

Points of consensus ¹

The contribution of collective bargaining in addressing challenges facing the public service, including the impact of the economic and financial crisis

1. An efficient and high-quality public service is essential to sustainable social and economic development and is of common interest to governments, employers and workers.
2. The conditions of work in the public service are set out through various means, including through constitutional provisions, legislation and regulation. Social dialogue is key to addressing several matters regarding public service. Collective bargaining is a concrete form of social dialogue, as it sets out in agreements the rights and responsibilities of public employers and public workers. A range of issues, including wages and workers' safety, can be determined through collective bargaining. Collective bargaining can contribute to reducing gender inequality and other forms of discrimination.
3. Collective bargaining should be carried out in a wider context of fostering and maintaining quality public services. It should aim to deal not only with technical conditions of work, but also to strive to create conditions that allow public service workers to carry out their duties in a motivated and efficient manner. Collective bargaining can also foster continuous dialogue that allows the public service to anticipate challenges. It can usefully set out areas of agreement and identify areas where consensus is not yet possible, with a view to addressing such issues in the future.
4. Effective collective bargaining requires mechanisms that will function well even in times of crisis. It should be based on good faith and strive to set out the collective responsibilities of the negotiating parties for achieving quality public services. Agreements reached should, if possible, cover several years to facilitate planning.

¹ These points of consensus were adopted by the Global Dialogue Forum on 3 April 2014. In accordance with established procedures, they will be submitted to the Governing Body of the ILO at its 322nd Session in November 2014 for its consideration.

Strengthening the independence and impartiality of the public service, notably through collective bargaining, as well as those public service workers who exercise independent power

5. The independence and impartiality of the public service and the protection of public service workers need to be ensured through legislation. This may include anti-corruption legislation.
6. Social dialogue, including collective bargaining and the implementation of collective agreements, can be part of the infrastructure that protects the independence and impartiality of the public service. Social dialogue should aim at, among other things, creating transparent conditions in which the public service develops an ethical culture that prevents corruption.

Action to enhance workforce development, career progression, employment conditions, efficiency and performance through social dialogue

7. In order to deliver quality public services governments should undertake proper workforce planning. Governments should consider training, retraining and mobility as being essential in order to ensure career progression and workforce development, including youth employment programmes. These measures should be seen as an important investment in productivity and employability and not only as an expense. They may also be considered a right for public service workers, which would offer the possibility of continued decent employment in the context of changes in technology and restructuring, in the full recognition of the fact that personal and professional development is a shared commitment.
8. Social dialogue should play a role in the design of training and retraining programmes. With the participation of workers' and employers' organizations, these programmes may help to advance public policies determined at a national level, such as mobility between the public and private sectors, or between government services.
9. Collective bargaining, in turn, is a particularly appropriate forum for protecting public workers' interests in continued skills renewal and gainful employment, while preserving the governments' interests in an updated and motivated workforce.

Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members

In view of the discussion at the Global Dialogue Forum on Challenges to Collective Bargaining in the Public Service, and subject to the availability of resources, the following future action was recommended:

10. The Office should carry out research on:
 - (a) the scope of topics which may be subject to collective bargaining in the public service, with a view to fostering further dialogue by constituents;

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- (b) the scope of essential services with a view to fostering further dialogue by constituents within the framework of international labour standards;
 - (c) the diversity of practices in social dialogue, in particular collective bargaining, in different countries, including the demographic dimensions of such practices. Such research should provide countries with knowledge to improve their own practices, enable improved responses to situations of crisis and to address obstacles in the ratification of Conventions Nos 151 and 154.
11. The Office should assist constituents in exploring linkages between social dialogue and such issues as public service delivery, labour migration, and public service renewal and modernization.
 12. The ILO and constituents should hold regional seminars to allow exchange of information and good practices on collective bargaining in the public service, in order to promote their sense of ownership in the results of social dialogue and collective bargaining.
 13. The ILO, in consultation with constituents, should adopt an integrated action programme on the promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining in the public service, which builds on existing initiatives.

Workers' organizations

14. Workers' organizations agreed to:
 - (a) strengthen existing negotiators' training programmes, focusing on ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 and Conventions Nos 151 and 154;
 - (b) carry out knowledge-sharing exchange programmes and disseminate among their members examples of good practice in social dialogue in the public service, including on equality clauses and anti-discrimination policies;
 - (c) strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, such as joint platforms or forums, with a view to facilitating collective bargaining across the public service.

Items already approved by the Governing Body

15. The ILO, in keeping with the Sectoral Programme for 2014–15, as endorsed by the Governing Body at its 317th Session (March 2013), will assist constituents in strengthening capacity to ratify and implement the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), in four countries, using the tools developed during 2011–12. Priority will be given to countries that have included the Convention as a priority in their respective Decent Work Country Programme (DWCPs) or national strategies; or recently ratified it or are expected to do so during the biennium.
16. The ILO and the tripartite constituents will continue to promote decent work in the public service through effective promotion, implementation and use of Convention No. 151, and of relevant instruments, declarations, codes of practice and tools, as well as engage in action-oriented research and dissemination of relevant information on trends and developments in the public service sector.