



Report on the International Labour Conference 2026

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STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Historic new protections for platform workers and stronger commitments to gender equality at work

The International Labour Organization held its 114th annual International Labour Conference in Geneva from 1–12 June 2026. It was attended by more than 5,700 delegates representing Governments and Employers' and Workers' organizations from the 187 Member States of the ILO, the United Nations specialized agency for the world of work. Delegates considered a number of important world of work matters such as decent work in the platform economy, a transformative agenda for gender equality at work and social dialogue and tripartism.



Members of the Irish delegation to the ILC (L to R): Neil O'Brien, Maeve McIlwee, Danny McCoy of Ibec; Deirdre O'Connor (ICTU/INTO), Minister Alan Dillon, David Joyce, Yvonne White, Caitriona Halpin, Therese Walsh, Peter Brennan and Patrick Rochford of DETE.

Congress was represented by David Joyce throughout the Conference, he was joined by Deirdre O'Connor (INTO) for a high-level visit during week two. The Ibec representative was Neil O'Brien, Senior Employer Relations and Communications Executive, and he was joined by Danny McCoy and Maeve McIlwee for a high-level visit in week two. The Government was represented by Alan Dillon, TD, Minister of State for Employment, Small Business and Retail, who was accompanied by several Government officials, including Ms Yvonne White, Assistant Secretary General Department Enterprise Tourism and Employment (responsibility for the Workplace Regulation and Economic Migration Divisions) and Patrick Rochford, Principal, ILO, EPSCO & Council of Europe Unit & Economic Migration Policy Unit. Ambassador of Ireland to the United Nations, Mr. Noel White hosted the delegation for a working dinner during the second week.

The conference is an important annual event with decisions that reaffirm the International Labour Organization's (ILO) central role in promoting social justice, defending democratic values and responding to today's global challenges in the world of work.

ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Hounbo's report to the conference, [*A Moment of Choice: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence for Decent Work*](#), stressed the need for international cooperation to ensure the benefits of AI are widely shared. Hounbo stated that "Our task is to help ensure that all countries, enterprises and workers have a fair chance to participate in and benefit from this transformation" and "ensure that AI advances decent work for all through a human-centred approach." David Joyce's speech to this report and to DG's report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories is available here: [*Speech at the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference | ICTU*](#). Minister Dillon and Mr McCoy also addressed the conference.





Minister Alan Dillon addressing plenary;

Decent work in the platform economy

The adoption of the first international labour standard on decent work in the platform economy was one of several important advances for workers at the conference. The ILC adopted Convention No. 193, Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, 2026, the first international labour standard specifically addressing the rights and protections of digital platform workers. David Joyce was a member of the workers group on this committee.

The Convention applies to all platform workers, regardless of the type of work they perform, whether online or location-based, and confirms that fundamental principles and rights at work apply fully in the platform economy.

The Convention includes:

- The right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- Recognition that workers' rights and protections must depend on the reality of the work performed and remuneration received, rather than on contractual labels.
- Important protections against discriminatory and unlawful suspension and deactivation, and the misclassification of employment status.
- Transparency and accountability in algorithmic management, including rights to information, human review and remedies.
- Timely and fair remuneration with cost recovery provisions and measures to extend social protection. For the first time ever in an ILO Convention, states are called upon to consider extending these protections to all platform workers.
- Occupational safety and health protections, including the right for workers to remove themselves from dangerous work situations

without retaliation, and protection against violence and harassment at work.

- Safeguards for workers' personal data and privacy.
- Additional protections for migrant and refugee workers.
- Guarantees of accessible, safe, fair and effective dispute resolution mechanisms and appropriate remedies.

Gender equality in the world of work

The Conference also adopted the Outcome of the General Discussion Committee on the Transformative Agenda for Gender Equality at Work – setting out an ambitious package of policies and actions aimed at improving the lives of millions of workers. Deirdre O'Connor was part of the Workers Group in this committee.

The conclusions recognise that the ILO Conventions on maternity protection, workers with family responsibilities and violence and harassment at work are essential complements to the ILO fundamental Conventions and mutually reinforce the realisation of the fundamental principles and rights at work.

To tackle structural barriers to gender equality, as well as emerging challenges emerging from demographic, technological and environmental transitions, the tripartite conclusions call for:

- The recognition of freedom of association and collective bargaining as fundamental tools to strengthen the representation of women workers, particularly domestic workers and workers in the informal economy.
- Equal pay for work of equal value and wage policies, including living wages.
- Gender-responsive occupational safety and health systems, including measures to prevent psychosocial and reproductive health risks, as well as violence and harassment at work.
- Expanding social protection coverage by two percentage points annually backed by stronger public investment.
- Comprehensive care policies and quality public services to support women's access to, retention in and advancement within decent work.

- Measures to tackle gender bias in algorithmic and artificial intelligence systems.
- Gender-responsive just transition plans towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

Gender equality is featured as a core institutional priority of the ILO, which is now called upon to develop a strategy to give effect to the conclusions and to regularly monitor progress.

Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)

David Joyce, on behalf of the Workers Group at the conference, spoke at an event to mark the growth of EPIC. Ms Yvonne White also spoke at the event and announced the next technical meetings of EPIC were due to be held in Dublin in September 2026.



David Joyce with Cuban Worker Delegate, CTC rep Mr Pieter Terry;

Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS)

The Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, which marked its 100th anniversary this year, reviewed how countries are applying international labour standards in law and practice. Delegates discussed the role

of employment and decent work in building peace and resilience in times of crisis and recovery. The Committee further held special sittings on Belarus and Myanmar and examined 23 individual country cases concerning the application of international labour standards.

As the situation in both Myanmar and Belarus is grave, the workers group stressed that the conclusions demand the fullest attention and follow up by all constituents.

It was emphasized that trade union members speaking at the conference cannot and must not be singled out for reprisals when exercising their rights. In this regard, during the Committee's discussion of the Panama case, the headquarters of CONUSI, a Panamanian affiliate to the ITUC, was raided. The Workers group emphasized that we consider these events as a clear threat and a direct act of reprisal against the Panamanian trade union leaders who were formally participating in the work of the CAS. These events confirm the gravity of the situation for trade unions in Panama.

The promotion of the ratification of ILO Conventions as well as their implementation in law and practice is and should remain core to the normative mandate of the ILO. The setting, promotion, ratification and supervision of international labour standards is of fundamental importance to the ILO, each reinforcing the other. Workers therefore welcomed the centenary statement of the Committee which reinforces the role of supervision in achieving real results on the ground for workers, employers and governments.

At an event to mark the centenary of the CAS, Patrick Rochford spoke about Professor Alfred O'Rahilly, an Irishman who was at the heart of the formation of the CAS. O'Rahilly was appointed Chief representative of the Irish government at International Labour Conferences in Geneva in 1924, 1925 and 1932. In 1924, he was elected Chairman of the International Labour Organisation's commission on the abolition of night work in bakeries. He became a lifelong friend of Edward Phelan, who indeed enabled him to have the Anglo-Irish Treaty formally registered with the League of Nations in 1924.

O’Rahilly in 1925 proposed the double discussion procedure for the adoption of Conventions that is the practice to this day, forwarding the notion that the first reading concentrate on the principles of a Convention and the second reading adopt its specific provisions. He also noted that the Conference should set up a committee to examine the expanding number of reports furnished by Governments to document how they had ratified Conventions. This suggestion was actioned in 1926 and formed the basis for the Committee on the Application of Standards and the Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards and Recommendations. These two innovations from a century ago still underpin the twin track ILO supervisory system that operates today.

Conclusions on social dialogue and tripartism

The participants also adopted a Resolution and Conclusions on social dialogue and tripartism, reaffirming the importance of governments, employers and workers working together to address challenges in the world of work. The conclusions highlight the need to protect workers’ and employers’ rights to organize and be represented and call for stronger cooperation and dialogue to help shape fair and effective labour policies. They also provide guidance for future ILO support to strengthen social dialogue at national, sectoral and workplace levels.

Palestine’s status confirmed

Another significant outcome of this year’s Conference was the confirmation of Palestine as a non-member observer state. The decision was endorsed in a vote by a large majority, with the USA, Israel and Argentina forcing the vote.

David and Deirdre with PGFTU General Secretary, Mr Shaher Saaed;



David Joyce with Cuban Worker Delegate, CTC rep Mr Pieter Terry;

Workers’ representatives welcomed the recognition as an important step in support of inclusive multilateralism and social justice. David and Deirdre met with PGFTU reps at the conference, Shaher Saed and Aisheh Hmoudah, who proudly displayed their worker delegate badges for the first time.

Cuba

We also met briefly with CTC rep Mr Pieter Terry and offered the solidarity of the Irish Trade Union movement to the people of Cuba during this time of existential threat for Cuba.

World Day against Child Labour

On the , 12 June, Deirdre attended an event to mark the World Day Against Child Labour where the Workers group demanded that governments and employers fulfil their promises to help the 138 million children trapped in work – including 54 million in hazardous work – robbed of their childhood, education and future.



Conclusion

At a difficult time, the Conference reaffirmed the central role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and multilateralism in promoting social justice and ensuring that technological and economic transformations deliver rights and protections for all workers. It is clear that social dialogue and tripartism are essential tools to address persistent inequalities faced by working people and that the ILO is at the heart of this.



For myself, the 2026 114th International Labour Conference marked my last one after many years representing Congress on the Irish delegation and in the Workers Group. It has been a privilege and one of the highlights of my career to serve in that capacity and I stand ready to assist my replacement in any way I can.



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