

**FOR INFORMATION**

SIXTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Guidelines for consultations with
the Bureaux for Employers' and
Workers' Activities****The context**

1. At its March 2005 session,¹ the Governing Body had requested the Director-General to develop clear guidelines for consultations and for facilitating the relationships between all departments and the Bureaux for Employers' and Workers' Activities, recognizing their unique role in presenting the priorities and views of workers and employers within the ILO. Subsequently, a representative of the Director-General had assured Committee members that they would be kept informed on the activities undertaken as a follow-up to the Committee's decisions.² It is in this context that these guidelines are being provided, for information, to the members of the Committee on Technical Cooperation.

Introduction

2. Since its foundation in 1919, the unique and defining characteristic of the ILO has been and continues to be tripartism. The ILO's ongoing contribution, (including cooperation with other international organizations), will, in the future as in the past, depend on carrying out its own mandate boldly and effectively.
3. Tripartism and social dialogue are not ends in themselves. They are tools to carry out the mission of the ILO. The role of ACT/EMP and ACTRAV is reaffirmed in the resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2002 where the Office is requested to "recognize the unique functions and roles of the Bureaux of Workers' and Employers' Activities in the Office and strengthen their abilities to provide services to employers' and workers' organizations".
4. ACT/EMP and ACTRAV work closely with the secretaries of their respective groups on nearly all of the issues of relevance to the groups. This is a central element of the role of the Bureaux serving as a liaison point with the groups, in particular, with respect to the relationship with the secretaries.

¹ GB.292/14(Rev.).

² GB.294/13.

5. The group secretaries, elected by their groups, also provide the other sustainable, year-round presence of employers' and workers' organizations with respect to the Office. Both Bureaux work closely with their respective secretaries, during meetings and throughout the year. The relationship of the Bureaux with the group secretaries underlines the importance of the advisory role of ACTRAV and ACT/EMP in the various committees of the Governing Body and the International Labour Conference. This is also the case for other meetings.
6. ACT/EMP and ACTRAV play a pivotal role in mainstreaming tripartism and social dialogue into the technical work of the Organization. They seek coherence between the priorities of the workers' and employers' groups and the work programme of the technical units in the Office. They can support the technical units in their work with constituents in the field.
7. The Bureaux are tools and resources to make the Office more responsive and work better. They are both sources of ideas and catalysts for action. The Bureaux are, at the same time, at the service of worker and employer constituents and of the broader Office. They therefore liaise with the secretariats in order to make sure that interests and priorities of the constituents find their way in all of the policies and activities of the Office. ACTRAV and ACT/EMP seek cooperation throughout the Office that will be sincere and effective and will improve the quality and impact of the work of the ILO.
8. In the report of its March 2005 Governing Body session, the Committee for Technical Cooperation dealt with tripartite influence and culture inside the Office beyond technical cooperation, and called for the negotiation of guidelines with ACT/EMP and ACTRAV to ensure that the views of employers' and workers' organizations were fully taken on board inside the Office.
9. This document seeks to respond to that request and is designed to ensure an effective involvement of social partners and for facilitating in a practical manner the relationships between all departments and units and the Bureaux for Employers' and Workers' Activities. It deals with five main areas: policy development, technical cooperation, regions, financial resources and ILO meetings. In all these areas, the Bureaux can provide access to research, know-how and expertise from constituents; focal points for consulting on policy papers; privileged access to constituents; network of field specialists; joint implementation; etc.
10. Over the last few years ACT/EMP and ACTRAV have made progress in learning to work with each other. To a certain extent it is hoped that this has provided the building blocks for a better Office-wide collaboration with the two Bureaux. A discussion would be appreciated with others on how the procedures outlined in this document can be implemented in a meaningful and productive manner. At a time when all departments are facing human and financial resource constraints, it is clear that early planning and consultation to determine priority areas of work will be more necessary than ever.

Policy development and implementation

Objective: Take full advantage of the Bureaux in order to ensure that social partners are effectively involved throughout the process.

11. The institutional tripartite governance and policy-making bodies meet for limited periods during the year. Being part of the Office, the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), strengthened by the political presence of the Groups' secretariats, are available to assist in the design, development and implementation of the tripartite mandate of the Office.

12. The strategic role of governments and employers' and workers' organizations in defining priorities is evident at the highest levels of decision-making. The Office as a whole is guided in its work by the policy direction set by the tripartite constituents in the Governing Body and at the International Labour Conference. Indeed, priorities are mandated by the Constitution, international labour standards, conclusions and resolutions adopted by the Conference, the outcomes of regional meetings and the decisions adopted by the Governing Body. The tripartite constituents are the principal decision-makers in terms of the policy and overall direction of the Organization, and social dialogue is seen as a delivery mechanism to achieve strategic objectives.
13. Several areas are involved in contributing to the quality of the work of the Office and ensuring that the concerns of the constituents are taken into consideration throughout the process.

WHEN

- I. Producing reports for the Governing Body and International Labour Conference.
- II. Selecting issues or topics for policy papers.
- III. Preparing key policy framework papers.
- IV. Developing materials for external use.
- V. Planning events.
- VI. Selecting priorities and topics for research.
- VII. Programming and designing activities.

WHY

- I. The Bureaux add views based on the policy elaborated by the groups.
- II. They help to ensure that work progresses more efficiently because documents and activities already reflect many of the concerns of constituents at the time that they are considered or carried out.
- III. Makes it easier for constituents to identify with programmes and policies developed by the Office from an early stage.
- IV. ACTRAV and ACT/EMP provide "entry points" for the social partners into the Office, but also facilitate entry of the Office into the world of work.
- V. All functions, measures and duties of the Office must be relevant and justifiable to workers' and employers' organizations, and governments. This is a reflection of the special and unique mandate of the ILO, which sets it apart from other international organizations.

HOW

- I. Effective involvement of the Bureaux at the time of the conception and design of policies, programmes, strategies and activities.
- II. Consultations on developing policies (what to do) and implementation (how to do it).

- III. In the case of reports and studies, the text should be made available to the Bureaux with adequate time to study it and, where necessary, consultation of the groups' secretariats. In case the author disagrees or does not find it possible to accommodate suggestions made by either of the Bureaux, the author should get in touch with the Bureau concerned and explain the reasons. This way a dialogue can continue and the reasons for certain actions are better understood.

Social partners' participation in ILO meetings/activities

14. Meetings and activities in the field are a crucial component for the implementation of policies adopted by the highest bodies of the Organization. In order to be truly effective they should be in almost the totality of the cases fully tripartite (if that does not happen, the reason has to be clearly stated).
15. The secretaries of the respective groups have the mandate to decide about the relevance of the planned activities (with the power to send back activities that are considered not pertinent) and to nominate participants in ILO regional and subregional meetings, as well as in sectoral meetings and expert meetings.
16. The secretariats liaise with the respective Bureau for implementation of decisions.

WHEN

- I. Any request for employers' and workers' participation in international, regional or subregional meetings, as well as sectoral or expert meetings, should be channelled to the secretaries of the employer and worker groups through ACT/EMP and ACTRAV, respectively.
- II. For national meetings, ACT/EMP and ACTRAV should be informed and consulted as regards social partners' participation.
- III. Employer and worker participation in tripartite evaluation teams, missions, etc.

WHY

- I. In line with their autonomy, employers and workers have the right to nominate their own representatives.
- II. According to the standing guidelines on submitting information on symposia, seminars and similar meetings to the Governing Body, organizing units should consult ACT/EMP and ACTRAV concerning the participation of employers and workers, before submitting the information on the planned meeting.

Technical cooperation

Objective: Better accommodation and integration of the priorities of donors and ILO constituents.

17. There is a clear need for capacity building for the tripartite constituents and, indeed, strengthening the capacity of the social partners is an integral part of the work programme of all sectors, both in terms of regular budget activities and technical cooperation. Tripartite partnership should not be considered an "add-on" dependent on finances, but rather seen as central to the effective implementation of the ILO's work programme.

Where limitations on specific issues are found within constituent organizations, the reasons behind this should be examined (e.g. maybe the issue is not addressing a real need) and, if necessary, the opportunity to build technical capacities should be addressed by the Office rather than seeking other partners for collaboration.

WITH WHOM

- I. Work should be with and through the tripartite constituents.
- II. Others, if need be, involved in technical cooperation should be following consultation and with the approval of the constituents, as stated in the resolution on tripartism and social dialogue.

WHY

- I. ILO is a tripartite institution and technical cooperation must reflect its mission, governance and structure.
- II. Technical cooperation at international, regional and national levels should reflect overall priorities and policies adopted by the Governing Body and by the International Labour Conference.
- III. ACTRAV and ACT/EMP, at all levels, with their knowledge of and close links with the constituents, can play an essential role in ensuring that work in this area responds to the needs of employer and worker constituents.
- IV. Priority efforts to address social partners' limitations or deficiencies will lead to stronger institutions and more sustainable, long-term results.

HOW

- I. Consultation with the social partners on key areas to be carried out at a very early stage when drafting proposals and throughout the operational stages of programmes. Technical cooperation should be close to and "belong" to all of the constituents. The Committee on Technical Cooperation is the place where priorities for extra-budgetary funding should be debated and decided upon.
- II. ACT/EMP and ACTRAV are effective and appropriate means to facilitate and carry out such consultation and cooperation from the beginning.
- III. Implementation of tripartite projects should be carried out in close cooperation with ACTRAV and ACT/EMP to ensure that unnecessary problems do not develop and that projects are both smooth and effective through the timely involvement of the social partners.
- IV. Involvement of social partners has proven to be useful in developing strategies and in putting technical cooperation in a larger context. Such involvement also ensures that projects remain fully tripartite.

Regions

Objective: To reflect constituents' priorities and ensure their ownership of programmes.

18. Employers' and workers' specialists are part of ILO teams in all but one of the subregional offices. In most cases, they play a role across the area of responsibilities of the offices and a greater interaction needs to be encouraged, as they are key interfaces between the employer and worker constituents respectively and the Office.
19. ACT/EMP and ACTRAV specialists in the field and their extensive networks of organized workers and employers give them a unique perspective that forces them to remain close to the reality of the world of work. In fact, they can facilitate access and interaction with constituents and provide bridges to an often harsh "real world".
20. The work of ACT/EMP and ACTRAV is relevant to all technical units and staff in headquarters and the field because they add balance and integrate the views of both workers and employers into the work of the Office.

WHEN

- I. Developing decent work country programmes.
- II. Selecting issues and topics and designing national, subregional and regional activities.
- III. Drafting or designing technical cooperation projects.
- IV. Planning allocation of resources.
- V. Implementing activities.

WHY

- I. Deep knowledge of the various actors operating in a country.
- II. Support for specific ILO work is not automatic from ILO constituents, particularly if they are not involved from the beginning. The risk should be avoided that the tripartite constituents are alienated from activities in which they must be involved if they are to be effective.
- III. To ensure that the tripartite constituents see the ILO as a coherent body taking on board their interests as they define and express them.

HOW

- I. Involving ACT/EMP and ACTRAV field staff in the tripartite consultation processes and in drafting the decent work country programmes.
- II. As ACT/EMP and ACTRAV are close to the constituents, early involvement can help ensure that the Office as a whole is close to the constituents. Design of programmes and full involvement in the agendas of meetings can avoid problems and misunderstandings by taking into account the views of the social partners.
- III. Because ACT/EMP and ACTRAV take into account the views of the social partners in their work programmes, they also provide an opportunity to further ILO objectives, particularly on a national basis. This includes follow-up to priorities identified in regional and subregional meetings.

Resource allocation and resource mobilization

Objective: Tripartism, from a financial point of view, should not be limited only to those specific actions for employers and workers (and captured in operational objective 4(a) but should be a major component of all ILO programmes.

21. The priorities of workers' and employers' organizations are not limited to concerns related to capacity building. The full range of ILO programmes are of interest to them.
22. At an early stage in the preparation of the programme and budget, all units and departments should take into consideration the concerns and priorities of worker and employer constituents in the specific technical area for which they are responsible. This should be true at the conception of the process and throughout all of the preparatory work. The Bureaux and the secretariats support the implementation of the decisions of the Programme, Finance and Administration Committee of the Governing Body in regards to the incorporation of the priorities of the social partners into the programme and budget.
23. Regular and extra-budgetary resources should serve the same ILO objectives. Extra-budgetary resources are vital and useful to the extent that they reinforce the work of the ILO and should always be considered in the context of its larger mission. They should, in particular, be used to strengthen tripartism and ILO constituents.
24. Although, in addition to their familiarity with employers' and workers' organizations, there is considerable expertise on a wide variety of subjects by the staff of the Bureaux. It is often necessary to call on experts with a profound knowledge of specific technical areas, whether those specialists are found in headquarters or in the regions. Such services and resources should not be reserved for governments only. In addition, other units in the Office should be open to shared efforts, including funding, in order to further the policies and principles of the ILO.
25. Extra-budgetary technical cooperation resources should not be seen simply as a way to provide additional resources for existing functions with no real *raison d'être*. Rather, they should be seen as opportunities to revitalize and stimulate viability and activity by constituents on the ground.
26. Work to support the activities of social partners by the ILO at national level is often only possible through the direct assistance of certain donors to ACT/EMP and ACTRAV or directly to workers' and employers' organizations. When identification of priorities has not taken place in full recognition of the views of the social partners in the ILO or, at times, even in the donor countries, the resulting programmes cannot be expected to correspond to the real needs and expectations of either constituents or donors.
27. The process of obtaining and using donor resources should be a creative and imaginative process that enables the Office to really achieve results and progress that would otherwise not be possible. And, the Bureaux should be fully involved in all aspects of the work. Tripartism, through various means, should be mainstreamed inside the Office.

WHEN

- I. Contacts are made with established and/or potential donors.
- II. Presenting ILO priorities to donors.
- III. Formal and informal meetings/reviews with donors are convened.

- IV. Internal ILO considerations regarding prioritizing submissions to donors take place.
- V. When proposals are being developed and reviewed at all stages of the process, including panel reviews under TC-RAM.

WHY

- I. Tripartism and sound industrial relations have no meaning without strong, capable and representative social partner organizations. Thus, adequate resources should be allocated for capacity building of workers' and employers' organizations.
- II. All of the activities and services of the Office and related means are to reflect the mandate of the ILO at the service of all three constituents.
- III. ACTRAV and ACT/EMP can help ensure that the overall resources contribute to the integration of the spirit of tripartism into all of the work of the Office.
- IV. The Office is increasingly dependent on extra-budgetary resources to carry out its mandate and mission. Thus, it is in the area of extra-budgetary technical cooperation where the need for an enhanced tripartite sensitivity is particularly acute.
- V. Many of the major donor countries recognize from their own experiences that strong, capable and representative social partner organizations are essential for sound industrial relations and thus equitable development.

How

- I. Include the two Bureaux in all formal and informal contacts/meetings with established and potential donors.
- II. Involve ACT/EMP and ACTRAV when developing and implementing TC-RAM proposals in the field and in headquarters to ensure that the views and interests of social partners are taken fully into consideration.
- III. Ensure that any "package" submitted to donors for consideration includes specific programmes that aim at strengthening the capacity of the worker and employer constituents. Such programmes are not necessarily tripartite.
- IV. Ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the involvement and strengthening of the social partners in all programmes/projects executed by departments/Bureaux other than ACT/EMP and ACTRAV.
- V. In order to facilitate points II and III above, involve and consult the two Bureaux in all internal donor-related business.

Geneva, 20 March 2006.

Submitted for information.