



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 August 2019

Original: English

Seventy-fourth session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session

Observer status for the International Organization of Employers in the General Assembly

Letter dated 16 August 2019 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the International Organization of Employers in the General Assembly" in the agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The International Organization of Employers represents one of the three constituents of the International Labour Organization. The others are the International Trade Union Confederation and the member States. We would also like to refer to the parallel request for observer status for the International Trade Union Confederation that we have also submitted ([A/74/292](#)).

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (annex I) is attached in support of the aforementioned request, as are a letter from the Director General of the International Labour Organization (annex II) and a draft resolution (annex III).

We have the honour to request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Anne **Gueguen**

Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations

(Signed) Jürgen **Schulz**

Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

(Signed) Rauf Alp **Denktaş**

Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations



Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

1. Historical background and mission

For nearly 100 years, the International Organization of Employers has been working to create a sustainable economic environment, in collaboration with its members, that promotes free enterprise and is fair and beneficial to both business and society. The Organization was founded in March 1920 in London.

The International Organization of Employers is recognized for its unique expertise, advocacy and influence as a powerful and balanced voice for business.

Its main areas of activity include the following: (a) generation of employment; (b) facilitation of skills development and lifelong learning opportunities; (c) empowerment of women and promotion of diversity; (d) development and enhancement of responsible business behaviour; (e) youth employment; and (f) digitalization and the future of work.

The global network of the International Organization of Employers directly improves people's lives by working to ensure that economic prosperity benefits all. It is the sole representative of businesses to the International Labour Organization (ILO). Furthermore, it is known across the United Nations system, the Group of 20 and in the context of other forums, as set out in sections 3 to 6 below.

At its March 2019 session, the ILO Governing Body welcomed the objective of the International Trade Union Confederation and International Organization of Employers to be granted observer status in the General Assembly. The ILO Governing Body is composed of 56 titular members (28 Governments, 14 employers and 14 workers) and 66 deputy members (28 Governments, 19 employer and 19 workers).

2. Membership and organizational structure

The International Organization of Employers represents 50 million businesses through its business and employer organization members in 150 countries. Membership is based on the consideration of businesses as "employers" and the role that members enjoy in shaping national social policies. The Organization looks carefully at three criteria when any organization expresses its willingness to apply for membership: independence (not public or compulsory contributions), representativeness and values. As a result, its members are well-recognized and influential business players shaping local policy. The supreme decision-making body of the Organization is the General Council, which brings together delegates from the membership organizations. It meets at least once a year, and is responsible for approving the work of the Management Board, which formulates the general policy direction of the Organization, adopts a plan of action for the next year and assesses the previous year's work. The secretariat, the body responsible for the day-to-day running of the Organization, is led by the Secretary-General, currently Roberto Suarez Santos, who is accountable to the General Council and the Management Board.

Membership of the International Organization of Employers is global in character and encompasses a comprehensive representation of business. The Organization does not represent one nation or one region, one type or size of business or one sector of the economy. It speaks for all businesses regardless of size, industry, location or legal structure. It also supports business networks of multinational companies: almost 50 multinational companies participate in the specific and dynamic networks of human resources managers and global directors of industrial relations.

3. Relations with United Nations agencies: International Labour Organization

The International Organization of Employers is the secretariat of the Employers' Group in the ILO governance structures and tripartite bodies and therefore represents one of the three constituents of ILO, one of the oldest specialized United Nations agencies, with 187 member States. This is exceptional within the United Nations system.

ILO is the only tripartite United Nations agency that brings together government, employer and worker representatives to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes aimed at promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all and promoting, inter alia, Sustainable Development Goal 8 (on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all).

For 100 years, ILO has promoted rights at work, encouraged productive employment and decent work opportunities, enhanced social protection and strengthened social dialogue on work-related issues. In its everyday operation, ILO gives an equal voice to workers, employers and governments to ensure that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in labour standards and in shaping policies and programmes.

Employers' organizations, which are represented by the International Organization of Employers at ILO, are a critical component of any social dialogue process, which can help to ensure that social and economic objectives are reflected in a balanced manner in ILO instruments, taking into account the needs of protection of workers and also the needs of sustainable enterprises.

Because of the importance of tripartism, ILO has made the ratification and implementation of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) a priority. Furthermore, the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization has stressed the key role of this instrument (together with the other three Governance (Priority) Conventions, No. 81, No. 122 and No. 129) from the viewpoint of governance.

Consequently, the international labour standards, without exception, are formulated, applied and supervised through a tripartite structure. The tripartite approach to adopting standards ensures that they have broad support from all ILO constituents.

Up until the present time, ILO has adopted 190 conventions and 206 recommendations, most of which are up to date. All of the conventions and recommendations were established in a tripartite manner and were adopted by a majority vote of International Organization of Employers representatives, International Trade Union Confederation representatives and government representatives of the member States.

In 1998, the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted by the ILO constituents (employers and workers, under the leadership and with the support of the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, respectively, and member States). The Declaration, which was initiated by the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, commits member States to respect and promote principles and rights in the following four categories: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the abolition of child labour; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

One central component of the ILO supervisory system is the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, which examines the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations each year. It is a permanent tripartite body of the legislative body of ILO, the International Labour Conference. It offers the representatives of governments, employers and workers the opportunity to undertake a joint examination of the manner in which States comply with their obligations deriving from the conventions and recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference. Following the technical and independent examination of government reports on their compliance with ILO conventions and recommendations carried out by the Committee of Experts, it is the employers' and workers' delegates to the conference, under the leadership and with the support of the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, who select 24 cases that will be examined before the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards. Furthermore, the employers' vice-chairperson, who is traditionally a Vice-President of the International Organization of Employers, and the workers' vice-chairperson, led and supported by the International Trade Union Confederation, are responsible for formulating the conclusions on the cases in the format of requests directed to governments. In the context of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, the social partners play an indispensable role for the core of the ILO supervisory system.

In sum, the International Organization of Employers is highly engaged in global governance, contributing directly and indirectly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, full and productive employment, decent work and economic growth, fair migration policies, climate change mitigation, conflict prevention, peace and security, among other issues.

4. Role within the repositioning of the United Nations development system

Like the other members of the United Nations development system, ILO has an important role to fulfil within the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as laid out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The reform of the United Nations development system calls for a stronger role for social partners in the United Nations system. This includes the International Organization of Employers, which, as a constituent of ILO, is well placed to make a significant contribution to this goal and to improve the accountability, efficiency and coherence of the United Nations development system.

The overarching aim of the reform of the United Nations development system includes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as also reflected in the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. To successfully implement the Goals, the United Nations must work with the representative employers' and workers' federations, which are critical agents in influencing local policy. These organizations play a key role in the negotiation and implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations and at the country level. In order to adapt to these requirements, ILO in 2018 took measures to implement this overarching goal and to adapt its development cooperation to the achievement of the Goals. The International Organization of Employers provided significant support for this decision and serves as a main actor in the implementation progress on the ground. Also, workers' and employers' organizations often join efforts through social dialogue and partnership, which are key for social stability and democracy.

4.1. Activities within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

ILO is a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and is actively involved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and

the United Nations development reform process. Being part of the tripartite structure, the International Organization of Employers helps to shape the ILO position within the Group.

4.2. Activities within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) elevated the position of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly the United Nations Development Assistance Framework) to become the most important planning and implementation instrument for the United Nations development system response to national needs and priorities in countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and thereby provide a contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. According to the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the United Nations country teams are mandated to support Member States in four interlinked areas: (a) sustainable development; (b) human rights; (c) peace and democracy; and (d) natural disaster prevention and response capability (resilience). This mandate involves supporting Member States in respecting, promoting, implementing and reporting on their obligations and commitments under the international norms and standards that the United Nations system upholds, including human rights instruments and international labour standards. The normative work that ILO undertakes within its mandate to support ILO members in complying with and reporting on international labour conventions and recommendations is fundamental to anchoring the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework inside the norms and standards of the United Nations.

For example, the workplan in the framework of a specific United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework on inclusive growth and decent work could include ILO support on implementing ratified international labour conventions based on comments and decisions of the supervisory mechanisms, including the conclusions of the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conference. Pursuing the normative agenda and the universal values that bind the United Nations must continue to be a priority of collective United Nations action at the country level, including through the engagement of the resident coordinators. Consequently, the social partners and ILO are closely interlinked in the process and will actively contribute to the good functioning of the new framework process.

In his letter dated 7 November 2018, addressed to the Director General of ILO, the Secretary-General stated his conviction that the reform process would lead to greater inter-agency cross-fertilization in support of the development priorities of countries, in turn expanding opportunities for the specific skill sets of specialized agencies such as ILO.

The close link between the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the ILO decent work country programme needs to be stressed. Such programmes follow two objectives: (a) promotion of decent work as a key component of national development strategies; and (b) the organization of ILO knowledge, instruments, advocacy and cooperation at the service of tripartite constituents. The programme is conducted within a results-based framework in order to advance the decent work agenda within the fields of comparative advantage of ILO. Tripartism and social dialogue, and hence the voices of workers and employers, are central to the planning and implementation of a coherent and integrated ILO programme. Decent work country programmes are the distinct ILO contribution to United Nations country programmes and constitute one of the main instruments to better integrate regular budget and extrabudgetary technical cooperation.

5. Relations with United Nations agencies and United Nations processes

5.1. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

Through its mandate, that universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice, ILO, as well as the International Organization of Employers in its role as one of its constituents, are crucial to promoting and advancing the entire 2030 Agenda and touch upon all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The decent work agenda is a driver of sustainable development and as such helps to advance many of the Goals. The International Organization of Employers has proven to be a reliable partner in activities essential to the achievement of the Goals, within and beyond ILO activities, especially in the achievement of substantial changes in local policies and regulations, through its members, who enjoy strong influence in this field. Furthermore, ILO development cooperation is now based on the promotion of the 2030 Agenda.

5.2. Economic and Social Council

In the context of the work of the Economic and Social Council, the International Organization of Employers was one of the first organizations to have received consultative status in the Council, in 1947. Consequently, the Organization, in addition to its role as a member of ILO, is very familiar with the United Nations system and has had long-standing experience in the international diplomatic context.

5.3. Global Forum on Migration and Development and Global Compact for Migration

The International Organization of Employers was invited by States attending the Global Forum on Migration and Development to coordinate the Global Forum business mechanism, a channel to provide the input of the private sector to the Forum. The interaction with employers enables governments to understand how migration policies and practices affect business operations at the national level. In view of demographic realities and skills shortages, employers face challenges in hiring the skills they need and can be a constructive partner in policymaking.

The International Organization of Employers has signed an agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), committing to finding practical and operational tools to be used by governments and business to combat unscrupulous recruitment practices. One such tool led by IOM is the International Recruitment Integrity System, a voluntary accreditation system for recruitment intermediaries so that they can demonstrate their commitment to fair and ethical practices. The International Organization of Employers is part of the Advisory Committee of the International Recruitment Integrity System.

Within the framework of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, several representatives of the International Organization of Employers spoke at United Nations Headquarters in New York in July 2018. The thematic debate was focused on the enhancement of public-private dialogue to rethink labour migration policies and international skills mobility.

With the participation of the International Organization of Employers and the World Employment Confederation, ILO has launched a fair recruitment initiative, which is aimed at preventing human trafficking, promoting safe migration and reducing the costs of labour mobility.

The International Organization of Employers actively contributed its expertise to the negotiation process of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular

Migration, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2018. The President of the International Organization of Employers spoke on behalf of the private sector at the adoption conference hosted by the President of the General Assembly in December 2018. The International Organization of Employers has also established a policy working group on international labour migration to ensure that the voice of businesses of all sizes and in all regions are taken into account in the elaboration of policy recommendations.

5.4. Human Rights Council (Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights)

The International Organization of Employers provides important employer perspectives in the many policy initiatives and forums held in the Human Rights Council. As a tripartite member of ILO and with previous experience in addressing human and labour rights challenges in the world of work globally, the Organization helps to link the work of ILO with that of the Human Rights Council.

Throughout the process of developing and now implementing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the International Organization of Employers provided a vital, constructive and broad-based business perspective to the many activities and initiatives that seek to advance the business and human rights and responsible business conduct agendas, involving and coordinating both multinational enterprises and small and medium-sized companies. The International Organization of Employers advocates on behalf of businesses, sharing the realities faced by business with policymakers and advocacy organizations to ensure reasonable, realistic and workable solutions.

Through its training and capacity-building projects, the International Organization of Employers also helps businesses of all sizes to meet their responsibility to respect human rights, in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and to make a positive contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Respecting and advancing human rights is a priority for the international business community and, as the world's largest international private sector network, the Organization is a critical stakeholder in helping to increase uptake of the Guiding Principles.

5.5. United Nations Global Compact

The International Organization of Employers has been a crucial partner throughout the elaboration of the United Nations Global Compact, since its creation. All Secretaries-General of the Organization have been members of the Global Compact Board, actively contributing to its debates and decisions.

Most members of the International Organization of Employers also participate in the Global Compact local networks, and a high percentage of the Global Compact local networks are run by members of the Organization, owing to the strong influence that they enjoy in this field and their active commitment to the principles of the Global Compact.

6. Activities with Governments and international governmental organizations

6.1. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

The International Organization of Employers has close links with the Business and Industry Advisory Committee at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Both organizations collaborate in providing recommendations to the Group of Seven.

6.2. Group of 20 and Group of Seven

The International Organization of Employers represents the core outreach group to the Group of 20 and the Group of Seven in terms of business representation. Among other common activities, together with the International Trade Union Confederation, it has developed, implemented and delivered on bipartite and tripartite agreements in the context of the Group of 20 and the Group of Seven.

In June 2019, for the first time, the Group of Seven agreed on a joint statement with international social partners, the International Organization of Employers/Business and Industry Advisory Committee to OECD and the International Trade Union Confederation/Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD, with a focus on: (a) strengthening coherence of the actions of international organizations and respect for international labour standards; (b) extending access to social protection; (c) adapting labour market institutions and promoting skills development in the new world of work; and (d) closing the gender employment, participation and pay gaps.

7. Reasons for seeking observer status for the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation

The International Organization of Employers contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals through its results-oriented membership, including a concrete impact on the ground. By granting the Organization observer status in the General Assembly, the United Nations system will strengthen its credibility as a multilateral body aimed at finding solutions through partnerships with employers' representatives. Together with the International Trade Union Confederation, the International Organization of Employers can serve as a proactive bridge between the United Nations and the world of work, at a time when the United Nations is looking to expand partnerships.

More concretely, the Organization can prospectively further, as it has already furthered, as laid down in the examples above, the attainment of the goals of the United Nations, especially in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, through the following approaches: (a) helping the United Nations to understand how businesses function and the most effective outreach avenues; (b) contributing extensive knowledge and experience on different aspects of the world of work to United Nations initiatives and programmes; (c) assisting businesses to address fundamental labour human rights violations and challenges; and (d) bringing the global voices of business to global debates and dialogue on sustainable development, migration, climate change, gender empowerment, youth integration and conflict prevention.

In the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the International Organization of Employers shares the same goal, namely to provide a better and sustainable future for all human beings, which is also often the goal of employers. As such, their voices are well represented by the International Organization of Employers, which is an organization that internationally coordinates the voices of employers around the globe.

Furthermore, the reform of the United Nations development system calls for the stronger representation of employers in the United Nations system. The International Organization of Employers will contribute significantly to the aim of improving the accountability, efficiency and coherence of the United Nations development system, including by providing a valuable challenge function.

In this regard, the contribution of the International Organization of Employers to the decision-making process of ILO has to be mentioned once more. As

international social partners, the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation represent 50 per cent of the eligible voters within ILO, and their voices have been indispensable for the consent and contribution of ILO to the United Nations reform process. In his letter, mentioned above, the Secretary-General thanked all ILO tripartite constituents for their collaboration.

Finally, the International Organization of Employers, owing to its long-standing membership and continuously excellent representation of employers at ILO, is best equipped to involve their voices in United Nations forums. The General Assembly is a crucial focal point where the Organization could contribute with its policymaking expertise in the context of the business world in all regions of the world.

While the requests for observer status of both the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation are submitted separately, to conform with the formal requirements of United Nations proceedings, both requests are intrinsically linked and are submitted so as to be granted observer status simultaneously. Indeed, to continue to be effective, both organizations need to continue to be able to act jointly at the global level.

8. Conclusion

The International Organization of Employers and its member federations represent the consolidated voice of business throughout the process of shaping United Nations policy. The above elaborated connections between the international representative of employers and the United Nations has made it evident that, for the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, considering the expertise of the Organization is crucial. As a representative of employers, it is, above all, critical in influencing local policy. It plays a key role in the negotiations, implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda at the United Nations and at the country level. Furthermore, employers' organizations often join efforts with workers' organizations through social dialogue and partnership, which are key for social stability and democracy.

As the representative of employers within ILO, the International Organization of Employers, together with the International Trade Union Confederation, represent 50 per cent of the eligible voters and hence are crucial to the decision-making process at ILO, a specialized United Nations agency. Being part of the tripartite structure of ILO, the International Organization of Employers can, in addition to working to fulfil the ILO mandate, determine the position of ILO within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. It is the intention of the Organization to use the momentum and to support the United Nations in the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Simultaneously, the Organization will intensify its communications and strengthen its efficient and effective working relations with the United Nations.

Annex II

Letter dated 12 July 2019 from the Director General of the International Labour Organization

On behalf of the International Labour Organization (ILO), I would like to express my support for the request by the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation for observer status in the General Assembly.

The International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation have a long-standing role in representing the interests of workers' and employers' organizations in the tripartite governance structure of ILO and have contributed directly to the development of international labour standards and the promotion of decent work for all. Their membership includes more than 207 million workers and 50 million businesses, respectively, in more than 150 countries.

Both institutions are influential players in the multilateral world, at the United Nations as well as in the Group of 20, the Group of Seven and other forums. They are strongly committed to advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation are founding partners and members of the Board of the United Nations Global Compact. They represent workers' and employers' organizations at the Human Rights Council and have played a fundamental role in the elaboration of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They have also contributed to the negotiations with respect to the Global Compact on Migration and are core stakeholders in the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

We are confident that, by granting observer status in the General Assembly to both the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, Member States will be taking an important step to strengthen multilateralism and international cooperation. It will allow for greater participation of business and workers in the development of global policies and standards while helping to rally millions of stakeholders behind the implementation of internationally agreed outcomes.

In the context of the reform of the United Nations development system, it would be extremely valuable to count on the contributions of national trade unions and employers' organizations affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation and the International Organization of Employers, respectively, working together with United Nations country teams, to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through partnerships and social dialogue.

Such observer status would also allow for a more coherent, consistent and legitimate participation of workers and employers in areas where enhancing private sector engagement is most urgent, including climate change, gender empowerment, youth promotion and sustainable peace.

For all of these reasons, I hope that you will be in a position to lend support to the request for observer status for the International Organization of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation in the General Assembly.

(Signed) **Guy Ryder**
Director General of the International Labour Organization

Annex III**Draft resolution****Observer status for the International Organization of Employers**

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of Employers,

1. *Decides* to invite the International Organization of Employers to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer;
 2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the action necessary to implement the present resolution.
-