

**Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Employment
in the Tobacco Sector**Geneva
24-28 February 2003

**Conclusions on the future of employment
in the tobacco sector**

The Tripartite Meeting on the Future of Employment in the Tobacco Sector,

Having met in Geneva from 24 to 28 February 2003,

Adopts this twenty-eighth day of February 2003 the following conclusions¹:

General considerations

1. Tobacco, both as a crop and a manufactured product in various forms, has helped to sustain and contributed to world economies for several centuries. In many countries today, tobacco is often the sole source of direct and indirect income, fostering community and regional growth. However, the sector needs to be reviewed in terms of recent economic and social developments.
2. Employment levels in the tobacco sector are affected by a combination of factors, inter alia, globalization, the relocation of companies, the introduction of new technologies, as well as corporate restructuring. In addition, choices are imposed on governments which have an impact on their responsibility on the one hand, to preserve and safeguard the health of their citizens, and on the other, for employment policy. These factors, as well as government decisions, at national and international levels, were determining in the decline in employment levels registered in certain regions over the past four decades.
3. A review of the sector needs to be conducted on a dual front: firstly, taking into account the economic and social consequences of rationalization of the sector and, secondly, the factors driving these developments which have implications for the current adverse and future employment trends in the sector. The tobacco sector still, however, continues to provide jobs for close to 100 million people worldwide, although there are indications today that the constraints which the sector faces are likely to lead to downward adjustment in employment. Conditions of employment in the sector, in particular in the creation of new jobs in developing and transition countries, should comply with the principles and rights enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up.

¹ These conclusions have not yet been examined by the Governing Body of the ILO in accordance with established procedures and therefore cannot be considered as definitive.

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4. Special attention should be given to the large numbers of workers employed in tobacco growing who do not enjoy freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, with a view to providing them with sustainable livelihoods.
 5. A number of initiatives have been undertaken in the tobacco sector and good practices regarding working conditions are prevalent in most of the manufacturing and processing areas. Nevertheless, special attention should be given to the growing sector and unorganized groups. In view of the expressed concerns over employment, social security and welfare benefits, social partners and governments should continue to put in more efforts in addressing the uncertainty prevailing due to the increasing challenges in the tobacco sector.

Employment

6. Whatever the constraints in the tobacco sector today, efforts should be made to minimize adverse employment impacts on the sector. Steps should be taken to ensure that all jobs in the tobacco sector, as well as the quality of the new jobs being created in the host countries, reflect the principles and rights enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up.

Conditions of work

7. Occupational safety and health of agricultural workers in the tobacco sector should be protected.
8. Special attention should be given to vulnerable groups such as women and migrant workers with regard to improving their conditions of work in the sector where necessary. Measures should be taken in order to eradicate child labour in the tobacco-growing sector, particularly through sound poverty-alleviation programmes, appropriate employment policies for the adult workforce and educational opportunities for the children.

Training

9. Training and development should be made available to maintain and enhance professional skills, in order to address new challenges related to the evolution of the activities in the sector.

Role of international instruments

10. Steps should be taken to ensure that growing, processing and manufacturing in the tobacco sector respect core labour standards. ILO fundamental principles and rights at work should be applied to the sector as laid down in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, namely:
 - (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
 - (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;
 - (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and

(d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

11. In formulating social policy, multinational tobacco enterprises should be guided by the recommendations of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

Social dialogue and the role of social partners

12. Governments, employers' and workers' organizations should address the social and economic challenges that face the sector through social dialogue.
13. The participants at the Meeting agreed on the importance and role of social dialogue and of the need to engage in social dialogue for problem-solving. Bipartite and tripartite structures and mechanisms for social dialogue on a regular basis should be set in place to address all the challenges which the sector faces, with an aim to arriving at concrete proposals. Social dialogue should be conducted at the enterprise level, the local level and the sectoral level. The sharing of pertinent and relevant information in a timely fashion is essential for social dialogue.
14. Should employment decline, proposals to provide alternative employment opportunities for workers employed in the tobacco sector today should be drawn up.

International action

15. In partnership with other international agencies, proposals should be considered for developing other effective employment opportunities and alternative income-generating activities for workers in the bidi and kretek sectors, especially vulnerable workers like women and migrant workers, some of whom live at poverty levels.

Priority areas for ILO action

16. The ILO should take steps to develop action proposals with regard to labour and social issues in the tobacco sector as follows:
- continue to undertake research on employment trends and conditions in the tobacco sector, as well as on vulnerable groups, including the gender dimension;
 - undertake research on the sector with a view to documenting occupational health and safety hazards so that appropriate solutions could be implemented;
 - provide capacity building to the social partners to assist in dealing with social dialogue issues;
 - facilitate international exchange of information on labour and social issues affecting the tobacco sector and organize a follow-up tripartite meeting as soon as possible;
 - study the impact of tobacco control policies on employment, taking into account the status of the framework Convention on tobacco control.