



International
Labour
Organization

- ▶ **Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to Prepare for the Work of the International Negotiating Committee to Develop an International Legally Binding Instrument on Plastic Pollution, including in the Marine Environment, Dakar, Senegal, 30 May-1 June 2022**

Statement by the International Labour Office

Enterprises Department (ENTERPRISES); Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE); Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR); Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV); and Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP)

▶ 1. Tacking plastic pollution with decent work and a just transition for all

Key messages

- The internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, should deliver the goals and objectives of a circular economy approach. This means taking into account the full life cycle of plastics. A new instrument should view environmental sustainability in an integrated way, paying equal attention to environmental, economic and social dimensions.
- Decent work should be a priority in order to create green, safe and healthy jobs. This will enable Member States to create an equitable world of work and resilient societies. In this regard, a systemic approach is required to implement a just transition through social dialogue involving the representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations at all levels, including at sectoral level.
- Developing a new instrument and its implementation must fully respect social dialogue in all processes. It should provide a roadmap for countries to develop comprehensive just transition programmes in national action plans to adequately tackle plastic pollution while promoting decent work and advancing social justice.

Background

- Plastic has become the workhorse of the modern economy and is found in all aspects of modern life, including the world of work. While providing significant benefits, the current production, including extraction, use, and disposal of plastics has many drawbacks.
- Plastic production includes numerous hazardous chemicals that can affect workers' health and safety as well as their well-being, with evidence linking exposures to cancers, birth defects and damage to immune, endocrine and reproductive systems.
- Millions of women and men work in the plastic industry, through its entire value chain from production to transformation, collection and recycling, in sectors such as oil and gas, petrochemical, and industrial chemical industries and are potentially exposed to hazardous chemicals used to make plastics, as well as plastic particles themselves. It must be noted that workers may be exposed to occupational safety and health (OSH) risks without their knowledge, as chemical components of plastics do not often appear on plastic product labels or safety data sheets.
- The handling of plastic waste remains largely part of the informal economy in many countries, where OSH regulations and social protections are limited or non-existent and workers face many decent work deficits, including hazardous work conditions, discrimination, violence and harassment, low earnings, long working hours and poor social security.
- Plastic waste impact sectors differently. According to a UN report: *Addressing marine litter and microplastics – UN system-wide contributions*¹, the impacts of litter – particularly plastic litter – on biota have been frequently reported. Many species are affected by the ingestion of litter, especially plastics, and there is an increasing concern that along with plastics, animals could be ingesting persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and toxic compounds, leading to impact on fish stocks through

¹ https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/UNEP_EMG-REPORT_Marine-Litter-Microplastics.pdf

the food chain and ultimately risks for wildlife and humans. Multiple effects of microplastics on fisheries and aquacultures, including on food safety, have been recorded.

- In addition to environmental impacts, lost and discarded fishing gears have significant socioeconomic impacts on both fishers and the broader community. Lost gears are hazardous to ship navigation and safety at sea, and there are significant costs for removing entangled gear from propellers or engines, repairs, fuel, loss of earnings, and for rescue services required when it causes breakdown. Bringing together the actors in the fishing sector, including workers' and employers' organizations, is important to address the challenges of plastic waste in the sector. Many other workers such as farmers, construction workers, textile and garment manufacturing workers and hospitality workers have impacted by plastic pollutions.
- It is indispensable and urgent to transform the "take-make-waste" model of the plastics' economy into a circular economy, based on a thorough and full-life-cycle approach. This will not only reduce the environmental impact, but will also open new opportunities for decent, safe and healthy work.

How to redress the impact of plastic pollution

- Addressing these gaps will greatly enhance opportunities for decent work. Therefore, the ILO's constituents – governments and employers' and workers' organizations – through social dialogue, have an important role to play to support a just transition.
- Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth is our guide.
- Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, safety, health, and security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.
- A human-centred approach to combatting plastic pollution will create more decent jobs while moving towards a circular economy.
- Numerous international labour standards (ILS) provide an established and validated legislative framework that will serve as a foundation towards a global agreement on plastics.
- Labour policies on skills and enterprise development, employment-intensive job creation and formalization of work, OSH, cooperatives, and the social and solidarity economy are essential.
- The conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007, including aspects of corporate social responsibility, should be used by governments and employers' and workers' organizations to foster an enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development to create decent jobs, promote sustainable production, including sustainable packaging, introduce clean technologies, bring innovative sustainable business models to the market and contribute to productivity growth, thereby advancing decent work and environmental sustainability.
- *ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* provides a coherent policy framework that outlines the necessary steps towards well-managed environmentally sustainable economies and societies, decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty.

▶ 2. International Labour Standards and other instruments relating to plastic pollution

Declaration

- Global Call to Action for a Human-centered Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient (2021)
- Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019)
- Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008)
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998)
- Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (2017)

International Labour Conference (ILC)

- Conclusions concerning Decent Work in Global Supply Chains (2016)
- Conclusions concerning the Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises (2007)

International Labour Standards (ILS)

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) (and its 2014 Protocol)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)
- Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)
- Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)
- Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)
- Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
- Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981
- Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
- Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
- Chemical Convention, 1990 (No. 170) Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)
- Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)
- Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)
- Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)

Other ILO instruments

- Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and society for all
- Code of practice on safety and health in textiles, clothing, leather and footwear industries
- Code of practice on safety and health in construction (revised version, 2022)

Training manuals

- User's manual to the ILO's Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all

▶ 3. ILO official meetings and up-coming events

ILO official meetings

(Not an exhausted list)

2022:

- 27 May–11 June 4, Geneva, 110th Session of the International Labour Conference Geneva
- 20–24 June, Geneva, Meeting of experts for the tripartite validation of technical guidelines on biological hazards
- 27 June–1 July, Geneva, Meeting of the tripartite working group on options to ensure decent work in supply chains
- 12–16 September, Geneva, Seventh meeting of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group
- 26–30 September, Geneva, Technical meeting on the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service sector
- 10–14 October, Geneva, Meeting of experts on decent work in the platform economy (TBC)
- 21–25 November, Geneva, Technical meeting on the future of work in the oil and gas industry
- 6–9 December, Singapore, 17th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting

2023:

- 18–20 January, Geneva, Sectoral Advisory Bodies
- 7–10 February, Geneva, Meeting of experts on the revision of statistical standards on informality
- 13–17 February, Geneva, Technical meeting on the future of work in the arts and entertainment sector
- 17–21 April, Geneva, Technical meeting on a green, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery for the civil aviation sector
- Second quarter, Geneva, Meeting of experts on decent work in agro-food: an essential part of sustainable food systems
- 5–16 June, Geneva, 111th Session of the International Labour Conference Geneva
- Third quarter, Geneva, Meeting of experts to produce joint ILO–IMO guidelines for medical examination of fishers
- Third or fourth quarter (TBC), Geneva, Preparatory Technical Conference on Just Transition
- 11–20 October, Geneva, 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians
- Third quarter, Geneva, Technical meeting on digitalization in the retail sector as an engine for economic recovery and decent work
- Fourth quarter, Geneva, Technical meeting on decent and sustainable work in the inland waterways sector
- Second half 11th European Regional Meeting (TBC)

Contact details

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7247
E: greenjobs@ilo.org