

The role of technology in shaping treaty-making practice ([UNGA res 78/236](#), para. 15)

Submission by the International Labour Organization

1. This contribution concerning the practice of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the role of technology in shaping treaty-making practice focuses on the system of international labour standards (ILS), maintained and developed by the ILO since 1919, and aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. ILS are legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers) setting out basic principles and rights at work. They are either Conventions (or Protocols), which are legally binding international treaties that can be ratified by Member States, or Recommendations, which serve as non-binding guidance.

Elaboration and adoption of ILS

2. The ILO uses artificial intelligence (AI) for research and analysis to inform its work, including consideration of standard-setting in relation to a particular topic and preparation of related reports. The ILO also uses in the preparation of background reports for the International Labour Conference on standard-setting items digital tools to register, track and process responses from governments, employers' and workers' organizations and other stakeholders when consulted on proposals for new ILS. The ILO is currently reviewing the possibility of constituents commenting through an on-line form which would automatically upload comments/replies into a database to limit the need for manual data entry. The ILO keeps its constituents informed by email communications and posts new reports and consultation forms on its website. During this preparatory phase, technology is used for the organization of remote consultations and information sessions.
3. New ILS is negotiated and drafted during the International Labour Conference. Credentials are submitted through an on-line platform and uploaded into a conference management system that tracks participants, composition of the Conference, including its committees where new ILS is negotiated, as well as their voting strength, quorum etc. The ILO uses two applications that contribute to streamlining the negotiation process and ensuring multilingual inclusiveness. The first is for processing amendments that government, employer and worker delegates propose to the draft text under consideration. The application consists of a password-protected web portal through which delegates submit the proposed amendments and a second application where each amendment, which can be submitted in English, French or Spanish, is translated into the other two languages. The output of the system is a file compiling trilingual files of all amendments received per day in the order in which they will be discussed. The compilation is distributed to delegates through the web prior to the meeting in which they will discuss the amendments so that they can prepare for the discussion. The second application, which is in fact another interface of the same system, is called "subamendment management module" and is used to display in the meeting room each amendment to be considered in the three languages and to introduce the subamendments proposed by delegates during the discussion in real time in the three languages. Conference information is mainly shared on the ILO webpage. The ILO disseminates on the web good drafting practices through the [Manual for drafting ILO instruments](#) which provides detailed guidance for drafting in English, French or Spanish and also exists as a short Quick Guide and in an [electronic interactive format](#). Finally, when a new labour standard is adopted by the Conference the final vote is conducted electronically. Following adoption, the Member States are notified by email and electronic copies of the new instruments are transmitted by email. All the [preparatory work of ILS](#) is made available on-line.

4. The ILO's work on AI includes the [ILO Observatory on AI and Work in the Digital Economy](#) which is the leading international knowledge hub on the world-of-work dimensions of AI and the digital economy. It aims to support governments and social partners in understanding and managing the digital transformation of work, including as regards workers' personal data, AI and digital skills, algorithmic management in the workplace and digital labour platforms. Platform economy is one of the most significant manifestations of the changes induced by digitalization in the world of work and has significantly transformed how work is organized and performed, with challenges in ensuring that workers on platforms have access to decent work. The ILO is preparing new international labour standards on decent work in the platform economy which will be discussed at the 113th and 114th sessions of the International Labour Conference (June 2025 and 2026). The technological dimensions of the topic impact various aspects of the standard-setting, including providing digital platform workers access to dispute resolution mechanisms, and the amendment procedure of the new standards for which an accelerated and simplified procedure has been proposed to ensure the continued relevance of the new standards in the light of future technological, regulatory or operational developments impacting on work in the platform economy.¹

Depository functions

5. The ILO puts at the disposal of the public scanned copied of certified copies of ILS. The ILO has not yet received any electronic instrument of ratification or a related declaration signed with a digital signature and has so far continued to request the original hard copy of such instruments. The ILO used to effect depository notifications on a periodical basis through the publication of its Official Bulletin. Currently, this is done though publication on the database NORMLEX (see also para. 9 a) below). It is expected that the depository notifications will continue to be issued electronically, including through an electronic version of the Official Bulletin.

Application and promotion of ILS

Supervision of the application of ILS

6. The ILO supervisory system is unique, multidimensional and anchored in the Organization's standards and principles, which includes the principle of tripartism – dialogue and cooperation between governments, employers and workers – that lies at the heart of ILO action.² In recent years, the ILO has been considering opportunities to increase its use of technology, primarily in relation to reporting and information sharing, across its supervisory processes. In particular, in 2025, the ILO Governing Body is set to consider proposals on the progressive roll-out and implementation of a streamlined system of reporting for the regular supervision of ratified Conventions³, including the development of an online platform.⁴ In November 2024, the Governing Body considered the creation of an online platform that would enable Governments to submit information in a more agile and modern manner.⁵ The platform would facilitate governments' access to information previously submitted to the CEACR, reducing the time required to provide new details under the subsequent reporting period. It would also enable the Office to process and make the full information available to the public in a user-friendly manner, which would foster a broader exchange of information, enabling governments and social partners to learn from each other's experiences and good practices.

¹ ILO: *Realizing decent work in the platform economy*, [ILC.113/Report V\(1\)](#) and [ILC.113/Report V\(2\)](#),

² ILO: *Rules of the Game: An introduction to the standards-related work of the International Labour Organization*, 2019, p. 105.

³ Regular supervision, governed by article 22 of the ILO Constitution, requires governments to periodically provide reports detailing the steps taken to apply the Conventions that the Member State has ratified, which are then examined by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR).

⁴ ILO: *Decision concerning the proposals on the streamlining of reporting on ratified Conventions*, [GB.352/LILS/4/Decision](#), 2024.

⁵ ILO: *Proposals on the streamlining of reporting on ratified Conventions*, [GB.352/LILS/4](#), 2024, paras 24-25.

7. As regards the submission of a representation under the representation procedure⁶ or the submission of a complaint alleging violation of freedom of association before the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA)⁷, the use of dedicated electronic forms available on the ILO's website is encouraged.

Promotion of international labour standards

8. In relation to the promotion of the ratification and effective implementation of ILS, dedicated platforms and databases have been developed, which can be accessed by the public on the ILO's website. To build the capacity of tripartite constituents and other stakeholders in this regard, the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITCILO) has established a specialized online learning platform. The accessibility of the public website (the new version of which was launched in 2024) and the online learning platform have improved, including as a result of the Office's implementation of its Open Access policy, which enables better use of all its knowledge products, with the goal of increasing accessibility, visibility, and impact.⁸
9. Knowledge-sharing platforms and databases on ILS:
 - a. **NORMLEX**: This information system is the ILO's principal knowledge-sharing database on ILS. It is a trilingual database (English, French and Spanish) which brings together a wide-range of information on international labour standards, as well as on national labour and social security legislation. Recent statistics covering the 2024-2025 period show that NORMLEX had 1,900,000 active users and 5,500,000 page views, making it the most visited ILO database. NORMLEX has been designed to provide ILO constituents, other stakeholders and the general public comprehensive and easily usable information on various aspects of the ratification of ILS, and its application in law and practice in Member States. It is particularly relevant to Member States in relation to their reporting obligations, as it compiles and provides access to the comments of the supervisory bodies, observations made by employers' and workers' organizations, and relevant complaints procedures. NORMEX ensures that this database is always fully up to date.
 - b. **NATLEX**: This is a database of national labour, social security and human rights legislation that is updated throughout the year. It features more than 100,000 records covering 196 countries and more than 160 territories and subdivisions. Data classification by subjects and full-text search enable users to explore and discover information in intuitive navigation. Records are available in the ILO's official languages, and when available, key information is in the original language. The American Society of International Law awarded NATLEX the 2022 Jus Gentium Research Award for important contributions to providing and enhancing legal information resources in international law.
 - c. Other platforms and databases: The ILO has other platforms and databases that provide information relevant to the promotion of ILS. While the dedicated database on employment protection legislation (**EPLex**), the database on selected judicial decisions in which national and international courts have relied on ILS and other international legal instruments (**Compendium of Court Decisions**), and the **website** on the resources required to meet ILS reporting obligations are useful, they are not updated as frequently as other such resources. In 2019, a **website** and an app (available on 'App Store' and 'Google Play') were created to address the frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006). **Finding aids** is a recently developed tool that assists researchers in locating

⁶ The representation procedure, governed by articles 24 and 25 of the ILO Constitution, allows an industrial association of employers or of workers to present to the Governing Body a representation against any Member State which, in its view, "has failed to secure in any respect the effective observance within its jurisdiction of any Convention to which it is a party".

⁷ The Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) examines complaints of violations of freedom of association brought against a Member State by employers' and workers' organizations, whether or not the country concerned has ratified the relevant Conventions.

⁸ ILO: *ILO Strategy on knowledge and innovation across the Organization: Updated Strategy and implementation plan*, [GB.352/PFA/3](#), 2024, page 11.

comprehensive data on general surveys, sessions of the International Labour Conference, and the preparatory reports and background documents for all ILS. By compiling the *travaux préparatoires* (preparatory documents), this tool provides information relevant to the adoption of international labour standards.

10. Capacity-building on ILS:

- a. **ITCILO eCampus:** This is a learning management system used by ITCILO for the courses on ILS that it organizes and delivers to participants from around the world. Each course has a specifically developed activity platform, in the activity language(s), which includes different tools, such as: pre- and post-course knowledge assessment; interactive self-guided modules; quizzes; discussion forums; assignments; PowerPoint presentations; multimedia resources, including videos and screencasts; and digital credentials. The eCampus includes the 'Community of Practice on International Labour Standards', which strengthens the network of former participants by monitoring developments in the ILS system, sharing information, and discussing topics of common interest in the field of labour law; and the 'Toolkit on International Labour Standards', which is a virtual space where staff can find resources to better integrate and promote ILS and supervisory bodies' comments into their daily work and, more broadly, within the UN development system.
- b. Other training materials: The ITCILO creates videos on selected fundamental Conventions, digital presentations on selected procedures relevant to ILS, including standard-setting, supervisory processes, general surveys, and complaint mechanisms, as well as recordings of global webinars with supporting resources.