

**FOR DEBATE AND GUIDANCE**

SEVENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Other questions**Future orientation of the Sectoral Activities Programme**

1. The Sectoral Activities Programme has withstood the test of time. Five decades of serving constituents as a meaningful window into the world of work have confirmed this Programme as central and salient to the ILO's mandate. The Sectoral Activities Programme has been periodically analysed, improved and reformed so as to remain relevant to its constituents and to the Organization.
2. By highlighting the importance of sectoral social dialogue, the Programme has given specific operational meaning to the ILO's work on standards and has reinforced and strengthened the role of governments and employers' and workers' organizations. By fostering sectoral social dialogue, the Programme strengthens industrial relations by addressing the key labour and social issues that affect specific economic sectors at the international, regional, national and enterprise levels. ILO principles and rights at work are the basis for engagement among the tripartite constituents, and sectoral exchanges have assisted them in exploring innovative ways to further the Decent Work Agenda, by promoting decent working conditions, by identifying opportunities for employment creation, by improving productivity and competitiveness, and by negotiating and finding solutions to a range of sectoral problems.
3. Since the pace of change has accelerated, so has the need to continuously redress the Programme's objectives and *modus operandi* in order to continue serving constituents' needs. Recent innovations such as sectoral action programmes have been promising and have infused the Programme with new potential. Additional revisions could further improve the Programme's focus and delivery of sectoral knowledge and service, and could boost appropriate follow-up. This paper aims to encourage further discussions on the future orientation of the Programme. Suggestions made in the course of previous biennia were:
 - to engage in sectoral work without a rigid, predetermined system of rotation;
 - to identify and group sectors into clusters, following agreed criteria;
 - to establish priorities that reflect the needs of sectors in a timely fashion;

- to make the Programme more adaptable to changes in the world of work and therefore more dynamic and open to additional sectors, subsectors or occupational groups not currently covered;
 - to facilitate decision-making in the Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues and to better involve constituents in this process (through regular and ongoing consultations to discuss challenges, priorities and activities for the sectors);
 - to further open the Programme to a range of activities, including action programmes, meetings, training and research and thus tailoring action to sector-specific demands and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches;
 - to strengthen the knowledge base on sectoral issues including sectoral data and statistics;
 - to search more systematically for opportunities for technical cooperation to strengthen sectoral activities as a complement to resources from the ILO regular budget;
 - to strengthen the sectoral component in decent work country programming; and
 - to improve the synergies with other ILO technical units, as well as with ACTRAV, ACT/EMP, regional offices, and social dialogue specialists in the field.
4. The Sectoral Activities Programme's proposed strategy for 2008-09, as outlined in the Preview of Programme and Budget proposals¹ builds on successes and lessons learned from preceding biennia. It is proposed that the strategy will give particular importance to the following elements: (a) key labour and social issues to be addressed by sectoral social dialogue at the international, regional and national levels; (b) enhancement of constituents' capacity and developing opportunities for them to cooperate, share their concerns, address critical issues from a wider knowledge base, identify good practices and negotiate strategies to address sector-specific issues; (c) provision of practical advice and guidance in industries and services of particular importance to governments, employers and workers; (d) promotion of the wide range of sectoral international labour standards in addition to the body of codes of practice and guidelines, to be translated and widely disseminated; (e) development and promotion of user-friendly and gender-sensitive training packages and other practical tools; and (f) rigorous, timely research with a sectoral focus in order to help the Organization and its constituents to understand and address the rapid changes, with the associated problems and opportunities, in the world economy.
5. In order to better meet constituents' needs and expectations, a programme could be designed that would make use of the following components:
- (a) action programmes that support social dialogue platforms through which national constituents can discuss issues of concern and address them in national action plans or policy recommendations;
 - (b) tripartite (or bipartite, where appropriate) sectoral meetings and/or expert meetings on normative issues, development and implementation of ILO guidelines and codes of practice in a given sector;
 - (c) smaller-scale global dialogue forums, such as two-three day, tripartite or bipartite meetings on specific issues; and

¹ GB.297/PFA/1/2.

(d) other activities (including training and research).

6. Based on this Committee's guidance, at this session, on the general future orientation of the Programme and further informal consultations to be undertaken, the Office will prepare concrete proposals to be presented in March 2007.

Geneva, 10 October 2006.

Submitted for debate and guidance.