



The ILO in a changing multilateral environment – the Staff Union’s position on the Administration’s draft GB paper

The proposed reform will fail to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the ILO, will weaken the delivery of services to our tripartite constituents and will undermine the ILO’s constitutional mandate. As such, it should not be supported by the Governing Body.

1. Case for intervention

The proposed measures are not the result of genuine consultations or a process of social dialogue with the Staff Union. The Administration did not only disregard established principles of social dialogue (contrary to the values and principles that are the backbone of the ILO) but through that it also deprived the reform process of expertise and insights exactly from those most capable of identifying efficiency improvements – the staff itself.

The ILO's constitutional mandate to promote social justice worldwide is placed at risk by the proposals and in particular the proposed restructuring of the policy portfolio in the current circumstances. The proposed centralization threatens the independence of technical expertise that underpins the ILO's impartiality. The proposed structure seems to sideline the Organization's substantive work in favor of administrative convenience, leaving it more exposed than ever to political interference at the expense of the ILO’s core mandate and its tripartite constituents. It also reflects a very unbalanced vision of the ILO of the twenty-first century, when most of the ILO staff and operations are in the field.

The draft GB paper falls markedly short of the level of quality ILO staff is expected to deliver on outputs of similar nature and demonstrates limited understanding of the Organization and its functioning it purports to reform. The proposed reform lacks clear vision for the future of the Organization; adequate justification, financial or strategic; and any rigorous analysis, including proper and transparent costing and necessary risk assessment. It reduces effectiveness and efficiency measures to an overtly HQ centric and simplistic cost cutting exercise also without clearly demonstrating any benefits to the constituents themselves.

2. Key Messages

- Staff is NOT against change, and the Staff Union strongly supports proposals related to field strengthening if those are developed in full consultation with staff and the Staff Union.
- The proposed relocations (be it to the field, including DC-funded staff, or to Turin) and the establishment of the global service centre in their current form will lead to the fragmentation of the

Organization with considerable loss of technical expertise, risk to the oversight functions¹ and lower value of the services to constituents.

- The proposed measures lack both necessary risk assessment and mitigation strategies and fail to clarify the criteria for selecting individual staff, units, or departments for relocation, as well as the legal foundation for their implementation. (ILO Staff Regulations, CBAs, IGDSs, JNC guidelines etc.)
- Management has failed in its duty of care towards staff, and the proposed measures are devoid of a human-centred perspective. There is no evident consideration of the significant negative effects of the proposed measures on staff and their families, nor any meaningful effort to mitigate them.
- The proposed measures focus solely on staff-related changes and costs, with no consideration given to improvements in business processes or the integration of technologies (such as AI) to enhance operational efficiency.
- The proposed reform closely mirrors the failed one implemented at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) by the ILO's current DG with its over-ambitious scope and scale carried out without feasibility study, under highly compressed timelines and through centralized decision-making processes without thorough oversight mechanisms.

3. Calls to Action

The Staff Union reaffirms its commitment to genuine, evidence-based reform founded on transparency, human-centered approach, phased implementation, and meaningful staff participation. We urge the Governing Body members to engage in substantive dialogue on these critical concerns with the Director General before any irreversible decisions are taken and call on Management to the following actions:

1. Stop and reflect and halt all relocations and structural changes.
2. Carry out transparent, thorough, participatory and objective cost-benefit and efficiency analyses together with risk and feasibility studies.
3. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of alternative, less disruptive cost saving measures that prioritize non-staff-related costs.
4. Unequivocally commit to and ensure genuine, meaningful and good faith social dialogue with the Staff Union, including the process of collective bargaining as established under the Recognition and procedural agreement signed between the Office and the Staff Union.
5. Establish robust oversight by the Governing Body with respect to the reform process and guarantee full transparency regarding the ILO's financial situation and all cost and efficiency analyses.

4. Contact

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¹ The text “risk to the oversight functions” was added on 25 September 2025, subsequent to the publication of the original version of the present document entitled “The ILO in a changing multilateral environment – the Staff Union’s position on the Administration’s draft GB paper”.