

Si vis Pacem, Cole Iustitiam. A Century of International Labour Organization

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Abstract

In 2019 the International Labour Organization celebrated its 100th anniversary. Established after the end of World War I, the organization aimed to improve working conditions and support actions for workers' rights by negotiating labour standards through tripartite concertation involving representatives of employers, employees and governments, and by ensuring, through social justice, long-term global peace. Over the years, the ILO has developed methods of action allowing for achieving those goals by actively participating in solving the evolving problems of the world of work and labour. The article attempts to summarize the achievements of the ILO in the 1919–2019 period by analysing the directions of action and outlining the evolution of the activities of the organization.

Keywords: International Labour Organization, social justice, social dialogue, labour standards, tripartism

JEL Classification: J880 (Labour Standards: Public Policy), J800 (Labour Standards: General), J810 (Labour Standards: Working Conditions), J830 (Labour Standards: Workers' Rights)

Introduction

As the construction of the new headquarters of the International Labour Office began in Geneva in 1923, three stone blocks were used as symbols of the three groups represented in the recently founded organization (governments, employees and employers), and on the

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parchment the Latin sentence ‘Si vis pacem, cole iustitiam’ (If you wish for peace, cultivate justice) was placed. The credo set the direction for the organization for the years ahead.

In 2019, the maxim was recalled, while celebrating the 100th anniversary of the ILO, and in the preface to the album – entitled, naturally, ‘If you want peace, cultivate justice’ – Guy Ryder, the Director General wrote: ‘the founding aim of the ILO was to improve conditions for working people and support their rights through international labour standards negotiated in tripartite cooperation between representatives of employers, workers and governments. Its compass was peace and prosperity through social justice’ (Ryder 2019: 5).

Indeed, since its inception ILO has been an exceptional institution, not only in terms of its objectives but also ways for achieving them. The article will shed light on the roots, purposes and evolution of the ILO.

New World Order

The decision to launch ILO was taken in 1919 during the Paris conference, as the terms of peace after the WWI were being negotiated with a view of establishing the new world order. The road to the creation of an international organization dealing with broadly understood labour problems had begun, however, much earlier as a consequence of social and economic changes triggered by the industrial revolution. Industrial revolution manifested by mass production, specialisation and fragmentation of work, emergence of large enterprises and rise of the new social group: industrial workers. That new social group was tied together by common interests stemming from problems, which had been known earlier, albeit at a much smaller scale: hazardous working conditions, low pay, scarce or even non-existent social protection in case of sickness and unemployment or unregulated child labour. With no adequate institutional arrangements, social tensions grew translating to strikes and swelling number of social conflicts, creating a need for new forms of social organization, relevant for the new challenges.

The first step in the process was to raise awareness of the workers about the dominance of employers and the need to level it up. This was to be done by organizations claiming workers’ rights – trade unions and workers’ parties. Over time, the right to association became the key postulate of the employees, which led to the creation of powerful and politically influential trade unions.

The next step was internationalisation of workers' rights agenda. Both trade unions and employers' organisations developed cooperation in order to exchange information and better protect their own interests. National governments started to create legal environment that would regulate the issues of working conditions and social security.

Already in the last decades of the 19th century, there were voices (coming mainly from trade unions and other civil society organisations and driven mostly by a belief that better working conditions would reduce social tensions) calling for international cooperation that would lead to conclusion of international agreements on standardization of working conditions and prevention of unfair competition at the global level. Those voices eventually led to an international conference of European governments in Berlin in 1890. The conference focused on worker issues, including counteracting child labour. Although the immediate effects of the meeting and the ones that followed were rather insignificant, in 1900 in Basel the International Association for Labour Legislation (IALL) was established, a forerunner of the future ILO. In 1901 IALL presented the first proposals for international conventions, including the ban on using highly toxic white phosphorus in matchmaking factories (Britannica 2019).

The picture of the socio-economic background briefly sketched above must be supplemented by a note on global political situation, which would become highly volatile and dramatic in the first two decades of the 20th century. First the World War I broke out in 1914, claiming 20 million human lives until 1918, then the communist Russian Revolution of 1917 erupted and the views of the red wave spreading all over Europe appeared to be very likely as the peace conference in Paris was about to start in 1919. For all those reasons, the participating parties had strong motivation to seek political solutions that would possibly allow for avoiding or at least relieving social tensions. There was clearly a favourable climate to advance the working class agenda (even though during the war a substantial part of worker rights had been suspended), and trade unions together with civil society organisations wisely took advantage of the window of opportunity as it opened. Two priorities, in particular, were addressed: first, establishment of an international organization dealing with work and labour issues, and, second, drawing a set of international standards regulating such areas as working time (with a view of cutting it short), as well as working conditions and workers' rights (with a view of making a general improvement therein) (ILO 2019: 28–29). There were certainly more challenges requiring prompt action such as workplace safety (especially accidents at work), child labour or the right to strike. Recognizing importance of those expectations and demands, the peace conference by one of its first

decisions, would create the Commission on International Labour Legislation, charged with a task to prearrange the establishment of the international organization. In the commission 15 states were represented, with Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States taking two seats each, while Cuba, Czechoslovakia and Poland each sent one delegate. The leading representative of the employee side was Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labour (AFL), who chaired the Commission and Léon Jouhaux of France. On 11 April 1919 the Commission delivered the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The document would be incorporated, as Chapter XIII, to the Treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919. Besides the League of Nations, the Treaty established ILO as another permanent international organisation¹.

The founders of ILO assumed – and that was reflected in the preamble to the ILO Constitution – that general and lasting peace must be underpinned by social justice, while the creation of the international legal framework in the field of labour would allow to eliminate or at least minimize the impact of unfair competition exercised by lowering of wages and negligence of proper working conditions (Sejm 1947). ‘Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries’ (Sejm 1947). Article 427 of the Treaty of Versailles lists nine key methods and principles in the area of labour: labour should not be regarded merely as a commodity; the right of association the employed as well as by the employers; wage adequate to maintain a reasonable standard of life; adoption of an eight hours day or a forty-eight hours week; adoption of a weekly rest of at least twenty-four hours; abolition of child labour; principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration; equal economic treatment of all workers in a country; system of labour inspection².

¹ The main source of information on ILO, regarding both past and present activities, is the website of the Organization (www.ilo.org), with an extensive list of web links and electronic library resources. Noteworthy and recommended is also the ILO-focused website in Polish (www.mop.pl), run by Tomasz Wójcik, a member of the National Committee of NSZZ ‘Solidarność’. Further recommended reading includes i.a. (Wysocka-Madej et al. 2019; Rodgers et al. 2009).

² The peace treaty ending the World War 1, signed by and between the Allies and Germany in Versailles on 28 June 1919.

Unique Tripartism

The founders of ILO, while drafting the principles for its operation to be included in the Constitution, created a unique, on the world scale, tripartite institution. Thus, since its inception the ILO has been an exceptional forum for cooperation, where governments and social partners engage in free and open discussion on standards and activities in the broadly understood work-related field. In that respect, it is crucial to ensure even representation of the parties, their independence and direct involvement in the decision-making process in all ILO bodies. The social partners are guaranteed the right to speak freely and act independently of governments.

In line with the ILO Constitution, each member country is required to delegate its representatives to the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva. The delegation is tripartite and consists of two government delegates and one employee and employer delegate. Fulfilling that condition of this principle is important for the sake of legitimizing activities of the ILC and the ILO as far as labour standards discussed and eventually adopted are concerned, in particular ILO conventions (which require ratification by member states subsequently) and recommendations.

Experiences of the first ILCs suggested that success of meetings (measured by number of quality of legal instruments adopted) largely depended on effective organization of tripartite negotiations among the three parties participating in the sessions. Therefore, during the first conferences working standards and ways of negotiating developed. Employers and employees held bilateral meetings already at the first conference in 1919 discussing their positions and postulates regarding the subject of the conference and its specific committees. The purpose of these meetings was to develop a unified position for each party to be presented by the so-called speakers i.e. the chairman of the Employers' Group and the chairman of the Workers' Group. That model has been followed up to date. In response to the practice, in the 1920s the International Labour Office established two administrative units servicing the group of employees (ACTRAV) and employers (ACT/EMP) (Tapiola 2019: 2–3). The ILO Administrative Board is a tripartite body, responsible for organizing the work of the International Labour Office and preparing annual Conferences.

In the early years of ILO the employee side was mainly represented by trade unions affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions founded in 1901. In order to boost the activities of the employer side within ILO, the International Employers Organisation (IOE) was established in 1920. To further enhance the

capacities of the social partners, the ILO International Training Centre in Turin was opened in 1965. In the 1960s the ILO launched a series of regional tripartite labour conferences devoted to the issues of specific global regions, mirroring at the local scale the activities of ILC.

Viable cooperation in such complex and complicated field required effective communication, so that all participants would be able to comprehend all the matters in focus. French, which had been the official language of international diplomacy, was not known to all delegates, neither was German, familiar mostly to participants from the Central and Eastern Europe. English was gaining popularity but yet to become the global *lingua franca* as it is today. For that reason, the ILO decided to introduce simultaneous translations.

Although tripartite concertation has had a long and distinguished tradition in the ILO, it has been also the target of critical voices, claiming the ILO has somehow become a hostage to the idea of tripartism which has hindered dynamics of negotiations and side-lined the interest in eventual ratifications of the legal instrument adopted. Maupain observes that there is a gap in understanding tripartism at the level of ILO (where it is primarily seen as a need for a compromise) and the levels of specific member countries (Maupain 2013: 336). The tensions illustrating the gap manifested, for example, in 2012, when the employer and employee groups clashed over the right to strike, which – as the employee side insisted – was inevitably an extension of the right of association (La Hovary 2015: 204–236). Another significant field of conflict is the control and enforcement of the fulfilment of ILO labour standards. This is accompanied by a discussion on representativeness of social partners taking part in the negotiations, who are said to be speaking on behalf of only a part of their constituencies.

Strong Position on the International Arena

Founding of the ILO at such an important historical moment as the end of WWI, as well as wide and open formula for its activities envisaged allowed the organization to compete for a strong political position. Tied from the very beginning to the League of Nations, and then to the United Nations (since 1946), ILO has established itself as an agency specialized in social affairs.

However, ILO has had to earn the strong mandate, which has taken many years. Undoubtedly, the early years had been decisive for marking the direction and defining the manner of operations. Dedication and determination of the first Director General, Albert Thomas, who extensively travelled around the world with a view of promoting the ILO goals and building alliances with other bodies, increased the levels of visibility and recognition of ILO. Thomas would meet heads of government, royalty, dictators and various politicians. Subsequently, regional offices of ILO opened, in such places as Berlin, London, New Dehli, Paris, Rome, Tokyo, Washington D.C. and Vienna as well as permanent representations in many other major cities (e.g. Warsaw).

The initial session of the ILC held in Washington D.C. from 29 October 1919 onwards was not just a celebrated and historically significant event but most importantly a viability test for ILO. Representatives of 40 countries and territories (18 from Europe, 16 from Americas, five from Asia, and one from Africa) took part. Many countries could not afford to send their delegates, may other did not rush before taking the decision to join. USA entered ILO only in 1934, and the USSR soon followed, which was considered a meaningful political gesture at the time of a growing threat on the part of Nazi Germany which openly contested the international cooperation.

Establishment of the permanent office of ILO in Geneva in 1926, holding staff of experts in the areas of labour law, social security and working conditions, was an important step on the path of building the organisation's position and reputation (ILO 2019: 28–29).

Nowadays, total of 187 countries belong to ILO. The important political position of the ILO was proven in 2009, when the organization for the first time was invited to the annual G20 meeting, in which event it has been since participating on regular basis, along with UN, WTO and OECD. Furthermore, in recognition of its achievements on its 50th anniversary ILO was made a recipient of the Noble Peace Prize.

Acting in the Name of Labour Standards

From the early years, ILO activities have proven that the decision to call a special organisation dealing with the labour standards into life was right. Only after the first ten years of operations, ILO's record consisted of 28 conventions on such vital issues as inter alia working time, underage work or social protection. ILO's regulations

affected not only industrial workers but also sailors, service workers and workers in agriculture³. In course of their activities, ILO has also turned its attention to such underprivileged groups in the labour market as migrants, refugees or war casualties⁴.

The first ILC held in Washington DC produced six conventions, six recommendations and 16 resolutions. Convention 1 dealt with working time in industry, imposing limits of 8 hours a day and 48 hours a week. Convention 2 introduced a positive obligation on member states to establish and maintain public employment agencies. Convention 3 standards for maternity protection in work situation. Convention 5 dealt with minimum age qualifying to industrial work. Convention 6 concerned the issue of night work for the underage workers in industry (Konwencje 2014: 1–23).

The next session held in Genoa in 1920 focused primarily on maritime work, including the issues of working time, minimum age of workers and unemployment protection (Conventions 7, 8 and 9). During the first two decades of ILO operations, maritime work was given substantial attention, which translated to 14 relevant conventions adopted before World War 2. In 1920 the Joint Maritime Commission (JMC) was called into existence. JMC is a bipartite standing body composed of ship-owners and seafarers' representatives (ILO 2019: 34–35).

Coping With Crises

The ideals that drove the founders of ILO in their pursuit of social justice at work seen as a way to facilitating lasting world peace would soon be confronted with dramatic challenges such as the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War 2.

The Great Depression produced blowing effects both in economic and political dimension. Economic collapse affected not only industrial sector but also agriculture. Massive unemployment led to a rapid growth in poverty scale, which in turn translated into overwhelming sense of instability and social unrest.

³ In 1921 ILO adopted i.a. the conventions on Minimum Age (Agriculture), Right of Association (Agriculture) and Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture).

⁴ In 1920 ILO established a special 'Section for disabled veterans' whose main aim was to promote cooperation among trade unions, employers, organisations of disabled veterans and governments with a view of providing support to that particular group.

As a consequence, nationalistic and fascist ideas started gaining popularity across Europe (in 1935 the Nazi Germany withdrew from ILO, with Italy and Japan soon following the example). Many countries opted to cope with crises on their own, introducing far-reaching social and economic reforms, which often involved curbing worker rights (right of association included), violating the fundamental principles of ILO.

In such difficult circumstances ILO's Directors General, Albert Thomas (died in 1932) and his successor Harold Butler were trying to figure out the appropriate role of the organization in the changing political landscape. Eventually, the approach that ILO should not restrict itself to working conditions only but also speak on global economic affairs and economic policy prevailed. The reason behind was that only by taking stand on macroeconomic policies, ILO would be able to have influence on labour market policies, thus in the end help alleviate some negative effects of the crisis suffered by workers, first and foremost unemployment. In course of lively debates, ILO came to embrace Keynesian economic paradigm and appealed for introduction both at national and international level of public works, active labour migration policies as well as extension of social security and reduction in working time. The conventions adopted in 1933 and subsequent years serve as evidence. At the 17th session in 1933, several conventions were produced such as fee-charging employment agencies and various type of insurance (old-age, invalidity, survivors'). In 1934, convention 44 was adopted on unemployment provision. In 1935, Convention 47 was passed, by virtue of which the standard working time was further reduced, to 40 hours a week. In 1936, Convention 52 on paid holiday was adopted. In 1930s forced labour became an important topic of debate too, which manifested in adoption of Convention 29.

ILO subscribed to the New Deal agenda of the US President, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the US Secretary of Labour Frances Perkins. Public works projects aimed at boosting employment and expand physical infrastructure, thus opened opportunities to improve living standards of millions of workers.

When World War 2 broke out, the faith of ILO founders in providing peace through ensuring social justice once again faced a serious challenge. As the biggest and bloodiest conflict in the history continued, ILO offices were moved overseas, to Montreal. On the one hand, such decision allowed the ILO to maintain its operations, on the other hand, it largely limited its territorial scope of activities.

Nevertheless, in late 1941 the acting Director General Edward Phelan organized a conference in New York, which hosted President Roosevelt among other participants representing 35 nations. The conference expressed its support to the Allies and

endorsed the objectives of the Atlantic Charter signed in August 1941 by Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. It is worth noting that Clause 5 of the Charter directly addressed the labour issue stating that [signatories] ‘desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security’.

ILO began to pursue those goals even before the war ended. In April 1944 in Philadelphia, the site of the Declaration of Independence proclamation, 26th session of ILO took place, where the will of the organization to engage in the reconstruction of the world after the war was reiterated. Addressing the conference participants, Secretary Perkins on behalf of President Roosevelt stressed that ‘the conditions of lasting peace can be secured only through soundly organized economic institutions fortified by human labour standards, regular employment and adequate income for all people’ (ILO 2019: 74).

As a result, the Declaration of Philadelphia of 10 May 1944 expressed the key principles for the ILO in future. Those were: 1) labour is not a commodity; 2) freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress; 3) poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere and 4) the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare (MOP 1944). In the chapter 2 of the Declaration, it was reiterated that ‘lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice’.

In order to fulfil the objectives set out in the Declaration, the ILO pledged to support the programmes aiming *inter alia* at full employment and the raising of standards of living; the assurance of equality of educational and vocational opportunity; policies in regard to wages and earnings, hours and other conditions of work calculated to ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all, and a minimum living wage to all employed and in need of such protection; the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining, the cooperation of management and labour in the continuous improvement of productive efficiency, and the collaboration of workers and employers in the preparation and application of social and economic measures: the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care; provision for child welfare and maternity protection (MOP 1944).

Aftermath of the World War 2 proved long-lasting, also for ILO, as the multilateral cooperation could not be restored smoothly. Absence of USSR from ILO until 1954,

and the political cleavage in the international trade union movement present since 1949, which negatively affected the role and involvement of trade unions from the Eastern bloc impacted the way ILO functioned.

Despite all those problems ILO managed to adopt two very important conventions related to the fundamental rights by the end of 1940s: Convention 87 on freedom of association (1948) and Convention 98 on right to organise and collective bargaining (1949). The two acts proved how significant to ILO was its democratic vision of relations between trade unions and employer organisations. The next step on that path was establishment of the Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission on Freedom of Association (1950) and the Committee on Freedom of Association (1951) charged with tasks of monitoring of implementation and observance of ILO standards (MOP 2013: 13–15).

In the following years ILO activities focused on the process of decolonization in Asia and Africa and involvement in the programmes designed to support economic and social development as well as employment and migration issues.

At the same time, efforts on improving labour standards continued, a clear sign that objectives set out in the Declaration of Philadelphia remained of highest importance. In 1951 Convention 100 on equal remuneration was adopted, followed by the Convention 111 (1958) on discrimination in employment.

In the 1960s the issue of technological progress and its impact on employment, industrial relations and working conditions was becoming essential. During that decade ILO's activities mainly concentrated on supporting developing countries, inter alia on social partners' capacity building.

On its 50 anniversary in 1969 ILO launched the World Employment Programme, whose objective was to promote development based on full employment, counteracting underemployment and fighting poverty. One of key achievements of the programme was the tripartite conference on world employment in June 1976. The conference addressed the problem of a spreading poverty in the developing world by forwarding the concept of satisfying 'basic needs' such as food, housing, education and transportation security.

In the 1960s ILO faced also a serious challenge of racial discrimination in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). In 1964 ILO issued the Declaration against Apartheid, followed up by drawing a plan aiming to eliminate the political system based on racial discrimination. RSA withdrew from ILO as a consequence but the apartheid was finally brought to an end only in 1994.

In the 1970s new economic problems emerged. Francis Blanchard, the Director General, said at the ILC in 1975: 'the success or failure of modern societies will depend

on how they solve this key problem of the inter-relationship between employment, remuneration, working conditions and environment, education, health and leisure'. 1975 was also the International Women's Year as announced by the UN, and on that occasion ILC issued the Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers.

In the decades that followed new political and economic challenges surfaced forcing ILO to take a stand. Economic crises were coped with by national government with such measures as deregulation, privatization, flexibilisation of labour market and reduction of social protection. International economic competition among the countries, which saw it as a chance for upswing also intensified.

Emergence of the 'Solidarność' union in Poland in 1980 was a significant event for the future of ILO. 'Solidarność' was the first independent trade union in the Eastern bloc established in line with Convention 87. Imposition of the Martial Law in 1981 followed by dissolution of the union by the communist authorities met with reaction of ILO, which established a special investigation committee to monitor the situation in Poland (Godderis 2013: 225–241; Tapiola 2019: 51–54).

In the 1980s the problem of environmental protection and preservation entered the ILO agenda. That was a consequence of the 1987 report by the World Commission for Environment and Development, where the issue of 'sustainable development' appeared.

Political shift in Europe in the late 1980s, exemplified by the 'Autumn of Nations' and the fall of the Berlin Wall on the one hand opened entirely new perspectives but on the other – marked the beginning of serious economic challenges related to transformation in the Central and Eastern Europe. At the time, ILO made efforts to support negotiation and consultation processes related to transformation in general, and to privatization in particular.

The end of the Cold War accelerated the process of globalization in the 1990s, which was also amplified by the IT revolution and opening of markets, leading to increased flows of money, goods and people. Internationalization of production also significantly grew and resulted in creation of global supply chains with all consequences (Anner 2015: 17–34; Brown 2015: 35–53). Global changes deepened the gap between developed and developing countries. The problem of child labour returned. In 1992, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) was launched by ILO, the largest programme run by the organization.

Economic crisis in Asia of 1997 exposed further problems entailed by globalization, especially painful social costs. At the same time, there was a fierce discussion at the

ILO regarding standards in force, which came to be viewed by some participants as an obstacle to economic development and competitiveness.

In 1994, at the 81st Session of ILO, preparatory works on the 'Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work' began, the final text would be adopted in 1998. The Declaration reprised the key principles ILO had formulated before, namely: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (MOP 1998). The key principles were embodied in seven conventions referred to as fundamental. Those included: the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). The list was further extended in 1999 by the addition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182).

In the 21st century the pace of globalization of the world economy and digitalization speed up even more. It became obvious that single countries were not able to cope with financialization and global supply chains on their own in order to effectively protect workers' rights. The economic crisis 2008+ manifested in rising unemployment and increased uncertainty of employees. The growing criticism of globalization forced the ILO to seek ways of counteracting and effectively removing emerging problems.

The response took form of the 'Decent Work Agenda', proposed by the ILO Director General Joan Somavia. Drawing on the Declaration of Philadelphia and the ILO Constitution four strategic pillars were designated: employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue.

ILO aims at pursuing the Decent Work at global, regional, national, sectoral and local levels in cooperation with national governments and social partners. The concept of 'decent work' has been endorsed by the UN, as well as been embraced by trade unions around the world.

The issue of globalization became the subject of debate in the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2002–2004), which produced the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (MOP 2008). As a follow-up activity, in 2009 ILC adopted the Global Jobs Pact, a tripartite accord intended to serve as a response to the crisis.

The current decade has been a period during which ILO has struggled with old and new challenges. The latter are mainly related to digitalization, whose impact on economic and social life is number of countries is disruptive, as well a global challenges such as climate change, environmental damages, and migrations and while the former include poverty, social inequalities and unemployment (especially among the youth).

Undeclared work in informal economy has attracted attention of ILO in recent years. It is estimated that some 2 billion people worldwide (i.e. 60% of global workforce) are employed in informal sector. The debate on the subject led to adoption of Convention 189 on domestic workers (2011) and the Recommendation 204 on transition from informal to formal economy Recommendation (2015).

Forced migration, entailed by war or natural disasters, had also become Focus of ILO. Working together with the UN, ILO has been searching for solutions that would not only address the needs of migrants and refugees but also provide assistance to the receiving countries, so that the incoming migrants are offered adequate living conditions.

The recurring problems of the current decade to be listed include child labour, forced labour, discrimination and violations of the right of association. The last ILC (no 108, which took place in 2019) should be deemed successful, as it managed to adopt the first convention in eight years, the Convention 190 on violence and harassment in a workplace, which concluded the lengthy debate on the subject matter (Wolańska 2019).

In 2013 Guy Ryder, the Director General (still in office) stepped forward with seven so-called Centenary Initiatives (in expectation of the forthcoming 100 anniversary of ILO), which included:

Improvement of the governance of ILO (Governance Initiative); stress on labour standards and their supervision (Standards Initiative); focus on enterprises and promotion of sustainable enterprises (Enterprises Initiative); embracing of 'green agenda' to achieve just transition to the environmental stability (Green Initiative); promotion of gender equality in employment (Women at Work Initiative); continuous fight with world poverty (End to Poverty Initiative); and equipping ILO to better prosecute its mandate for social justice (Future of Work Initiative). The latter translated in 2017 into establishment of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, an expert body charged with a task of preparing a special report to be presented at the 108 ILC Session in 2019.

The Future of Work and Social Dialogue

ILO concluded the works stemming from the Future of Work Initiative with adoption of the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work on 21 June 2019 at the 108 ILC Session. The document is relatively short and consists of a preface and four chapters.

In the preface achievements of the ILO over the past hundred years are highlighted, and it is underlined that the continuous and concerted action of governments and representatives of employers and workers is essential to the achievement of social justice, democracy and the promotion of universal and lasting peace. It is also acknowledged that such actions brought historic advances in economic and social progress that have resulted in more humane conditions of work. At the same time, it was pointed out that there are still negative phenomena in many parts of the world: persistent poverty, inequalities, inequalities and injustices, conflicts, disasters and other humanitarian threats which pose an obstacle to the ILO's tasks of decent work and prosperity. Further in the preface, the key importance of key documents of ILO such as Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia and the aims, purposes, principles and mandate set out therein. Newer documents such as the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization are also recalled. It was also reconfirmed that the imperative of social justice that gave birth to the ILO should remain the superior objective of its activities and that it lies within the reach of the governments, employers and workers to reinvigorate the organization and shape a future of work. Such actions may, however, take place only through social dialogue, as it 'contributes to the overall cohesion of societies and is crucial for a well-functioning and productive economy'. Some other principles were referred to in the preface as well, such as de-commodification of work, importance of sustainable enterprises as promoters of decent work or world of work free from violence and harassment. It was also underlined that a viable response to the new challenges faced by the world of work ought to be multilateral. All constituents of ILO were also called to reaffirm their commitment to achieve social justice and universal and lasting peace as agreed in 1919 and 1944. The desire to democratize ILO governance by ensuring a fair representation of all regions and establishing the principle of equality among member States was also expressed at the end of the preface.

The process of preparation and adoption of the Centenary Declaration was, however, not as smooth as the final content of the documents may suggest. In fact,

negotiating the declaration was an arduous and difficult task, in course of which the long lasting tensions between the group of employees and employers manifested. As a result, more than 400 amendments were submitted to the final draft delivered on 13 May 2019. From the ‘employees’ perspective the employers’ attempts to remove any references to ‘workers’ rights’, ‘collective bargaining’, ‘social dialogue’ and, most importantly, ‘workplace safety’ were signs of a confrontational attitude of the other party. As a consequence, during the second week of the debate, there were number of voices suggesting dropping the initiative, which – if effectuated – would be a clear signal of the more general problems encountered by negotiations at ILC. If there had been ambitions to create a document matching the ILO Constitution or the Declaration of Philadelphia, they proved futile (Gliksman 2019). Nevertheless, despite all tensions and disagreements – the declaration was eventually adopted.

Summary

Tripartite formula of ILO must be regarded a success. The model adopted in 1919 allowed for drafting and enacting of numerous labour standards, either in form of conventions or recommendations, which significantly helped improve working conditions all over the world. The progress made from the adoption of the Convention 1 on the 8-hour working day to voting the Convention 190 on violence and harassment in a workplace is undeniable.

The most important factors explaining the efficiency of ILO are arguably consistency of the vision projected by the ILO Constitution of 1919 and reliance of the organization in course of its activities on three following foundations: international labour standards (which have some influence on the legislation at the national level), very extensive social dialogue, whose main aims are building of common understanding and overcoming particular group interests, and, finally, tripartism (or multilateralism), the major cornerstone of ILO, which facilitates participation of all stakeholders of socio-economic life in democratic decision-making. Despite changing external environment of the organization, all three keystones still remain in place.

Secondly, the success of ILO can be explained – despite all the reservations addressed above – by efficiency of its actions. Over the past 100 years ILO had to cope with a variety of challenges, of political (World War 1 and 2, the Cold War,

colonialism, racial segregation, the Autumn of Nations in 1989), economic (the Great Depression and many subsequent crises recurring on local or global scale, digitalization) and social. ILO was not only a witness to those dramatic events in world history but also played – to various degree – active part in attempts to address them, always acting in accordance to its mandate and striving for social justice.

Thirdly, significance of ILO also stems from its ability and willingness to defend the values in the name of which it called into existence. Despite critical voices pointing to inadequate reactions of ILO in the face of violations of the workers' rights, lessons learnt in course of the organisation's activities and its unshaken faith in peace methods show that it has been able to effectively argue its causes, as cases of contesting apartheid in South Africa or pressing for observance of right of association in Poland prove.

It seems that risks and threats brought about by new challenges – regardless of their specific nature – emerging for the world of work on regular basis can still be dealt with by using the methods practiced by the ILO, in particular tripartite negotiations. Comparing the state of the world of work in 1919 and 2019 allows to realize how much can be changed by cooperation, social dialogue and mutual understanding. And this is exactly the way of ILO since its very first day.

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