

Mthunzi Mdwaba written comments on items INS 21 and POL 4

INS 21:

Consistent with the decision point d) of GB.340/POL/4(Rev.1), it needs to be clarified that the decision to have or not an “Additional sectoral meetings listed in the appendix to GB.340/POL/4”, as listed in Appendix, has not been taken yet. The decision to include a 9th meeting in the programme of sectoral work should be considered by tripartite constituents in the framework of the consultations outlined in the present document.

POL 4:

Employers support the new terminology used in Para c) as it ensures that a coherent and coordinated approach is taken by the ILO to tackle the effects of Covid-19. Thus, SECTOR’s work should be fully in line and reflect ILO’s overall strategic plan as discussed and adopted by the GB. Employers would therefore not support the development of a myriad of strategies per sectors or topics. As mentioned during the consultations on this item, Employers also request that SECTOR’s ongoing programme is brought to the attention of the Sectoral Advisory Bodies so that Constituents can make inputs to it at its next session.

Consistent with previous GB discussions, para d) reflects the fact that the GB has not yet decided whether to have or not an additional meeting in the 2020-2021 sectoral programme of work: previous discussions did not mandate an additional meeting but only required that resources be kept in reserve to allow for one additional meeting if and when required. The decision to include a 9th meeting in the programme of work should be considered by tripartite constituents during the consultations outlined in GB340/INS/21. To prepare these consultations, we request that the Office prepares a detailed document outlining how virtual and hybrid sectoral meetings can take place in practice so that constituents can take an informed decision. This paper should also include information on the consequences of postponing meetings to 2022 and the consequences for the following biennium (2022-2023).

GB.340/INS/21

Composition, agenda and programme of standing bodies and meetings

IMEC Statement

1. IMEC thanks the Office for preparing the documents and engaging in consultations with us regarding this agenda item. This agenda item is now more significant than ever, since, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is impossible to hold meetings as previously planned. We must reconsider the arrangement of meetings while keeping in mind the purpose of each meeting.

2. In general, IMEC supports the Office's proposal to hold meetings related to the governing body and supervisory mechanisms fully or partially by virtual means if it is obliged to do so due to the prevailing circumstances. We believe this is important and necessary from the perspective of the continuity of the ILO's work. In the context of COVID-19, the role of the ILO has become all the more important, and the ILO must ensure that its work continues to contribute to the global recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

3. Virtual meetings are rapidly becoming part of the "new normal" in the ILO and worldwide. As we adopt to this new custom, we should ensure participation in meetings for all constituents on an equal footing and also keep improving on working methods specific to virtual meetings to make them more efficient and effective.

4. This session of the Governing Body will be the first experience for the ILO to have substantive discussions in a virtual meeting. Based on the experience of the GB340, measures to improve the efficiency of virtual meetings should be taken towards improving the experience for GB341 and other meetings going forward.

5. We also understand that while some meetings need to be face-to-face, under the current constraints, it is difficult to organize them for the time being. When we consider resuming face-to-face meetings, hopefully in the near future, it must be considered thoroughly by all groups, since the national circumstances may be different for each country in terms of travel, health, and safety conditions. From this perspective, and considering the fact that there are many meetings for which dates and format are to be determined as described in the second part of the Appendix, IMEC supports the office's proposal to convene tripartite consultations regarding this item, as described in para 6 and 8(b).

6. Specific comments regarding each meeting are as follows.

(a) The 109th Session of the International Labour Conference: We cannot afford to defer the 109th ILC again, considering the continuity of the ILO's work and the fact that we have to adopt the next P&B on that occasion. We sincerely hope that it can be held as a face-to-face meeting, but it is unclear whether the situation would permit it. Therefore, IMEC is strongly of the view that the discussion about the arrangement of the ILC should start early and we should not exclude the possibility of a virtual meeting, especially considering the time bound nature of some of the issues. When we consider

holding a virtual format ILC, more details than usual must be discussed, such as how to set a programme and order of business that is efficient and acceptable for different time zones, how to hold elections, and how to ensure strict time management. Such a discussion should start, well in advance, based on the experience of the GB340.

(b) The Sixth Meeting of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group: It is of critical importance to the world of work that the ILO's standards are up-to-date, robust and relevant. Postponing the SRM TWG meeting to September 2021 means that the GB will unfortunately miss one year of SRM TWG recommendations and follow-up by the Office and the ILO constituents. IMEC would like to urge the Office to make sure this is not a lost year for the SRM process by proceeding with its work, and urges all SRM TWG constituents to be innovative and flexible in their approaches going forward to ensure the group can continue its very important work.

7. With those comments, IMEC can support the point for decision.