

**KOLPING and the International Labour Organization (ILO):
30 years of commitment
for justice at work worldwide**



We believe in you!

“Si vis pacem
cole justitiam”

“If you desire peace,
cultivate justice”



Table of contents

Foreword by ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo	3
1. Introduction: The working person at the center of KOLPING	4
2. Civil society at the ILO	6
2.1 The role of the ILO social partners and non-governmental organizations	6
2.2 KOLPING and the ILO: First rapprochements 1977-1993	8
3. 30 years of KOLPING at the ILO: A review in three stages	9
3.1 The beginning of consultative status: 1993-2002	9
3.2 Cooperation with the German Commission for Justice and Peace: 2003-2012	10
3.3 In a network with Catholic-inspired organizations: 2013-2022	12
4. KOLPING and the ILO: prospects for the future	15
5. The authors and interview partners	16

Foreword by ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's 30th anniversary of participating as an observer at International Labour Conferences (ILC) comes at a time when the realization of social justice faces considerable obstacles. The COVID-19 pandemic, growing political instability, conflict and economic crises have worsened pre-existing decent work deficits, increased poverty and widened inequalities. These overlapping crises have highlighted the urgent need to strengthen resilience, innovation and cooperation. At the same time, profound transformations, driven by technology, demographic factors, globalization and climate change are rapidly changing the world of work.

In this context, fighting for social justice is more necessary than ever. During the past 30 years, the International Labour Organization (ILO) built a solid response to the main challenges faced by the world of work. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has been part of this endeavor. Allow me to recall some of the landmarks of this journey.

In 1998, the ILC adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, in which the ILO's constituents committed to promote the fundamental rights of workers. In 2022, the Conference took the important decision to amend the Declaration by adding a 'safe and healthy working environment' as a fifth fundamental principle and right. In 2008, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization institutionalized the decent work concept developed by the ILO since 1999 and recalled the ILO constitutional mandate to promote policy coherence for social justice. In 2019, the worldwide celebration of the ILO's 100th anniversary culminated in the adoption of the ILO Centenary Declaration,

calling for a human-centered approach to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future of work. In the same year, the ILC adopted the landmark Violence and Harassment Convention (C190).

These advances have been very important, but they are not enough, so we need to keep working together.

This is why I envisage to forge a Global Coalition for Social Justice including through the World of Work Summit during the 111th Session of the ILC in June 2023. The Coalition aims to help reduce and prevent inequalities and ensure that social justice is prioritized in national, regional and global policies and activities, with a view to achieving real, sustainable and inclusive progress for the working women and men of the world.

Partnerships are an essential component of promoting social justice because no one organization or group can address complex economic and social issues alone. The Coalition will bring together governments, employers' and workers' organizations. It will also include other United Nations (UN) agencies, multilateral institutions, the private sector, civil society, development partners and academics.

I wish to pay tribute to KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's long-standing commitment to social values and look forward to working with you to reach our joint goals. Together, we can build just, sustainable and resilient societies.



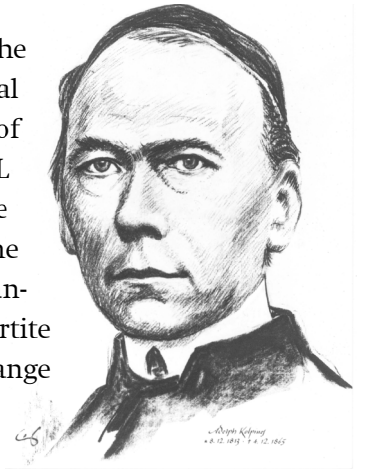
Gilbert F. Houngbo
11th ILO Director-General

1. Introduction: The working person at the center of KOLPING

“Si vis pacem cole justitiam” is written on the foundation stone of the International Labour Office of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva: “If you desire peace, cultivate justice”. When the ILO was founded after the First World War as the first specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), employers, employees and governments were still under the devastating impression of the First World War. Knowing that social injustice can also be a cause of war, they set themselves the task of formulating globally valid standards at work that must not be undercut anywhere.

In view of the realization that almost all people are forced to work, Catholic social teaching also formulated that inalienable human dignity must be protected by a multitude of rights at work. Early on, the popes stated that exploitation and oppression, low wages and excessive working hours contradict Jesus’ message of love. The fact that Adolph Kolping, the founder of our association, turned his attention to working journeymen and the workers of industrialization decades before the first social encyclical still points the way for the work of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL today.

The concerns of the ILO, the values of Catholic social teaching and the concerns of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL therefore show considerable overlaps. The fact that the ILO is also the only UN organization that, due to its tripartite structure, namely the exchange between governments, employer representatives and trade unionists, is an



internationally unique arena for social dialogue, underlines its importance for the social organization of the world of work on all continents even more.

The legitimacy with which it sets standards, struggles for compromises and ultimately formulates these as human rights at work in the form of core labour standards is extremely high. The fact that it also gives international civil society organizations the opportunity to participate in the consultations and feed their own positions and experiences into the debates considerably increases this legitimacy and ultimately also the acceptance of the standards set.



Inhumane and often dangerous working conditions still prevail in many countries around the world.



Giving young people access to education and decent work is one of the focal points of Kolping's work worldwide.

For 30 years now, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has been involved in the controversial and often arduous struggle for binding regulations for all working people on earth. We owe it to our approximately 400,000 members worldwide to stand up for all those who bring their labour to marketplace every day. Precisely because in some countries national governments are either unwilling or unable to guarantee the minimum standards of decent work, we need the international level, we need the ILO to set standards that are also valid independently of national ratifications. In addition, there is the technical assistance with which the ILO aims to support and help develop local and regional labour markets through its country offices. Here, too, the ILO's concrete work on the ground intersects with

the work of the many national associations of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL around the world.

In the following pages of this anniversary publication, we would like to look back on what we have achieved together over the past three decades. A large network of actors has been involved, who have tried with great passion to make human dignity shine, especially at work. The millions of injustices that people suffer every day at work will not allow KOLPING INTERNATIONAL to remain silent in the coming years but will continue to be an incentive for us to throw all our civil society weight into the scales so that things really are becoming fairer and fairer in the world of work. There is still a lot to do.

2. Civil society at the ILO

2.1 The role of the ILO social partners and non-governmental organizations

A classification by Pierre Martinot-Lagarde, Special Advisor at the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Every year, between 60 and 80 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) attend as observers the International Labour Conference (ILC). Among them, approximately 30 are global trade union federations, the remaining belong to the broad realm of civil society. To be more specific, these organizations are either human rights promoters, social protection and mutualist advocates, women's organizations, development actors, professional organizations (nurses, lawyers, etc.), faith based and value based organizations (predominantly Christian organizations). Since it was first invited in 1993, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has regularly attended the Conference.



Since 1993, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has regularly participated in the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

The participation of this wide range of organizations has been made possible because of arrangements specified in the ILO Constitution, the Standing Orders of the Conference as well as the rules of the ILO Governing Body related to admissions to the ILO Special list of organizations. It contributes to enrich and inform the technical debates taking place during the Conference, but also offers a space of interactions for civil society organizations related to the world of work.

The ILC, sometimes called the World Parliament of Work, convenes every year and brings together tripartite representatives of ILO country members, from governments, employers and workers organizations. In addition, civil society organizations may be invited as observers by the ILO Governing body. Together, the Conference convenes between five to six thousand persons in Geneva for two weeks. On its agenda lays in particular the preparation and adoption of International Labour Standards as well as other resolutions and recommendations aiming at promoting Social Justice in the World of Work.

Only INGOs meeting certain conditions are eligible for invitation. In particular, their aims and objectives should be “in harmony with the spirit, aims and principles of the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia”. It is also specified that length of existence, geographical coverage, practical achievements and the international nature of their activities constitute the main criteria. Finally, the organization in question should have, by reason of the aims it pursues, an evident interest in at least one of the fields of activity of the ILO.

The debates of the ILC are in essence public. Visitors are also welcome on the premises of the Conference (provided the absence of security threat). As for INGOs, their participation statute is of observers. The President (of the Conference) together with the Vice-Presidents may authorize them to take the floor during the Conference (to comment the report of the Director-General) as well as



All over the world, Kolping members are actively working for social justice as part of civil society.

during the Committees addressing some specific topics. In addition, the observers may be allowed on a case by case approach to make or distribute statements, as well as circulate information, on matters related to the work of the Conference.

Aside from the participation in the ILC, the INGOs may be granted “Special List statutes”. The “purpose of the establishment of the Special List was to place the ILO’s relations with these organizations on a systemic footage”.

From the ILO’s perspective, the participation of INGOs to the discussions being held at the International Labour Conference is a sort of extension to the essential consultation process to be held. In the ILO Conference rules, reference is made to employers, workers, agriculturists and cooperators. This reference has been viewed as the basis for further inclusion of other organizations. However, the statute of observer may appear quite restrictive as the rights to make statements or circulate information is always limited, and permission is to be granted by the President and the two Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

It is of course up to the INGOs to assess the benefits of their participation. The ILC is both a place where to advocate, bring information, but also to meet other groups and organizations. For instance, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has engaged in this context with other faith-based and Catholic organizations in the context of the ILC centenary and played a leading role in the project “The Future of work, Labour after Laudato Si”. Other opportunities of the same nature will surely arise in the near future.

Dr. Pierre Martinot-Lagarde is Special Advisor at the International Labour Organization.



The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the International Labour Organization.

2.2 KOLPING and the ILO: First rapprochements 1977-1993

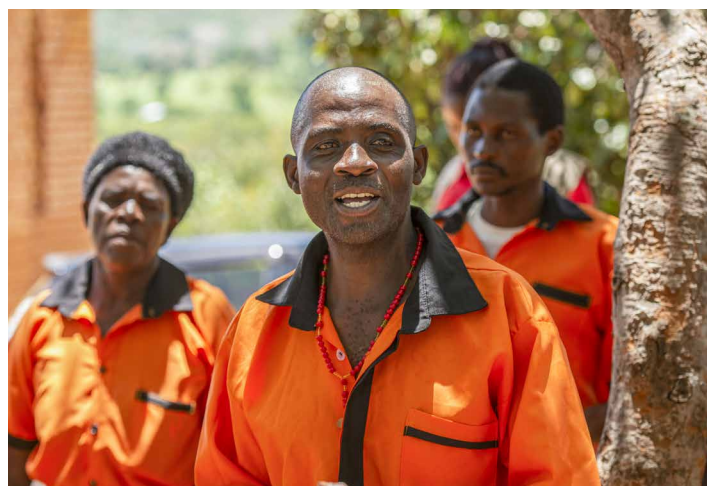
An interview with Hubert Tintelott, former Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL.

The first correspondence between the International Labour Office in Geneva and KOLPING INTERNATIONAL dates back to 1977. How did KOLPING INTERNATIONAL become aware of the ILO's development cooperation?

Hubert Tintelott: *Initially, it was the vocational training measures that became interesting for KOLPING INTERNATIONAL. An article in the trade journal "Die berufsbildende Schule" (The Vocational School) presented the training materials of the ILO. As training materials were urgently needed in Latin America in the 1970s, we requested these materials so that they could be adapted to the local context.*

In addition to the use of vocational training materials in Brazil and Chile, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL was interested in practical cooperation with the ILO on microcredits in India, as well as in Tanzania and Kenya. After the fall of communism, there was also a desire to seek training in business development in the Czech Republic. What were the limits of cooperation for non-social partners on the ground?

The training materials were not initially intended for partners other than the government agencies and social partners of the countries. In addition, there were of course test phases for new materials, which delayed their usability for KOLPING INTERNATIONAL. The ILO country offices, on the other hand, reacted differently to the requests of the Kolping associations - but mostly with restraint. Cooperation was limited to government offices and official social partners.



Creating better working conditions together.

Communication and cooperation tended to focus on the International Labour Office in Geneva. And here, too, it proved to be advantageous to have consultative status.

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL initially sought consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (UN) in New York. What did KOLPING INTERNATIONAL hope to achieve by registering with the ILO in Geneva?

As a UN location and seat of the Human Rights Council, Geneva was certainly a city that seemed interesting for the political work of the Kolping Association. After the first approaches via requests for concrete cooperation, the request for registration procedures in 1990 represented a homogeneous further development and consolidation of the cooperation. This was underlined by a personal visit to Geneva in 1993. The ILO also came into view, as the core of the development policy work was the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises and job creation through vocational training. The opportunity to regularly meet social partners from all over the world in an undistracted working atmosphere at the annual Labour Conferences via the consultative status was very promising. It also made it easier to gain access to the many specialist departments of the International Labour Office. It was also hoped that this would lead to better contacts with the ILO country offices, although this was not necessarily the case due to the bureaucratic hurdles on the one hand and the slow progress in raising awareness among Kolping members to seek cooperation with the ILO on the other. In any case, the expectation that experts from Geneva would make valuable contributions at events was confirmed. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL only used the annual meetings of the International Labour Conference as a platform for presenting its own positions as the political work progressed.

Hubert Tintelott was
Secretary General of
KOLPING INTERNATIONAL
from 1973 to 2012.



3. 30 years of KOLPING at the ILO: A review in three stages

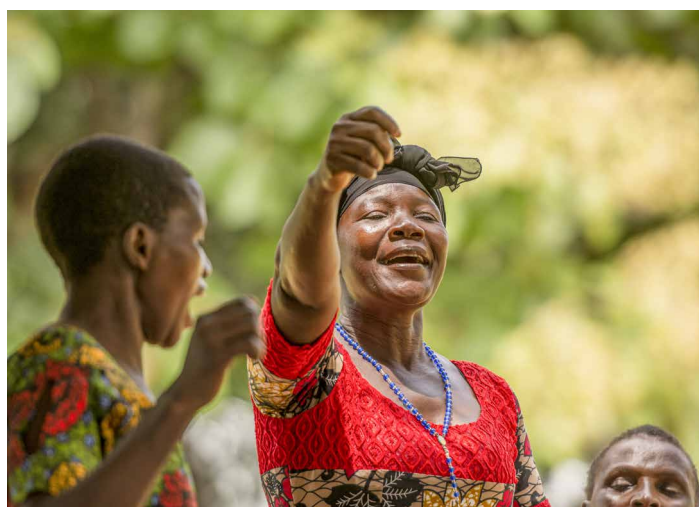
Three decades in a person's life encompass the important time of discovery, trial and error and learning. But they are also a time to focus on what is important to you and a time to search for tasks and challenges. Ultimately, these decades are also a time for building the social fabric, forming friendships and alliances. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's involvement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) developed in a similar way.

3.1 The beginning of consultative status: 1993-2002

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's experience with the ILO in the areas of microcredit, vocational training and business development in various KOLPING INTERNATIONAL member countries was fundamentally positive. In fact, the ILO identified similarities in the approaches to development policy work, particularly in the areas of savings groups and the development of microcredit programs. As the ILO does not see itself as a donor organization but as an implementing body for technical cooperation, it recommended approaching the ILO offices in the countries, for example in India, Tanzania and Kenya, and seeking opportunities for cooperation. The ILO also confirmed agreement on the need to combat poverty and achieve social justice. You can see the leverage here. It is precisely in these countries that the majority of Kolping members work in the informal economy. Therefore, the right to organize is a basic prerequisite for them to represent their interests, shape their development path and thus achieve active participation in society. Catholic development organizations have the responsibility not to stop at the implementation of projects but to influence the framework conditions of economic, environmental and social policy. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL sees itself as a shaping social force that takes a stand against poverty and exclusion.

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL is not alone in this understanding of development policy. The German Commission for Justice and Peace is a well-established network of Catholic institutions, associations and organizations.

With its diversity and wealth of experience, it not only brought together different perspectives but also enabled the discussion of development policy interventions. The



Uniting in solidarity and fighting together for structural change is what KOLPING worldwide is all about.

Federal Association of Development and Humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (VENRO) was founded in the mid-1990s. Here it was rather the other way round, with KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's work at the ILO qualifying the discussions in the VENRO working groups over the years with regard to the relevance of labour market policy for poverty reduction and development.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the ILO discussed the phenomenon of growing informalization in the globalized world of work. In the member countries of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, informal working conditions are prevalent. In India, for example, up to 90 percent of the working population still works informally. For KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, too, this discussion was an important orientation for development cooperation. In addition, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL was successfully registered

with the United Nations (UN) agencies. This enabled us to regularly position ourselves on development policy issues at the Economic and Social Council, as well as at the ILO. The basis for these positions was and is the experience of Kolping associations in building livelihoods and improving the living conditions of their members. These experiences bear witness to the difficulties of gaining access to social security, negotiating fair wages and good working conditions or developing alternative solidary economic forms.

In general, processes in the ILO or the UN are decisive for KOLPING INTERNATIONAL to devote more attention to working conditions in the informal economy, such as the adoption of the UN's Millennium Declaration in 2000, which contained 8 development goals to be implemented by 2015. Significantly, Goal 1 was to reduce poverty in the world. However, until 2007, the factor of work played no role in this. Decent work was only added to the list as a sub-goal of Goal 1 halfway through implementation. At its annual Labour Conference in 2001 and 2002, the ILO had focused on the informal economy. After that, it was obvious that sectors of the informal economy were now being negotiated between the social partners. For example, the issue of rights for domestic workers, which began to emerge in 2009, also affected many Kolping



In the early 2000s, the focus increasingly shifted to working conditions in the informal economy.

associations on all continents from Uruguay to Indonesia. Many predominantly young women from rural areas take on the work of domestic workers, both in cities in their own country and as cross-border migrant workers.

3.2 Cooperation with the German Commission for Justice and Peace: 2003-2012

Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical "Populorum Progressio" also inspired KOLPING INTERNATIONAL to follow the idea that peace comes about through justice and development. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL became involved in the Catholic Working Group on Development and Peace, which was founded by Catholic lay movements and later became the German Commission for Justice and Peace. Justice and Peace, now supported by the German Bishops' Conference and the Central Committee of German Catholics, is a round table of development, peace and human rights policy organizations, associations and institutions of the Catholic world in Germany. From 1999 onwards, the Commission's works focused on the social question in times of globalization. In particular, the right to organize, i.e. to form trade unions and associations in order to achieve decent working and living conditions, which

is enshrined in a so-called core labour standard, was the guiding principle for development policy advocacy. The International Labour Conference (ILC) provided important insights into this with its discussion on the informal economy in 2001 and 2002. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's consultative status with the United Nations and the ILO made it possible for Justice and Peace to work for humane working conditions at international level through the cooperation.

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's broad membership in the countries of the Global South, the majority of whose populations work in the informal economy, has contributed to the successful implementation of Justice and Peace's principle of innovative, exemplary and subsidiary development policy advocacy.



At the 2017 interfaith conference at the Kolping House in Uganda, the participants focused on developing South-South regional cooperation to transform working conditions in line with the ILO's "Future of Work" initiative and the SDGs.

In the early 2000s, the Executive Board of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) succeeded in highlighting the urgency of implementing the right to freedom of organization in the informal economy, including through an exposure and dialogue programme at the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad (India) in 2005, which ultimately led to SEWA's inclusion in the new founding of the International Trade Union Confederation in 2008. The new cooperation in turn led to the founding of the discussion group of German trade unions and the German Commission for Justice and Peace in 2006. It is made up of representatives from the DGB and six individual trade unions as well as from Catholic associations, members of the Commission and their environment. It was chaired by the then Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, Hubert Tintelott.

The original aim of the discussion group was to raise awareness of the right to freedom of organization in the informal economy among the social partners and thus promote its implementation. The concept of decent work developed by the ILO became an important framework for development policy engagement.

The ILO country strategies on decent work inspired the creation of similar discussion structures in countries where both KOLPING and other Catholic associations - such as the Christian Workers' Movement and the Christian Workers' Youth - were active. In Uganda, the "Joint Action Committee on Decent Work in Informal Economy" was founded in 2012 with the help of international trade

union associations such as the German union IG Metall, together with KOLPING Uganda and other Catholic associations under the leadership of the Ugandan Commission for Justice and Peace.

Since 2008, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL has also been able to set the tone for freedom of organization in the informal economy at the ILO, especially at the ILCs in Geneva. The intensive personnel cooperation between KOLPING INTERNATIONAL and the German Commission for Justice and Peace has enabled KOLPING INTERNATIONAL to sharpen its profile as an international non-governmental organization (INGO) which, in addition to its project work, pursues a strong advocacy approach by acting as a mediator between trade unions, churches and organizations from the informal economy. This was evident in the preparations and negotiation of a labour standard for decent work for domestic workers. From 2009 to 2012, this topic was the focus of side events during the ILC, workshops for civil society actors and discussions with the government and parliament at European and German level. The aim was to raise awareness of the prevailing lack of rights for domestic workers, to campaign for the prompt ratification of the ILO standard C189 adopted in 2011 and to promote cooperation between churches and trade unions for decent work for all. Thanks to the Kolping associations' roots in society, it was possible to successfully hold talks with members of national parliaments such as the German Bundestag and gain access to decision-makers. This contributed to the ratification of this ILO convention in Germany just two years after its adoption.

Around the negotiation of the Domestic Workers Convention and the efforts to anchor the right to decent work as a sustainability goal in the UN's follow-up agenda on sustainability, Catholic organizations working on labour and employment policy issues came together to form an advocacy network. In alliance with Justice and Peace, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL was committed to strengthening this network. During the ILCs, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL coordinated cooperation with the International Coordination of Young Christian Workers (CIJOC-ICY-CW), the International Young Christian Workers (ICAJ), the World Movement of Christian Workers (WBCA), the International Catholic Center in Geneva (CCIG), the International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC), Caritas Internationalis (CI), the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations in Geneva, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the International Christian Union of Business Executives (UNIAPAC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) and organized training seminars and political discussions. These opportunities were new territory for informal economy organizations such as WIEGO, trade unions such as IUF and SEWA, migration organizations such as the Migrant Forum Asia as well as church actors.



Dr. Markus Demele, Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, with Dr. Hildegard Hagemann from the German Commission for Justice and Peace.

3.3 In a network with Catholic-inspired organizations: 2013-2022

The success of German civil society in ratifying the Domestic Workers Convention in 2012/2013 also heralded the third decade of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's involvement with the ILO. The election of Dr. Markus Demele as Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, who had worked on the development policy significance of the ILO in his dissertation, gave further weight to the international work surrounding the ILO.

In addition, the follow-up agenda to the UN Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) loomed on the horizon. The advocacy efforts of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, Justice and Peace and other Catholic-inspired organizations at the ILO successfully focused on firmly anchoring the goal of "Decent Work" in the new agenda of the SDGs. To this end, KOLPING

INTERNATIONAL played a leading role in the creation of a position paper in 2013, which marked the start of advocacy with this goal. In September 2015, this effort was achieved with the adoption of the new agenda by the UN General Assembly.

In the UN Agenda 2030 adopted on September 25, 2015, Sustainable Development Goal 8 "Sustainable economic growth and decent work" has since provided the framework for further engagement with the ILO. Cooperation with other Catholic organizations, which send delegations to the ILC every year, is a supporting framework based on the common foundation of Catholic social teaching.

The profile of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL at the ILO is



Strategy meeting of the Catholic-inspired organizations (CIO) involved with the ILO in Geneva in June 2018.

visible in three components:

- **in close cooperation with the local Kolping Families**
For KOLPING INTERNATIONAL, those who work in the informal economy, who earn their income unorganized, unprotected and unheard, are at the center of the efforts for decent work and decent income. The annual contributions to the plenary debate on the respective report of the Director-General build the bridge between the experiences and efforts of the Kolping Families on the ground and the level at which international law is created.

- **in cooperation with international Catholic and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved with the ILO**

During the 14-day ILC, the Catholic-inspired INGOs, with the support of other INGOs, organize various events that delve into relevant topics, serve as training for other NGOs and give partners the opportunity to present their experiences. These include thematic workshops, strategy meetings, political meetings with government representatives as well as formal and informal networking meetings.

- **in the membership of the German Commission for Justice and Peace**

The “Development” section of the German Commission for Justice and Peace worked on several positions on burning but often neglected issues in the field of decent work. The ILC opened up opportunities to give these topics and the corresponding positions more attention and also to discuss the positions presented with social partners. For example, the events on the fringes of the ILC focused on precarious work in value chains in 2016 and on labour inspection in 2017. In 2021, the special challenges of the socio-ecological transformation were considered from a labour policy perspective.



Secretary General Dr. Markus Demele 2019 during his presentation at the ILC in Geneva.

The years 2017 to 2019 were marked by the 100th anniversary of the ILO. Also KOLPING INTERNATIONAL and the Catholic-inspired organizations prepared a cooperation between the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the current Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the ILO, which – inspired by Catholic social teaching – addresses the question of the future of work in the light of the encyclical *Laudato si*. KOLPING INTERNATIONAL was also significantly involved in the development of the project and, together with the German Commission for Justice and Peace, in the implementation of a three-year project around the centenary of the ILO.

In addition to the findings of the project, which led to the impressive document “Care is Work - Work is Care” in 2020, the Catholic-inspired organizations underlined their presence and commitment with a 14-day education and advocacy program during the ILC in 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic shaped the years 2020-2022. While the ILC was canceled altogether in 2020 and postponed to 2021, where it was held exclusively virtually

and in two parts, there was a hybrid event in 2022. This could be attended by the social partner delegations in Geneva on site, while INGOs were connected virtually. In both years, it was a tremendous achievement for the office to translate these complex and precisely coordinated negotiation formats into digital or hybrid formats. However, the INGOs can only hope that normality will return for them in the coming years. Having a live voice in the corridors of the Palais des Nations and the ILO has a different impact than being able to make your allotted 3-minute contribution in front of the screen.

Nevertheless, the Catholic-inspired organizations were not deterred from using their right to have a say through webinars and strategy meetings, through joint and individual contributions in the committees and the plenary. The increased distinction between social partners and INGOs due to the pandemic has made the question of meaningful and effective social dialog more virulent. A paradox is emerging: the precarization of the world of work is being promoted by the pandemic, while social dialogue is being restricted.



In the Global South, savings groups and microcredits are a successful instrument used by KOLPING organizations to enable women to earn their own income. Thanks to the start-up aid, many of them open a cookshop, a business or produce goods for sale.



4. KOLPING and the ILO: prospects for the future

Not least the pandemic and the way it has been handled have shown that cooperation between the social partners and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is not an unreservedly accepted factor, as the rights of workers are also repeatedly at risk of being undermined due to alleged serious damage to a growth society. The social partners will therefore continue to pay very close attention to their negotiating power and protect it by all means. This applies above all to the workers' side, as they are still the ones with the shortest leverage in the distribution machine. It is therefore also very much a question of how INGOs deal with this power structure and imbalance.

However, member-based associations can help to strengthen negotiating power by making their roots in the population and their commitment to informal and precarious workers available to the social partners. To this end, consideration can be given to how to familiarize members with the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO), how to make the achievements tangible in such a way that interest is aroused in seeking exchange with the ILO at national level and, if necessary, with all social partners. The informalization of the world of work is constantly being driven forward by the crises of our time. Even if the goal is to transform the informal economy into the formal economy, as described in ILO Recommendation R 204 of 2013, in the time until then it will always be up to civil society organizations to make the voices of precarious workers heard, as Pope Francis has always called for. The future of social

dialogue remains the central theme of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL's commitment.

The beginnings of convergence with the work of the ILO took place via the formalization of training and self-employment. For workers in the informal economy, it remains a constant challenge to assign themselves to one social partner or another. Nevertheless, no one needs to change sides once their social voice has been successfully recognized but can act as a bridge. And this is precisely what makes Kolping so strong: The perspectives of employers and employees, of craftsmen and trade unionists, of formal and informal workers are reflected in the association.

The work around the ILO is like an hourglass. Commitment at national level leads to the preparation of effectiveness at international level, and the quality of work at international level influences development at national level. The prerequisite for this is a smooth flow of information and constant socio-ethical reassurance.

KOLPING INTERNATIONAL does not face this challenge alone but in association with other international movements of both Catholic and labour rights character. In the coming decades, KOLPING will continue to raise its voice and be an advocate for those who are at risk of being exploited, taken advantage of and forgotten in a globalized world economy. In this way, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL will remain true to the work of Blessed Adolph Kolping, which moved him to action in Germany over 170 years ago.



5. The authors and interview partners

Dr. Markus Demele has been Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL since 2012. He is responsible for the Association's engagement with the ILO. Since writing his dissertation on the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, he has repeatedly worked on international labour rights issues.

For many years, **Dr. Hildegard Hagemann** represented KOLPING INTERNATIONAL at the ILC as part of the cooperation between KOLPING INTERNATIONAL and the German Commission for Justice and Peace. She contributes significantly to the networking of Catholic-inspired organizations at the ILO.

Dr. Pierre Martinot-Lagarde has been Special Advisor on socio-religious affairs in the External Relations Department of the ILO in Geneva since 2008. He has been supporting NGOs in their work at the ILO for many years.

Hubert Tintelott was Secretary General of KOLPING INTERNATIONAL from 1973 to 2012 and played a key role in shaping the Association's engagement with the ILO and its cooperation with the German Commission for Justice and Peace.

Imprint

Published by: KOLPING INTERNATIONAL Association e. V.
Kolpingplatz 5-11 - 50667 Cologne - www.kolping.net

Editors: Michaela Roemkens, Dr. Markus Demele (V.i.S.d.P.)
michaelaroemkens@kolping.net

