

Protecting the ILO's Identity and Staff Conditions in Times of Reform

The ILO is not just any UN agency. It is the only tripartite organization in the UN system, grounded in a Constitution that mandates it to promote social justice and decent work through social dialogue, standard-setting, and technical cooperation.

Reforms must strengthen — not erode — this unique model.



Major changes without guarantees

Document GB.354/INS/5, submitted to the June 2025 Governing Body session, outlines sweeping reforms:

- Merging of departments
- Downsizing of senior management
- Relocation of 25% of HQ Staff
- Creation of Global Service Centres
- Re-profiling and potential downgrading of technical posts
- Introduction of an "agreed termination" scheme
- Proposed alignment with the UN Common System on employment conditions
- Hot-desking and reduced office space to start with

What's missing?

There are no clear scenarios being shared with us related to various budget cuts. No transparent efficiency benefit analysis, no cost-benefit analysis. No transparent evaluation of how these measures would:

- Respect and protect the ILO's tripartite nature
- Save costs
- Improve efficiency and delivery
- Preserve technical quality and coherence
- Respect working conditions won through decades of social dialogue

MOUNTING RISKS TO DELIVERY AND STAFF WELL-BEING



- Voluntary terminations for any officials
- Generalists replacing specialists
- Broad, overextended portfolios
- External recruitment halted; only 1 in 5 retirees replaced
- 40% cut in consultants; 30% cut in travel

These measures will have major consequences on:

- Technical quality
- Institutional memory
- Staff workload and morale
- Delivery of the Programme and Budget
- Dismantling of the ILO as a centre of excellence
- for the World of Work

Decent work starts at home

“Aligning” with the UN Common system: The risk of a levelling down

Alignment with the UN system can expand on-going collaboration with UN sister agencies with complementary mandates, but it may also potentially:

- Erode the ILO’s independence and tripartite distinctiveness
- Pave the way for part of the mandate handed over to other UN agencies with no tripartite governance
- Imply future changes to contractual conditions without due process or full Governing Body debate
- Undermine the ILO’s ability to attract and retain specialized staff



Learning from experience of other UN Agencies

- Downsizing and decentralization led to weakened coordination
- Technical capacity was diluted through re-profiling
- Staff morale, mental health and delivery suffered
- Withdrawal from the ILO Administrative Tribunal – ending impartial access to justice

The ILO must not repeat these mistakes

ILO’s credibility starts with respecting rights in-house

The ILO cannot credibly promote tripartism, rights at work, and decent work globally while weakening those principles within its own institution.

A message to Governing Body members:

- ✓ Demand transparency and justification for all reforms
- ✓ Insist on formal impact assessments (delivery, governance, staff well-being)
- ✓ Defend the ILO’s independence from automatic alignment with UN-wide reforms
- ✓ Require all structural, contractual, or governance changes to be approved by the Governing Body
- ✓ Reject any weakening of staff rights, conditions, or access to justice (e.g. ILOAT)
- ✓ Defend the right of staff to meaningfully contribute to collective bargaining and other social dialogue mechanisms – based on access to data and analysis
- ✓ Not last-minute notifications as was the case with document GB.354/INS/5

What we call for



- ◆ **Transparency** – Publish cost-benefit analyses and efficiency-benefit analyses for each measure
- ◆ **Consultation** – Engage staff and constituents in a timely manner before irreversible decisions are made
- ◆ **Safeguards** – Respect procedures; the Staff Union is prepared to pursue all available mechanisms, including collective action and legal recourse, in case of violations of due process or staff rights
- ◆ **Reaffirmation** – That the ILO will remain distinct and tripartite in its structure and values

French version

Spanish version



**Let’s not quietly accept reforms that could erode what makes the ILO unique.
Let’s protect the values we stand for — inside and out.**