



# South African Delegation Plays Active Role During First Week of 114th International Labour Conference in Geneva

The 114th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) officially got underway in Geneva on 01 June 2026, bringing together government, employer and worker representatives from across the globe to deliberate on some of the most pressing issues shaping the future of work.

Held from 1 to 12 June 2026, the Conference agenda includes discussions on decent work in the platform economy, a transformative agenda for gender equality at work, and the strengthening of social dialogue and tripartism. The gathering provides a critical platform for member States and social partners to influence international labour standards and advance social justice in a rapidly changing world of work.

Opening the Conference, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Mr Gilbert F. Houngbo, highlighted the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence on labour markets. He said that while AI presents opportunities to improve productivity, innovation and job quality, whether it advances decent work will depend on the choices made by governments, employers and workers through appropriate policies, regulation and social dialogue.

A significant highlight of the week was the work of the Committee on Social Dialogue and Tripartism, chaired by the Department's Acting Deputy Director-General for Labour Policy and Industrial Relations, Mr Siphon Ndebele. Opening the committee's deliberations, Mr Ndebele described social dialogue as "the very heartbeat of the International Labour Organization and of our labour markets." He cautioned that collective bargaining coverage is declining in many countries and that tripartite institutions are increasingly under pressure, calling for stronger and more meaningful engagement between governments, employers and workers in responding to challenges such as digitalisation, platform work and demographic change.



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The second day of the Conference commenced with an Africa Group meeting, where senior government delegates from across the continent met to coordinate positions, exchange perspectives and strengthen a common African voice on issues affecting the world of work. Discussions on gender equality also featured prominently on the sidelines of the Conference, with the Africa Group engaging on measures aimed at advancing equality and inclusion in workplaces.

South African delegation continued to play an active role in discussions on the future of work, participating in government group meetings on decent work in the platform economy. The South African delegation expressed confidence in the principles underpinning the discussions, emphasising the importance of platform work within the evolving labour market and its implications for emerging forms of employment.

South African government also reaffirmed its commitment to workplace transformation during proceedings of the Committee on the Application of Standards. Addressing delegates, the South African government highlighted persistent racial, gender and disability inequalities in the labour market and defended employment equity measures as necessary instruments for advancing substantive equality, inclusion and social justice.

As the first week of the Conference draws to a close, the South African delegation remains actively engaged across various committees and discussion platforms. Delegates are looking forward to welcoming South Africa's Minister of Employment and Labour, Nomakhosazana Meth, who is expected to join the delegation during the second week of the Conference and participate in the high-level engagements that will shape the outcomes of this year's International Labour Conference.



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