating to international migration. The ILO is also participating in preparations for the UNGA High-level dialogue on International Migration to be held in September 2006.

20. *Social finance:* In the International Year of Microcredit (2005) [26] the ILO actively participated in multi-agency work to prepare the "Blue Book": *Inclusive financial sector development*, [27] and in May 2005 hosted a high-level policy dialogue on this topic in Geneva. This initiative is steered by UNDESA and UNCDF, and advised by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the IFAD, the ILO, the IMF and the World Bank.

21. *HIV/AIDS:* In July 2005 the ILO took over the rotating chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO) of UNAIDS for one year. [28] At its 26th meeting in New York in October 2005, chaired by the ILO Director-General, the CCO made recommendations for improved coordination at country level within the framework of the broad United Nations reform agenda. The meeting also agreed to put in place a joint United Nations system HIV/AIDS workplace programme.

22. The General Assembly decided in December to undertake a comprehensive review in 2006 of progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS of 2001, [29] involving a high-level meeting in June 2006 aimed at continuing the engagement of world leaders in a comprehensive global HIV/AIDS response.

23. *Disability:* The ILO continued to be actively involved in the elaboration of the draft comprehensive and integral international Convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

II.   The multilateral system

1.   International financial institutions: Annual Meetings (Washington, DC, 26-27 September 2005)

24. At the 2005 annual meetings [30] Paul Wolfowitz delivered his first statement as President of the World Bank. He considered that the time was ripe for action on the three fronts of aid, debt and trade. Most of his remarks were devoted to the World Bank's new "Africa Action Plan", designed to increase the rate of GDP growth in Africa, and to promote the World Bank's concept of "shared growth". Wolfowitz described the Plan as a "performance and results-based approach". At the International Monetary and Financial Committee, he underscored the continuing importance of conditionality, describing his stance as being one of "performance for assistance", but also "assistance for performance".

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[26] http://www.yearofmicrocredit.org .

[27] http://www.uncdf.org/english/microfinance/bluebook/pub/index.php?get_page=contents .

[28] http://www.unaids.org/en/Cosponsors/CCO/default.asp .

[29] http://www.un.org/ga/aids/coverage/FinalDeclarationHIVAIDS.html .

[30] http://www.imf.org/external/am/index.htm ; Communiqué: http://www.internationalmonetary fund.com/external/np/cm/2005/092505.htm .

25. Addressing the International Monetary and Financial Committee, the ILO Director-General drew attention to the link forged at the World Summit between Decent Work and development and the universal concern for fair globalization. This meant strengthening the link between growth and jobs and actively pursuing the goal of full employment. Highlighting the large projected increase in the global labour force in the coming decade, he emphasized the need to give full attention to global growth, investment and employment creation through a coherent policy approach and successful governance based on concern for social outcomes and decent work for all.

2. Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development (G24)

26. In its communiqué of 23 September 2005, [31] the G24 Ministers commented on global economic prospects, the Millennium Development Goals, debt relief, the medium-term strategic roles of the Bretton Woods institutions, policy support for low-income countries, trade, and the voice and representation of developing countries. They emphasized the lack of progress on the MDGs, calling for urgent action, drew attention to the plight of the heavily indebted poor countries, called for additional debt relief and welcomed the proposals made by the G8.

27. The ILO Director-General addressed the G24 meeting, stressing that to attain the MDGs by 2015, much more needed to be done. The inadequate creation of productive jobs was a cause for concern, and much greater attention would have to be given to Africa if the goal of poverty reduction was to be attained. A more balanced approach was needed to economic and social policies to integrate them more closely so as to increase competitiveness and productivity. [32]

3. Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference
(Hong Kong, 13-18 December 2005)

28. The ILO attended the WTO's Sixth Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005 [33] as an observer. An intense round of last-minute negotiations produced an agreement. Some progress was made on improving market access for cotton-producing countries in Africa, and an agreement was also made by the United States, the European Union, and Japan to eliminate export subsidies for their agricultural exports by 2013.

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[31] http://www.g24.org/09-05ENG.pdf .

[32] For the full text, see: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2005/g-24.pdf .

[33] http://www.wto.org/English/thewto_e/minist_e/min05_e/min05_e.htm .

III. Regional and other groupings

1. Group of 77 and China Second South Summit
(Doha, Qatar, 12-16 June 2005)

29. At the Second South Summit, Heads of State and Government welcomed the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and urged the General Assembly and other organs and bodies of the United Nations system to give full consideration to its proposals and recommendations with a view to helping make globalization inclusive and equitable for all the world's people. [34]

2. Assembly of the African Union: Fifth Ordinary Session (Sirte, Libya, 4-5 July 2005)

30. In their Declaration, [35] African leaders resolved to redouble their efforts to strengthen cooperation and joint activities to meet the MDGs by the target date; to enhance investment and development by promoting peace and security and creating a conducive environment by ensuring good governance through various measures. Other commitments relate to employment-oriented poverty reduction strategies, promoting the rural economy, agriculture and the private sector, and mainstreaming gender into national development strategies.

3. Fourth Summit of the Americas
(Mar del Plata, Argentina, November 2005)

31. Heads of State adopted the Declaration of Mar del Plata and a Plan of Action, each subtitled "Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance", [36] in which they pledged to put active policies in place to promote decent work as a means of combating poverty, including the elimination of forced and child labour by 2010; to reduce youth unemployment and significantly lower the percentage of young people that neither study nor work; and to eliminate discrimination against women at work.

4. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

32. The ILO participated in meetings of the OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSA), and its Working Parties on Macro-Economic and Structural Policy Analysis (Economic Policy Committee) and Employment; an OECD Poverty Net (POVNET) meeting on risk and vulnerability (16-17 November 2005); the OECD High-level Political Forum on Ageing and Employment Policy (17 October 2005); a Workshop on Building Awareness of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Region (Istanbul, 11-12 July 2005); and the OECD Forum of April 2005.

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[34] http://www.g77-doha.org/ .

[35] http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0001370/P1643-AU_Declarations_Sirte_July2005.pdf .

[36] http://www.summit-americas.org/NextSummit_eng.htm .

33. The ILO has also developed its links with the OECD's new Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development [37] through its programme on Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE). [38]

5. Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: OECD High-Level Forum on Joint Progress toward Enhanced Aid Effectiveness (harmonisation, alignment and results), (Paris, 2 March 2005)

34. In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, [39] adopted in February 2005, donors and developing countries agreed for the first time to use indicators and targets to measure their success in making aid more effective. This practical blueprint for donors and developing countries to monitor each other's progress involves some 50 commitments. Donors have agreed to base any conditions on aid to developing countries on the country's own poverty reduction strategy. In turn, developing countries, with the assistance of donors, agreed to reform national systems wherever necessary to improve their capacity to manage development resources.

6. The European Union

(a) Communication from the European Commission on the Social Agenda (Brussels, February 2005)

35. In its communication, the European Commission [40] endorsed the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and recalled its own proposals to make substantial progress in strengthening the social dimension of globalization. Through its Social Agenda the Commission seeks ways of benefiting from the exchange of experience between the European Union and its partners on the close links between economic progress and social progress, taking account of the impact of foreign trade on competitiveness.

36. The Commission also expressed the view that the promotion of decent work for all should be a world objective at all levels, considering that the goal of decent work is in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals, the commitments of the Copenhagen World Social Summit and economic governance.

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[37] http://www.oecd.org/department/0,2688,en_2649_33956792_1_1_1_1_1,00.html .

[38] http://www.ilo.org/dyn/empent/empent.portal?p_lang=EN&p_prog=S&p_subprog=WE .

[39] OECD: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf .

[40] http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_policy_agenda/social_pol_ag_en.html .

(b) ***Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Globalization, adopted by the Council of the European Union*** *(Brussels, March 2005)*

37. The Council expressed support [41] for the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, and stressed the positive benefits of globalization and their unequal sharing; noted the gender dimension of such inequality; highlighted the need for effective and transparent global governance of the process to prevent unbalanced outcomes and to promote sustainable development towards fully inclusive and equitable globalization; highlighted that better management of globalization calls for action by developed countries and by developing countries as well as by international organizations; and emphasized the role of the social partners and of civil society organizations in mobilizing actors with a view to better addressing the social dimension of globalization.

(c) ***European Parliament: Resolution on the social dimension of globalization***

38. In its resolution of 15 November 2005, [42] the European Parliament acknowledged the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, and stressed the importance of compliance with internal standards, including the ILO's core labour standards. The resolution includes extensive references to areas of ILO concern.

7. G8 Summit (Gleneagles, United Kingdom, 6-8 July 2005)

39. The main agreements reached at the Summit covered development in Africa and global climate change. The Chairperson's summary [43] reported on their discussions on how to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, especially in Africa. They welcomed the substantial progress made in Africa in recent years in terms of democratic elections, accelerating economic growth, and the ending of long-running conflicts; agreed with their African partners on their common interest in building on such progress to create a strong, peaceful and prosperous Africa; and agreeing on the action needed. The G8 agreed upon a comprehensive plan to support Africa's progress in recognition of the African Union's Sirte Declaration (see above, III.2), in particular, to provide extra resources for Africa's peacekeeping forces; to give enhanced support for greater democracy, effective governance and transparency; to help fight corruption and return stolen assets; to boost investment in health and education, to take action to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB and other killer diseases; to stimulate growth; and to improve the investment climate and to make trade work for Africa, including by helping to build Africa's capacity to trade and working to mobilize the extra investment in infrastructure which is needed for business.

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[41] http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/international_cooperation/docs/globalis_council_feb05_en.pdf .

[42] 2005/2061(INI): http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?TYPE-DOC=TA&REF=P6-TA-2005-0427&MODE=SIP&L=EN&LSTDOC=N .

[43] http://www.g8.gov.uk/ .

40. The G8 also agreed that all of the debts owed by eligible heavily indebted poor countries to IDA, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund should be cancelled, as set out in the finance ministers' agreement of 11 June 2005.

Geneva, 10 February 2006.

Submitted for information.