



30 April 2025

Standing together in solidarity – Update on recent events

Dear colleagues,

Greetings. We hope that you and your respective families are all well.

Around the world, the seasons shift — spring blooms in one place, monsoons roar in another, winter grips some, and rain nourishes others. The skies may change, and crises may test us, but nothing divides our spirit. Across every region and every climate, we, the union family of the ILO, rise each day with purpose, strength, and unity.

The past few weeks have tested us like never before. We have faced challenges that demanded resilience, energy, and unwavering solidarity. And together, drawing on our collective strength and deep commitment, we stand to answer that call. In the toughest moments, let's continue to stand stronger. In the face of the obstacles we are facing, let's move forward — together.

Because solidarity isn't bound by borders or seasons. It's who we are. And when we stand as one, we all rise.

Key Staff Union action points

- US funding cuts: Fighting for fair solutions for affected colleagues (severance, seniority, reassignment).
- Solidarity and the SUAF: Mobilizing support for those facing abrupt contract terminations.
- ILO Review Process: Ensuring transparency and staff voices in reforms.
- HRD/SUC Open forum for affected staff: Regular dialogues to address urgent concerns on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

US funding cuts

On 20 February 2025, the Staff Union's Annual General Meeting adopted Resolution 108 on the "Direct or Indirect Consequences for ILO Staff of the US Administration's Decisions in relation to Funding", which provides the mandate for the Staff Union in the current context.

The Staff Union negotiated with HRD a package of concrete measures to ease the transitions to the labour market of the 8% of ILO officials who are losing their jobs because of the withdrawal of US funds. This has been published only recently but was also a basis for our action, regarding termination conditions, support measures during the notice period and beyond, and measures to support as much as possible reassignment of colleagues, and ensure that the Office does not lose the expertise and talents.

The Staff Union activated a legal team to provide assistance, upon request, to individual colleagues who face such a difficult situation.

HRD/SUC Open forum for affected staff

Regular dialogue sessions to address urgent concerns are held every Tuesday and Thursday. A heartfelt thank you to the HRD team for organizing these valuable sessions, which have been incredibly informative and greatly appreciated by staff.

Solidarity and the SUAF

The sudden termination of US-funded projects, as announced by the Director-General, has had a devastating impact on more than 200 of our colleagues and their families – costing them not only their jobs, but also their salaries, health insurance, and a sense of security. In this moment of profound uncertainty and hardship, the ILO Staff Union Committee is calling on our shared humanity and solidarity to support those who have been hardest hit. Through the Staff Union Assistance Fund (SUAF), which relies on the voluntary generosity of staff, we aim to provide vital help – covering SHIF contributions, maternity care, and allowances for disabled children. Every contribution, no matter the size, can help ease the burden for our most vulnerable colleagues. Donations can be made via the SUAF bank account or directly at the Staff Union secretariat (Office 6-016) until 15 June 2025. Now more than ever, your compassion and support can make a meaningful difference.

Staff in need of assistance from the SUAF are kindly encouraged to reach out to the [SUAF Committee](#) so that we can work together to find the best way forward.

Townhall insights

At the DG's Townhall, staff raised critical concerns: the human cost of funding cuts, lack of gender balance in decision-making, and the need for equitable mitigation measures. While the Administration acknowledged challenges, we insist on concrete action – not just words – to protect jobs and uphold our principles.

ILO Review Process

As mentioned previously, Resolution 108 (on the “Direct or Indirect Consequences for ILO Staff of the US Administration’s Decision in relation to Funding”, which was adopted during the last Staff Union’s AGM) mandated the Staff Union to engage in negotiations regarding the consequences for staff, in particular if further restrictions would need to be implemented.

Based on that mandate, the Staff Union set up an ad hoc group with the objective of establishing its position with respect to the unprecedented crisis the Organization is facing and developing a set of (alternative) proposals for measures that might be required. The ad hoc group is composed of Staff Union Committee members and technical advisers who bring much needed technical expertise to the upcoming discussions.

The Staff Union has also launched its own consultation process in relation to the ongoing “ILO review: Building the future together”. The consultation is currently being carried out through the Union representatives, both at HQ and in the field.

As indicated under the launch of the ILO Review Process, the Staff Union has been invited to a process of regular consultations with the Review Team, which has begun with the hope for a constructive dialogue and, where needed, negotiations grounded in the principles of good faith bargaining.

The Staff Union firmly believes that:

- ILO Officials should not be treated as commodities and staff retention is crucial for the ILO to continue to deliver on its mandate.
- Cost-reduction measures proposed by the Administration should prioritize reduction of non-staff costs with transparency on the allocation of funds saved.
- The Staff Union also advocates for a “OneILO” approach – with measures that target ALL staff categories in a similar manner as per their needs, with no creation of additional privileges.

We stand in solidarity with colleagues affected and strongly encourage you to engage in the consultation process and make your views heard by discussing your recommendations for action with your Staff Union representative.

Below is an update on some events and actions in the regions, while acknowledging that there are unfortunately many others that are not mentioned but that are affecting colleagues on a daily basis. We reiterate that we are in solidarity with all our colleagues in these difficult situations.

Updates from the regions

Africa:

During last week’s virtual Joint Negotiating Committee session, we expressed our deep concerns to HRD about the challenges surrounding local staff recruitment in Africa. We highlighted serious issues including a lack of transparency in selection criteria, an outdated regulatory framework, and continued inaction by regional bodies. A detailed and evidence-based set of demands was submitted to the Director-General; however, we have yet to receive a formal response.

In light of this lack of progress, our region maintains a clear and firm position: unless meaningful changes are implemented swiftly, we will be compelled to withdraw from all recruitment panels and take coordinated action to advocate for a fair, transparent selection process.

Simultaneously, the abrupt termination of numerous local contracts due to US funding cuts – executed without notice or due process – has placed many colleagues in a state of extreme precarity, while also jeopardizing the integrity and impact of our field operations.

Americas:

Between uncertainty and conviction: What is at stake

The abrupt cancellation of key projects, affecting over 50 colleagues across the region, along with the exclusion of women from strategic decision-making, has brought us to a pivotal moment. This message is both a reflection on what has been lost and a reaffirmation of the principles we refuse to compromise.

In the face of uncertainty, we affirm our principles

Project cancellations and contract terminations have caused more than just job loss – they’ve disrupted lives, families, and futures. The impact extends to the communities we serve, compounding the sense of disorientation and loss.

In Mexico, Brazil, Lima (including Bogotá and Ecuador), Paraguay, San José, and Haiti, projects funded by USDOL and USDOS were abruptly halted, directly affecting 55 colleagues – 23 women and 22 men. In

Mexico alone, over half the staff were let go. These projects tackled critical issues such as child labour, forced labour, trafficking, migration, freedom of association, and labour rights in vulnerable sectors.

The emotional toll is widespread. Teams feel a profound void. Motivation has declined, and the human and professional bonds that sustained this work have been deeply strained. Recovery will take time, but even in this uncertainty, one truth remains: our work matters – deeply.

Gender equality is non-negotiable

We are alarmed that the new advisory group guiding organizational reform includes no women. This isn't a minor oversight – it's a serious step backward on one of our core values: equality.

Even more troubling is the suggestion that female inclusion might be mere political correctness. Gender equality is not about optics – it's about fairness, legitimacy, and quality. Especially now, when both women and men are contributing with vision and commitment, this exclusion is unacceptable.

The absence of women from such a pivotal group isn't a result of financial constraints – it's a choice. And if we're willing to compromise this principle in shaping the future of our Organization, what message does that send?

We continue to hold each other together

In times like these, solidarity is more essential than ever. We recognize the pain, the uncertainty, and the frustration – but we also recognize the strength of our community, the power of organizing, and the importance of standing together.

This message is not just about loss – it's a declaration of what we believe in: justice, equality, and dignity, lived through daily actions and collective care.

We will keep pushing for fairness, for representative spaces, and for meaningful change. To our colleagues most affected: we see you, we stand with you, and your contributions remain an indelible part of our journey.

Now more than ever, let's support one another and stay true to the values that brought us here.

Asia and the Pacific:

Staff contract termination Under US funding: A new kind of disaster in the Asian region

One by one, termination letters are being issued to staff affected by the US Government's funding cuts – impacting nearly 60 colleagues across Asia. Among the hardest hit are offices in Myanmar, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Jakarta, and Dhaka, where numerous initiatives focused on child labour, forced labour, gender equality, social dialogue and labour relations, are being abruptly halted.

Many of these colleagues have dedicated over a decade to advancing the ILO's mission and serving some of the most vulnerable communities. The termination of these projects is more than an administrative decision – it is a deeply personal loss. Each announcement cuts deep, halting not just employment, but a calling to serve. The Staff Union has opened its doors to provide support and consultation, but we know this can only ease part of the immense pain our colleagues are enduring.

In this critical moment, the role of Country Directors, HRD, and Regional Management is vital. Their active support in identifying alternative opportunities, mobilizing resources, and encouraging affected staff to

apply for other roles is deeply needed. We urge them to continue standing with our colleagues – and not to leave anyone behind. The Staff Union remains steadfast at their side.

In Myanmar, already battered by conflict and crisis, this is yet another devastating blow, with six more colleagues set to lose their jobs. We renew our urgent plea to prioritize funding and support for the ILO office in Yangon.

In Malaysia, the toll is equally stark – nine of 16 staff are facing termination, more than half the office. Elsewhere, colleagues wait anxiously for the outcome of the “USG 90-day review”, extended to 20 May. This includes staff in the Kiribati Islands under the MCC funding stream.

As a Filipino proverb says, “A pain in the little toe is felt by the whole body”. This sorrow is shared across our entire Organization. The atmosphere is heavy – with grief, with uncertainty, and with a deep sense of loss.

In 1969, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for creating international legislation ensuring certain norms for working conditions in every country”. In this moment of hardship, we hold on to that legacy and strive to continue realizing our mandate – through dignity, solidarity, and service to those who need us most.

Europe and Arab States:

Staff in the Arab States and Europe have also been severely affected by the recent cuts to US-funded projects, leaving several offices significantly diminished. The Staff Union is closely monitoring the situation – tracking affected colleagues, the terms of their contract terminations, and exploring any possible avenues for reassignment. Most of those impacted belong to the GS and NO categories, where opportunities for redeployment within the ILO are particularly limited. In the months ahead, close monitoring of recruitment and selection processes will be essential, especially in light of the mitigation measures agreed upon by the Staff Union and the Administration.

Our call to action

This isn’t just about contracts; it’s about lives, dignity, and our shared mission. As we enter May, let’s:

- Mobilize for solidarity on the 1st of May.
- Demand fairness in restructuring.
- Refuse to compromise on equality.

You are not alone. The Staff Union fights for every one of you. Together, we’ll turn this crisis into a catalyst for justice.

In solidarity.
