

International Labour Organization (ILO) - UPSC Notes

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency dealing with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all. This topic is of relevance to the [UPSC exam](#) aspirants.

International Labour Organization (ILO) - History

The ILO was established as an agency for the League of Nations following World War I.

- It was established by the **Treaty of Versailles** in 1919.
- Its founders had made great strides in social thought and action before the establishment of the organization itself.
- It became the first specialised agency of the UN in the year 1946.
- The ILO has played a significant role in promoting labour and human rights. It had held a significant position during the Great Depression (1930s) for ensuring labour rights.
- It played a key role in the decolonization process and in the victory over apartheid in South Africa.
- The organization got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969, for its efforts to improve peace amongst the classes, and for promoting justice and fair work for the workers.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Objective

The ILO is the only tripartite U.N. agency. The ILO is a meeting point for governments, workers and employers of ILO's member States to set labour standards, improve upon policies and create programs which promote decent work for people. The four strategic objectives at the heart of the Decent Work agenda are:

- To develop and effectuate standards, fundamental principles, and fundamental rights at work.
- To ensure that men and women have equal access to decent work while enhancing opportunities for the same.
- To magnify the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for everyone.
- To strengthen Tripartism and social dialogue.

International Labour Organization (ILO) - Structure

The basis of the ILO is the tripartite principle. The ILO comprises the **International Labour Conference**, the **Governing Body**, and the **International Labour Office**.

- **International Labour Conference:**
 - The progressive policies of the ILO are set by the International Labour Conference.
 - The conference is an annual event, which happens in Geneva, Switzerland. The conference brings together all the representatives of the ILO.
 - Function: It is a panel for the review of the important issues regarding labour.
- **Governing Body:**
 - The Governing Body is the executive body of the International Labour Organization.
 - The governing body meets in Geneva. It meets three times annually.
 - The Office is the secretariat of the Organization.
 - It is composed of 56 titular members, and 66 deputy members.
 - Functions:
 - Makes decisions regarding the agenda and the policies of the International Labour Conference.
 - It adopts the draft Programme and Budget of the Organization for submission to the Conference.
 - Election of the Director-General.
- **International Labour Office:**
 - It is the permanent secretariat of the International Labour Organization.
 - **Functions:** It decides the activities for ILO and is supervised by the Governing Body and the Director-General.
- **The ILO member States hold periodically regional meetings to discuss the relevant issues of the concerned regions.**

- Each of the ILO's 183 Member States has the right to send four delegates to the Conference: two from government and one each representing workers and employers, each of whom may speak and vote independently.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Functions

The ILO plays an important role in the formulation of policies which are focussed on solving labour issues. The ILO also has other functions, such as:

- It adopts international labour standards. They are adopted in the form of conventions. It also controls the implementation of its conventions.
- It aids the member states in resolving their social and labour problems.
- It advocates and works for the protection of Human rights.
- It is responsible for the research and publication of information regarding social and labour issues.
- The **Trade Unions** play a pivotal role in developing policies at the ILO, thus the **Bureau for Workers' Activities** at the secretariat is dedicated to strengthening independent and democratic trade unions so they can better defend workers' rights and interests.
- **The ILO also assumes a supervisory role:** it monitors the implementation of ILO conventions ratified by member states.
 - The implementation is done through the Committee of Experts, the International Labour Conference's Tripartite Committee and the member-states.
 - Member states are obligated to send reports on the development of the implementation of the conventions they have approved.
- **Registration of complaints:** The ILO registers complaints against entities that are violating international rules.
 - The ILO, however, does not impose any sanctions on the governments.
 - Complaints can also be filed against member states for not complying with ILO conventions that have been ratified.
- **International Labour Standards:** The ILO is also responsible for setting International Labour Standards. The international labour conventions which are set by the ILO are ratified by the member states. These are mostly non-binding in nature.
 - But once a member state accepts conventions, it becomes legally binding. The conventions are often used to bring national laws in alignment with international standards.
- **ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work:** The formation of an ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work marks the second stage in the ILO Future of Work Initiative.
 - The Commission outlines a vision for a human-centred agenda that is based on investing in people's capabilities, institutions of work and decent and sustainable work.
 - It also describes the challenges caused by new technology, climate change and demography and appeals for a collective global response to the disturbances being caused in the world of work.

International Labour Organization - Mission

The ILO's mission is to promote decent work for all workers. This is accomplished by promoting social dialogue, protection, and through employment generation.

- The ILO provides technical support along with the support of development partners to multiple countries in order to achieve this mission.

International Labour Organization - Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

The Declaration was adopted in 1998, and it mandates the member states to promote the eight fundamental principles and rights. The Fundamental Principles and Rights are categorized into four classes. They are:

- Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining (Conventions 87 and 98)
- Elimination of forced or compulsory labour (Conventions No. 29 and No. 105)
- Abolition of child labour (Conventions No. 138 and No. 182)
- Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Conventions No. 100 and

No. 111)

- As part of the Follow-up to the Declaration, the ILO Director-General also submits a Global Report on one of the four categories of fundamental principles and rights at work to the tripartite International Labour Conference.

International Labour Organization - Core Conventions

The eight fundamental conventions form an indispensable part of the United Nations Human Rights Framework, and their sanction is an important sign of member States' commitment to human rights. Overall, 135 member States have ratified all eight fundamental conventions.

- The eight-core conventions of the ILO are:
 - Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
 - Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
 - Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
 - Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
 - Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)
 - Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)
 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)
- The conventions are highly relevant due to the economic challenges faced by workers all around the world.

International Labour Organization and India

India is a founding member of the ILO. It became a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body in 1922. The first ILO Office in India was inaugurated in 1928.

- India has ratified six fundamental conventions.
- India has not ratified **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)** and **Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)**.
- As the two conventions involve the granting of certain rights that are prohibited under the statutory rules for government employees.

Labour Movement in India

The growth of the trade union movement in India was an organic process. It started towards the tail end of the nineteenth century and has had a parallel development to India's industrial development. The difficulties of the workers' lives came into light during the 1850s. The labour movement in India can be categorized into two phases: **the first phase lasting from the 1850s -1918**, and the **second from 1918- till Independence**.

- The origin of the labour movements in India can be traced back to the 1860s, however, the first agitation occurred only in 1875.
- The actions of the working class in the earliest stage were sporadic and disorganized in nature and hence were mostly futile.
- It was only from the second decade of the twentieth century in Bombay, that serious attempts were made for the formation of associations that could lead an organized form of protests.
- The second phase witnessed the sporadic protests obtain an organized form. During this phase, Trade Unions were formed on modern lines.
- The first labour tumult occurred in Bombay, 1875 under the leadership of S.S Bengalee.
 - It concentrated on the plight of workers, especially women and children.
- This agitation led to the appointment of the first Factory Commission, 1875.
- The first **Factories Act** was passed in 1881 consequently.
- In 1890, M.N Lokhande established **Bombay Mill Hands Association**. This was the first organized labour union in India.
- The 1920s was significant in this regard. Congress and the Communists made serious attempts to mobilize and establish a connection with the working class.
- The first attempt to form an all-India organization was also made in the 1920s.
- **Features of the labour movements in this era:**

- Leadership was exemplified by social reformers and not by the workers themselves.
- The movements in this era mainly concentrated on the welfare of workers rather than asserting their rights.
- They were organized, but there was no pan India presence.
- A strong intellectual foundation or agenda was missing.
- Their demands revolved around issues like that of women and children workers.

UPSC Questions related to ILO

What is the significance of the eight core conventions of the ILO?

The eight-core conventions of the ILO provide relevance and bring justice to the workers all around the world. The conventions are formulated keeping in mind the economic challenges faced by the workers of all classes. They help the workers get fair pay for their work and get the opportunity to be treated equally. It also regulates the employment of children for minimum wages.

Why is the ILO important?

The ILO works to promote social justice at the workplace, as it believes that social justice is the key to lasting peace. It also promotes employment generation and the concept of decent work, while adhering to international labour and human rights.

How does the ILO help the workers?

The ILO formulates policies and programmes which are aimed at serving the needs of the working men and women. The policies ensure that all workers have an equal opportunity, get respected for their work, and get paid decent wages.

What are the principles of the ILO?

The ILO works for promoting internationally recognized human rights for the workers. They have three primary principles which are based on freedom of the association, the abolition of child labour, and promoting social justice.

How many ILO conventions are there in total?

There are a total of 189 ILO conventions. There are 8 fundamental conventions and 71 other conventions which are in force. The fundamental conventions are binding on all member states irrespective of their ratification. The ratified conventions are legally binding international treaties, which have to be promoted by the member states.

