



16 October 2025

Fifth Global Meeting of the ILO Staff Union: United in Defending Staff Rights Amid Uncertainty

Dear colleagues,

The Fifth Global Meeting of the ILO Staff Union took place in Geneva from 6 to 10 October 2025, bringing together staff representatives from all duty stations. This was our first in-person global gathering in ten years, and it came at a critical moment as the Organization faces significant financial uncertainty and ongoing UN reform processes.

Why This Meeting Mattered

The meeting opened with an address from Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo, who outlined the financial pressures resulting from delayed contributions by key Member States. In response, Staff Union representatives from across all duty stations reaffirmed our commitment to solidarity, and the urgent need to protect employment and working conditions and staff rights during this challenging period.

What We Achieved and What Remains to be Done

Delegates reviewed significant progress made in recent years, including advances in:

- Flexible work arrangements;
- Enhanced parental leave policies;
- Disability inclusion measures;
- Occupational safety and health protections;
- Mental health support initiatives;
- More equitable recruitment practices.

However, representatives also identified persistent inequities that require immediate attention:

- Unfair treatment of staff on development cooperation contracts;
- Gaps in job security and mobility opportunities;
- Inconsistent policies between headquarters and field offices;
- Lack of transparency in implementation of HR policies.

Union representatives made clear that **all staff, regardless of contract type or duty station, deserve fair and transparent treatment.**

Our Position on Budget Cuts and Organizational Changes

A significant portion of the meeting focused on the Organization's financial outlook and the potential impact of proposed budget reduction scenarios. The Staff Union adopted the following positions:

- **Good faith social dialogue (including collective bargaining) and transparency is non-negotiable** – Any proposed changes must be discussed with staff representatives through proper good-faith social dialogue, not decided behind closed doors;
- **Phased implementation is essential** – Sudden, drastic changes put staff livelihoods at risk and undermine organizational stability;
- **Governing Body oversight is required** – Major decisions affecting staff must have proper oversight and accountability mechanisms;
- **Commitment to decent work principles should also apply to ILO staff** – Financial constraints cannot become an excuse to erode fundamental rights within the very organization mandated to promote them globally.

Preparing for the Future of Work

Beyond immediate financial concerns, the meeting addressed longer-term challenges: how artificial intelligence, climate change, and shifting geopolitical dynamics will reshape work and the ILO itself and questioned how to maintain the international civil servant's neutrality in these critical periods and consider the impact on mental health and well-being of staff.

Delegates called on the Organization to lead by example through:

- Proactive capacity building for all staff;
- Just transition measures for those affected by technological change;
- Policies that safeguard staff well-being and dignity in an era of transformation.

Moving Forward: Our Commitments for the Next Five Years

The meeting concluded with the adoption of a resolution, a vision and mission statement and a strategic direction to guide Staff Union activities through to 2030. Our key commitments include:

1. **Defending staff rights through collective action** - We will continue to organize, mobilize, and stand together to protect the rights and working conditions of all ILO staff.
2. **Demanding genuine good-faith social dialogue** - We will not accept decisions made without good faith social dialogue. The Administration must engage meaningfully with staff representatives on all matters affecting our working conditions.
3. **Ensuring transparency and communication** - We will push for transparency and clear, consistent communication between headquarters and field offices, and accountability in implementing policies that affect staff.
4. **Holding leadership accountable to decent work principles** - The ILO cannot credibly promote decent work globally while failing to uphold these principles for its own workforce.
5. **Preparing staff for future challenges** - We will advocate for training, support, and fair transitions as the world of work and our organization evolves.

What This Means for You

[The resolution](#) adopted during this meeting represents the collective voice of staff representatives from all duty stations. It will guide how the Staff Union engages with the Administration on critical issues over the coming years.

We want to be clear: ***“Financial uncertainty must not be used as justification to undermine staff rights, bypass proper consultation processes, or make decisions that affect your livelihood without your voice being heard”***, says Daniel Bertossa, General Secretary of Public Services International (PSI).

The Staff Union will continue to:

- Monitor developments closely.
- Demand transparency from the Administration.
- Consult with staff on major proposals.
- Negotiate on your behalf with your interests at the forefront.
- Keep you informed of significant developments.

Your Voice Matters

The strength of the Staff Union lies in the active participation and support of all ILO staff. We encourage you to:

Stay informed about developments affecting staff, engage with your local staff representatives, share your concerns and perspectives, stand in solidarity with colleagues across all duty stations.

In these uncertain times, unity is our greatest asset. United we bargain, divided we beg.

In solidarity,

The ILO Staff Union Committee
