

International Labour Organisation (ILO), Headquarter, Objectives, History

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The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a UN specialised agency founded in 1919 to promote social justice and fair working conditions worldwide. Its core objective is to ensure decent work for all by strengthening labour rights, social protection, and tripartite dialogue among governments, employers, and workers. The ILO performs key functions such as setting international labour standards, monitoring compliance, providing technical assistance, and supporting member countries in labour reforms. It has developed 189 conventions, including eight fundamental ones covering forced labour, child labour, equality, and freedom of association.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

ILO stands for the **International Labour Organisation** is one of the most influential international bodies working to ensure fairness, dignity, and justice for workers worldwide. Since its inception, the ILO has shaped labour rights, protected vulnerable workers, and set global standards for humane working conditions. Its tripartite model and commitment to social justice make it a cornerstone of global governance in labour welfare.

Also Read: [United Nations Environment Programme](#)

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Objectives

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) aims to create a global environment where workers can enjoy decent employment without exploitation. Its objectives promote dignity, fairness, security, and equality in the world of work. Through its Decent Work Agenda, the ILO works to expand social protection, empower workers, and strengthen industrial relations.

- Promote labour standards and fundamental rights at work.
- Ensure equal opportunity and treatment for men and women in employment.
- Strengthen social protection for workers across all sectors.
- Encourage social dialogue and tripartism for better policymaking.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) History

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established after World War I to promote global labour rights and later became the first specialised agency of the UN, continuously working for social justice and fair labour standards worldwide. Over time, it has played a significant role in shaping labour reforms, supporting decolonization, and strengthening democratic labour movements.

- Established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles as part of the League of Nations.
- Became the first specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- Founded on the belief that social justice is essential for universal and lasting peace.
- Works to promote internationally recognised human and labour rights.
- Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 for advancing peace and workers' welfare.

Also Read: [World Trade Organisation](#)

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Structure

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) functions through a unique **tripartite structure** that brings together representatives of governments, employers, and workers to frame labour standards. These bodies collectively design policies, supervise implementation, and ensure global cooperation on labour rights.

1. **International Labour Conference (ILC):** The ILC acts as the highest decision-making body of the ILO, responsible for setting international labour standards and shaping the broad policy direction of the organisation. It gathers annually in Geneva, serving as a global parliament of labour where representatives from all member states participate.
 - Functions as the International Parliament of Labour.
 - Sets International Labour Standards (ILS) through conventions and recommendations.
 - Meets annually in Geneva with participation from all member states.
 - Acts as a forum for global discussion on major social, economic, and labour issues.

2. **Governing Body:** The Governing Body serves as the **executive council** of the ILO, responsible for policy decisions, monitoring progress, and approving the program and budget. It meets three times a year in Geneva to develop strategies and recommend actions for implementation by the secretariat.
- Acts as the executive council overseeing all major ILO decisions.
 - Meets three times a year in Geneva to frame policies, programs, and the budget.
 - Supported by tripartite committees on major industries and specialized sectors.
 - Assisted by expert committees on vocational training, safety, workers' education, women's issues, and youth employment.
3. **International Labour Office:** The International Labour Office is the **permanent secretariat** of the ILO and the operational hub for all its activities. It works closely under the direction of the Director-General and the supervision of the Governing Body to implement policies and prepare technical documents, reports, and research studies.
- Serves as the permanent secretariat and headquarters of ILO operations.
 - Implements policies and programs under the Director-General and Governing Body.
 - Acts as the focal point for research, publications, labour statistics, and technical assistance.
 - Conducts regional meetings to address issues of special concern to regional member states.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Functions

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) performs a wide range of functions aimed at establishing social justice, promoting fair labour standards, and ensuring the protection of workers across the world. It sets international labour norms, provides technical support to countries, and monitors compliance to improve working conditions globally.

- **Formulates International Labour Standards (ILS):** Creates conventions and recommendations to improve wages, working hours, safety, and rights at work.
- **Supervises Implementation:** Monitors whether member countries follow the labour standards they have ratified.
- **Provides Technical Assistance:** Offers expertise in areas like labour law reform, employment policies, social security, and workplace safety.
- **Supports Employment Promotion:** Helps nations design programs for job creation, skill development, and fair recruitment practices.
- **Conducts Research & Publishes Reports:** Produces global reports on labour trends, working conditions, and economic changes.
- **Encourages Social Dialogue:** Facilitates cooperation among governments, employers, and workers for policy-making and dispute resolution.
- **Promotes Social Protection:** Works on programs related to health insurance, maternity benefits, pensions, and protection of vulnerable workers.
- **Eliminates Child Labour & Forced Labour:** Assists countries in implementing strategies to end exploitation and ensure safe, dignified work for all.

Core Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The eight fundamental conventions form the global foundation for worker protection. They address child labour, forced labour, discrimination, and the right to organize. They are part of the wider UN Human Rights Framework and ratification reflects a nation's commitment to fair labour standards.

1. Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
2. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)
3. Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)
4. Discrimination Convention (No. 111)
5. Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)
6. Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)
7. Freedom of Association Convention (No. 87)
8. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)

Also Read: [World Organisations and Their Headquarters](#)

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998)

The 1998 Declaration mandates all member states, regardless of ratification, to promote eight core labour rights. These rights represent the minimum standard required for decent work and human dignity.

Four Categories of Fundamental Rights

- Freedom of Association & Collective Bargaining
- Elimination of Forced Labour
- Abolition of Child Labour
- Elimination of Discrimination in Employment

International Labour Organisation (ILO) and India

India has been an active member of the ILO since its inception and continues to play a significant role in shaping global labour standards. The country participates in all major ILO forums and has collaborated with the organization on issues like child labour elimination, social protection, and workers' welfare.

- India is a founding member of the ILO (since 1919).
- One of the few countries with a permanent seat on the ILO Governing Body.
- Has ratified multiple ILO conventions, including those on forced labour, equal remuneration, and worst forms of child labour.
- Collaborates with ILO on child labour eradication, social security reforms, and skill development initiatives.
- ILO supports India in modernizing labour codes, improving workplace safety, and promoting formal employment.
- India participates actively in International Labour Conference discussions and regional ILO programs.
- **India's Ratification Status**

- Ratified 6 out of 8 core conventions.
- Has not ratified Conventions 87 and 98.
- Works closely with the ILO on child labour, social security, and skill development.

• **Core ILO Conventions Ratified by India**

- Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)

• **Core Conventions Not Ratified by India**

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work

The ILO established the Global Commission to understand challenges posed by automation, AI, climate change, and demographic shifts. The Commission promotes a human-centred future of work, focusing on adaptability, new skills, and sustainable employment. It encourages nations to invest in people and redesign institutions of work.

Key Focus Areas

- Skill development for the future workforce.
- Adapting laws to new technologies.
- Ensuring inclusive economic growth.
- Addressing climate-change-induced job transitions.

Reports released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The International Labour Organisation publishes several flagship reports that analyse global employment trends, wages, social protection, labour rights, and workplace conditions.

- **World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO):** Provides global and regional trends on employment, unemployment, labour income, productivity, and job quality.
- **Global Wage Report:** Analyses global wage patterns, wage inequality, purchasing power, and wage growth trends.
- **World Social Protection Report:** Examines coverage and performance of social protection systems (pensions, health, maternity, unemployment benefits).
- **ILO World Report on Child Labour:** Provides statistics, trends, and policy recommendations to eliminate child labour globally.

- **The State of Social Justice 2025:** A recent flagship ILO report emphasises how climate change, technological advancements, and demographic shifts are converging with existing global inequalities

The Labour Movement in India

The labour movement in India evolved gradually alongside industrialization, beginning in the late 19th century when workers first began raising concerns about harsh working conditions. Over the decades, these scattered protests transformed into organised trade unions advocating for better wages, safety, and rights.

- **Early Phase (1850s-1918):** Sporadic, unorganised worker protests highlighted exploitation, poor wages, and long working hours.
- **First Major Agitation (1875):** Led by S.S. Bengalee in Bombay, focusing on the plight of women and child workers.
- **Factory Commission & Act:** The 1875 agitation resulted in the first Factory Commission and the Factories Act of 1881.
- **First Labour Union (1890):** M.N. Lokhande founded the Bombay Mill Hands Association, marking the beginning of organised trade unionism.
- **Second Phase (1918-1947):** Trade unions evolved on modern lines, with political groups like the Congress and Communists mobilising workers.
- **1920s Growth:** Rise of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and national-level labour organisations.
- **Features of the Movement:** Led by social reformers, focused on welfare, lacked a pan-India presence initially, and advocated issues like women and child labour protection.
- **Impact:** Strengthened collective bargaining, shaped labour legislation, and linked worker rights with India's freedom struggle.

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