

# Guide to the International Labour Organisation

BIGMUN 2018

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## 1. What is the International Labour Organisation (ILO)?

The ILO was originally part of the League of Nations, the forerunner to the UN, and is the oldest organ within it. After World War 1, it was created as a part of the Treaty of Versailles. This reflected the belief that only through social justice and international cooperation could the world remain at peace.

Operating through three main bodies (the International Labour Conference, the Governing Body, and the International Labour Office) the ILO aims to *“ensure that it serves the needs of working women and men by bringing together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes.”* – ILO website (<http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/lang--en/index.htm>). Be aware that how the real ILO functions is not the exact same way as it functions during BIGMUN.

This is achieved through the unique tripartite system that is the heart of the ILO, where, as stated, workers, employers and governments meet on equal terms to discuss how to best protect workers, economies, and businesses from the risks, dangers and unfair systems centred around labour.

## 2. The Tripartite System

The ILO's perhaps most essential quality is its tripartite system. Social dialogue is an integral and important part of freedom and democracy. It ensures that all are able to work and fight for better labour standards, and that although parties may disagree on certain topics, mutual understanding can be reached.

On the other hand, as well as being a symbol of cooperation and progress, the nature of the tripartite system generates a unique format of engaging in MUN debate. It is natural that governments, employers, and workers all will have different agendas. By placing representatives of these different factions together in a room, dispute is inevitable. Delegates must keep this in mind at all times during the conference, since they ultimately set the tone of the committee. The Presidents will, of course, attempt to steer the debate in the right direction, but Delegates are very much responsible for the outcome. Imagining the power and relationship dynamics between, for example, a government official and union member, or a businessman and a union member, will help Delegates understand the special nature of the ILO.

## 3. Expectations for the conference

Due to the unique composition and many interlocking motivations of the parties involved in the ILO, work in the committee is going to be characterised heavily by freer debate and lobbying. Due to the highly fragmented interests of the many parties involved, much of the debating will centre around explaining and debating how the topics at hand will negatively

or positively affect Delegates' specific interest group, and what provisions must be taken to protect their interests.

It will hence be crucial for Delegates to consider how they may find common ground with other Delegates and their interest groups. Will they form coalitions along lines of their own party, workers with workers and employers with employers? Will they come to an agreement with the relevant opposition parties civilly, or will they be fiercely competing, vying for the government Delegates' favour to win their case? Will labour unions clash or cooperate with the Delegates of their mother countries? Will workers and employers of non-overlapping sectors work together to outmanoeuvre a common enemy?

Important to note is that ILO conventions (elaborated upon later) are only binding for those wishing to sign, meaning that no entity is within the ILO without believing it to have some merit. Even employers are not opposed to agreeing to some propositions which would restrict them to some extent, as the alternative to this might be strikes or even harsher national-level legislation being imposed in the future. Worker organisations may threaten with any such notions, should they feel their voices are not heard, just as the employers may threaten with lockout, movement of factories or the like. The ILO is about negotiation, not trampling.

#### 4. Participating representatives

Employer organisations:

1. Hitachi
2. General Motors
3. Siemens
4. Banco Bradesco
5. British Petroleum
6. Sasol
7. Eni S.p.A.
8. Industrial and Commercial Bank of China

Worker organisations:

1. General Confederation of Labour
2. United Voice
3. United Steelworkers
4. Confederation of Mexican Workers
5. Eastern Africa Farmers Federation
6. International Transport Workers' Federation
7. Indian National Trade Union Congress
8. Public Services International

Countries:

1. Germany
2. US
3. UK
4. China
5. Japan
6. Russia
7. India
8. Australia
9. Brazil
10. South Africa
11. DRC
12. Saudi Arabia
13. Canada
14. Mexico
15. Italy
16. Singapore
17. Mexico
18. Nigeria

## 5. Conventions

An ILO convention is the central point of debate during session. Generally, ad-hoc Resolution procedure – starting debate with a blank resolution to which Clauses are added one-by-one through amendments – will apply directly to ILO conventions. Note that ILO conventions work like treaties, contracts which countries sign.

The convention's equivalent to Operative Clauses are Articles. An Article is a description of a commitment a country which signs the convention must strive to uphold. The Articles can be phrased very bindingly (using words such as "must") but can only dictate the actions of those that sign the convention. It is possible for a convention to pass, but only a section of the country Delegates signing it. Making a strong convention is hence not only about passing the convention, but also ensuring that many countries will sign it.

Examples of Articles have been shown below:

They can describe an obligation of signatories:

(C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98))

### *Article 3*

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Machinery appropriate to national conditions shall be established, where necessary, for the purpose of ensuring respect for the right to organise as defined in the preceding Articles.

Specify terminology or extent of other Articles:

(C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102))

### *Article 21*

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The persons protected shall comprise--

- (a) prescribed classes of employees, constituting not less than 50 per cent. of all employees; or
- (b) all residents whose means during the contingency do not exceed limits prescribed in such a manner as to comply with the requirements of Article 67; or
- (c) where a declaration made in virtue of Article 3 is in force, prescribed classes of employees, constituting not less than 50 per cent. of all employees in industrial workplaces employing 20 persons or more.

And discuss meta-aspects of the convention and its circumstances:

C117 - Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117)

### *Article 18*

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- 1. This Convention shall be binding only upon those Members of the International Labour Organisation whose ratification have been registered with the Director-General.
- 2. It shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General.
- 3. Thereafter, this Convention shall come into force for any Member twelve months after the date on which its ratification has been registered.

The Articles do not need to be phrased beginning with BIGMUN OC opening phrases  
(Encourages, decides etc.)

The articles can have several sections, denoted as follows:

1. First section
2. Second section

The sections can have sub-sections, denoted as following:

- (a) First sub-section
- (b) Second sub-section

Which in turn may have their own subsections, called undersections:

- (i) First under-section

(ii) Second under-section

To be inspired as to the structure of conventions, please browse through ILO conventions found here:

<http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm>

After the conventions have been discussed, and if they are to be passed by majority vote, each country will decide whether to sign them. **All delegates, country, employer or employee may vote for any motion or the passing of any amendment or resolution.** However, only country Delegates may sign the convention, as it is their countries which will have to obey and enforce its standards. If a country accepts the terms, and the conventions are voted into acceptance, this is considered the standard cause of action.

By signing a convention, a country agrees to adopt its principles in national law, follow them, and report annually on its application. For countries that violate ratified conventions, complaint procedures can be initiated against them and may result in the use of article 33 of the ILO convention: "*[i]n the event of any Member failing to carry out within the time specified the recommendations, if any, contained in the report of the Commission of Inquiry, or in the decision of the International Court of Justice, as the case may be, the Governing Body may recommend to the Conference such action as it may deem wise and expedient to secure compliance therewith.*" This article has only been applied once in ILO history, although more than a dozen complaints have been filed.

## 6. Debate procedures

Normal MUN ad-hoc procedure applies for ILO. However, a few more motions are entertained and expected to be used:

### Motion to engage in a moderated caucus:

Due to the unique nature of the ILO, it can be very useful to engage in a freer form of debate. This motion seeks to achieve this. Delegates will often be encouraged to make this motion by their Student Officers but may also propose it independently. When proposed, it can specify what the caucus' focus is to be (phrasing, effect on certain industry, certain aspect of topic etc.). If it passes, the Student Officers will allocate time for this moderated caucus.

Frequently, a wealth of information regarding the agendas of many different Delegates and their opinion on the broad topics at hand needs to be conveyed in a short amount of time which will not be achievable through speeches.

When in moderated caucus, Delegates raise their placards to make motions or points. However, speeches are not entertained, instead, the Student Officers accept comments. A Delegate makes a comment simply by standing up and stating a brief point or posing a brief question. They do not need to address the house or take the podium for this. Each commentator will have one minute to state their point and will then be asked to finish it promptly by the Student Officer. If they do not do this in the few following seconds, they will be cut off by the Student Officer.

A Delegate with time left in their comment can declare that they wish to yield the rest of their time to another Delegate. This can be a display of solidarity, if they believe this Delegate can add something to the debate or, most importantly, if they have asked another Delegate a direct question and would like them to answer. If this is approved by the Student Officers, the chosen Delegate can accept or reject the rest of the offered speaking time to continue the comment.

Large parts of the time in session is expected to be in moderated caucus. However, the rest of the debate will still be covered in standard procedure.

#### Motion to extend/shorten the moderated caucus

If Delegates find that there is much more to be said in a moderated caucus or that there is some more value to be found in it, they can set forth this motion. If confirmed by Student Officers and backed by at least two seconds and no objections, the Student Officers extend or shorten the caucus to the extent that they find in the interest of the debate. The Delegate may make a suggestion in proposing the motion, but it is ultimately under the discretion of the Student Officers.

#### Motion to extend commentary

If a Delegate runs out of commentary time, they can make a proposal to the Student Officers to prolong their time. This should only be used if the Delegate has a relevant conclusion building up and the Student Officers are confident that they will reach it soon or if the Delegate has had unrealistically little time to make their point, e.g. if they were yielded half of another Delegate's time to answer a question. This motion cannot be objected to and does not need seconds. As long as the Student Officers agree to it, it passes. The Student Officers extend the commentary to the extent that they find in the interest of the debate. The Delegate may add a suggestion to the motion, but it is ultimately under the discretion of the Student Officers.