

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20-22 June 2023



EC 5

**“Building a strong, united and vibrant IndustriALL Global Union on the way to the 4th Congress in Sydney, Australia in November 2025”**

**Conclusions  
from the Mid-Term Conference**

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20–22 June 2023



## Preamble

IndustriALL Global Union’s Mid-Term Policy Conference was held from 20 to 22 June 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss the progress made with the implementation of the Action Plan adopted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress in 2021. The Conference elaborated current and future challenges for IndustriALL Global Union seeking answers for immediate, achievable, and tangible priorities that will enable IndustriALL to achieve the desired impact in the coming years regarding political, structural, financial, and operational matters.

## Setting the Scene

Most world economies are going through intense recession. The cost of living is skyrocketing in most countries and workers are feeling more vulnerable. The war in Ukraine has triggered multiple crises, particularly with huge increase in energy and food prices which fuelled high inflation rates throughout the world. Geopolitical tensions and trade wars, particularly between USA and China, have the potential to produce changes in the global economy. Increasing extreme right-wing tendencies create concerns in every corner of the world.

Inequality is having a major impact worldwide, affecting everything from economic growth to political stability and social cohesion. Policies, which prioritize market-oriented approaches and limited government intervention contribute to income inequality. What is needed is an economic system that is socially and ecologically sustainable and fair, serving all people in the world.

The countries of the global south are indispensable for achieving a just transition. Their economies are rightly striving for more economic development, more value creation at home, so that society can develop. But the countries of the south lack the financial capacity to make their economies more environmentally friendly and workers tend to be less organised.

Better cooperation between global north and south unions is a must. Solidarity and cooperation between unions from different regions are essential to address inequalities and strengthen trade union networks. Policies of inclusion should involve women, LGBT+ people, young and older workers, white collars, migrants and refugees, and people with disabilities in union activities.

The rapid changes in the world of work, which we continue to experience are mainly attributed to increasing competitiveness of other countries; outsourcing of operations; generational shifts in the workplace; the rate of technological change; and climate change and adaptation.

Increased unemployment and inequality negatively impacted on poverty reduction strategies that are required for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) although remote work contributed to social and economic activities being sustainable.

Globally, the labour market has been experiencing increased informality. Many countries have been experiencing rapid shifts in forms of employment. The shift is from a standard employment arrangement to non-standard employment relations.

They are generally precarious since they frequently, do not provide the workers the fundamental principles and rights at work. Such rights include freedom of association and collective bargaining, right to paid leave, and the right to social protection. They also impair labour relations and erode worker protection, and transfer additional responsibilities, such as social and trade union protection, job security, and wage negotiations to the worker.

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20-22 June 2023



Trade unions are increasingly losing membership and worker power is rapidly being eroded amidst swift changes in the world of work. Therefore, there is a strong need for a new social contract in order to ensure that rights are respected, jobs are decent with living wages, social protection is universal, accountability for business is secured through due diligence, and social dialogue ensures Just Transition measures for climate and technology.

Under the circumstances, IndustriALL will:

- Have a clear focus on the core areas of competence which include multinational companies, global institutions, strategic organizing and campaigning, which requires affiliates' ownership and clear goals;
- Strengthen its role in addressing imbalances and inequality caused by corporate power, and advocate for a new social contract through building trade union power in multinational companies and their supply chains and strengthening union structures to enable them to influence policy makers via global solidarity, cooperation and campaigns;
- Reinforce democracy, transparency, and inclusion by encouraging active participation of affiliated unions in policy-making and decision-making processes and establishing mechanisms and platforms to promote transparency and accountability within IndustriALL.
- Ensure equal gender representation, and inclusion of different groups in decision-making.
- Start a discussion until the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of IndustriALL in Sydney in 2025 about possibilities of statutory changes to support the participation of youth in the bodies.

## Main priorities over the strategic goals:

### 1) Addressing growing inequalities in the world

A New Social Contract is needed between workers, government and business which should include a floor of a universal labour rights guaranteed for all workers. Implementing it would make sure that rights are respected, jobs are decent with minimum living wages and collective bargaining, social protection is universal, due diligence and accountability are driving business operations, and that social dialogue ensures just transition measures for climate and technology.

Inequality negatively affects societies. It leads to a concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a small wealthy elite. They use that power to shape policies and institutions in ways that benefit their own interests at the expense of the broader population. This leads to a lack of representation for marginalized groups and erosion of democratic institutions.

Growing inequality is having negative effects on workers being stuck in stagnating low wages, precarity and job insecurity are increasing, the gender pay gap is widening, and bargaining power is decreasing.

Organizing, collective bargaining and mobilization are the most important tools at our disposal to fight inequality. Trade unions must therefore increase their international cooperation and coordinate appropriately to achieve this goal. In addition, the trade union movement should fight for more fair, more progressive and re-distributive taxation of wealth, act against tax havens, and ultimately improve the working conditions of all workers, regardless of their country, to reduce overall inequality.

Within this framework, IndustriALL will prioritize to:

- Develop its tools to secure basic trade union rights for all workers fighting any attack againsts the right to organize and bargain collectively, and build on the strength of

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20-22 June 2023



IndustriALL as a global membership based organization to bring together affiliates in solidarity when attacks occur.

- Strengthen solidarity and cooperation between unions from different regions, particularly between Global North and Global South in order to address inequalities through advocacy actions in global governance architecture by strengthening its networks.
- Enhance its policies of inclusion with active involvement of women, LGBT+ people, young and older workers, white collars, migrants and refugees and people with disabilities in union activities.
- Reinforce its Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) actions and practices in regional, sectoral and cross-sectoral areas.

## 2) Building union power through organizing

Building union power through strategic organizing is key. Organizational power arises from workers to associate and unite to form unions. Increasing membership is its primary goal as members are a union's greatest resource. However, membership numbers alone are not enough. Trade unions need financial and human resources with expertise to do their work.

There are many problems related to the increasing use of subcontracting and the ever-expanding supply chains. Strong cooperation between unions at various levels and between countries, including north-south, is seen as of great value. IndustriALL's position is seen as very crucial to building this cooperation, as well as solidarity, between the global north and south.

International tools provide opportunities to empower workers and build solidarity in an environment where global supply chains and human rights due diligence are becoming increasingly important. It is critical to efficiently use these instruments, which requires concrete actions in increasing awareness raising and building capacity throughout the supply chain to ensure their effective implementation.

There is a clear need to look at the future of union organizing approaches and strategies, and at transforming union agendas, structures, actions, methods, and tactics in order to empower workers and build a strong union base at the workplace in an inclusive and participatory way in order to integrate the most vulnerable groups. Unions need to develop strategies and actions on how to open new or previously non-union industries to unions.

Weak legislation and weak implementation of legislation are re-occurring obstacles to organizing. The right to organize, right to bargain collectively, and right to strike are fundamental human rights that, in many countries, are violated on a regular basis.

Due diligence at various levels can be a paradigm shift, but also as the first step. There is a need for a lot of work to make this due diligence legislation work, including explaining what it is and how unions can use it effectively to build more union power.

Within this framework, IndustriALL will prioritize to:

- Make organizing a priority in its sectoral, regional, and company work taking actions and carrying out strategic organizing campaigns with clear defined goals around different phases, including research and mapping, good preparation, recruitment in order to build strong union bases on the ground to enable them to negotiate and conclude good collective bargaining agreements to improve working conditions and establish social dialogue. This strengthens existing union structures and leads to organizing non-union industries and companies;

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20-22 June 2023



- Develop a joint understanding and institutional capacity in the field of strategic organizing to be used in special projects and other activities through effective education and training for organizers and members with a particular focus on organizing workshops, with guidance on organizational development for the empowerment of affiliated trade unions;
- Together with affiliates, be more inclusive over the transformative agenda which include catching up on the reality for workers, gaining the necessary expertise, installing good training concepts and mechanisms and using modern approaches and techniques of organizing to create a future-oriented union direction, for which existing resources and materials will be mapped, reviewed, and revised through a Working Group;
- In order to achieve the points mentioned above establish a working group that conducts workshops and established an action plan as described in the document on building trade union power adopted in the Executive Committee meeting in June 2023; in doing this, the perspective from the regions needs to be taken into consideration and a better cooperation between unions from the Global South and North shall be promoted;
- Invest in due diligence processes where workers and their representatives have a say, in advocacy work as well as for awareness raising, in capacity building on how to use due diligence for organizing, collective bargaining and the protection of fundamental rights, skills for capacity building and awareness raising, and invest in creating a database about the efficient use of due diligence—the aim is to develop a collective competence within IndustriALL across the sectors and regions to collect data, develop more expertise and coordination of the work in this field.

### 3) Strategies and actions towards companies and brands

It is important to acknowledge the use of state apparatus and strategies employed by brands and multinational corporations (MNCs) to avoid accountability and scrutiny, such as relocation, name-changing practices, and subcontracting. To effectively respond to these challenges, it is important to highlight the international solidarity, open dialogue, and the inclusion of workers in campaigns.

IndustriALL needs proactive strategies and structures within multinational companies highlighting the importance of strategic focus, collaboration, and targeted action. IndustriALL can effectively strengthen trade union solidarity, enhance capacity, and advocate for workers' rights within strategic industries. In order to ensure sound and functioning industrial relations and social dialogue, corporate campaigning with clearly defined goals should be at the heart of IndustriALL's work, and therefore, necessary resources need to be made available.

Transparency and open processes are important, particularly in terms of internal negotiations and the establishment of global agreements. The role of unions in the home countries of MNCs is important to ensure equality between the global north and south. It needs to be recognized that there is the need to be sensitive to cultural diversity and gender aspects, placing them at the centre of transnational cooperation.

Building strong networks and collective multinational actions are crucial for effective trade union power. There is a clear need for transparent and open comprehensive complaints mechanisms to address issues, as well as the role and influence of states or governments in union bashing.

Another significant aspect is the identification of strategic campaigning policies. There is a need for both reactive and proactive approaches and further mapping exercises of potential sectors. It is vitally important to have a balanced global focus on sectors with strong potential and impact.



# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20-22 June 2023



Within this framework, IndustriALL will prioritize to:

- Allocate resources to empower workers within multinational supply chains; strengthen coordination and cooperation among affiliates in supply chains; and advocate for transparency and accountability from multinational corporations regarding their supply chain practices.
- Develop corporate campaigns aiming at forcing multinational companies to the bargaining table, supported by sufficient ground-level engagement with clear campaign outlines and plans, accompanied by industry research and collective multinational actions.
- Invest and campaign in strategic sectors such as battery and renewable energy, starting with wind energy.

## 4) Shaping our future through Just Transition

The transition to a cleaner, more sustainable economy must be economically and socially just and fair for workers and their communities. The main goal should be to create at least one new, decent job for each job lost.

It is challenging to achieve Just Transition in a world characterized by unequal economic development and political power, and conflicts of interest between employers and employees and between different countries.

Countries in the global south are indispensable for achieving Just Transition, but their economies seek more economic development, the states lack the financial capacity to green their economies, workers tend to be less organized, and there is a great diversity of the most represented economic sectors, making it difficult to achieve a strong, unified push for a just ecological transition.

The need to respond to climate change is felt differently in different countries, depending on their geographical location and financial capacity to mitigate climate-caused damages. Many MNCs do greenwashing, or some countries try to reach their climate goals by transferring pollution and hazardous production to other countries.

Trade unions can and must play a central role in pushing for a Just Transition, but they are impeded by unequal trade union development and capacity to affect national and international policy making. Additionally, different worker interests can diverge enormously, depending on their situation within the global economy.

IndustriALL needs to continue to fight for a Just Transition with the creation of millions of secure union jobs, delivered through social dialogue at the highest levels.

IndustriALL and its affiliates demand a seat at the table and the creation of multi-stakeholder Just Transition task forces/commissions/permanent institutions on structural change in employment that are properly constituted and properly funded. IndustriALL further demands that these discussions take place at company, local, national, regional, and global levels.

Within this framework, IndustriALL will prioritize to:

- Advocate industrial policies at all levels for quality well-paid union jobs making sure that all the measures linked to the condition of respecting workers' rights, promoting dialogue and collective bargaining, and defending Just Transition are taken;
- Work together to push for fair policies and support unions in different countries in their transition efforts for a sustainable economy that protect existing jobs and create new quality employment opportunities with the involvement of workers in decision-making

# IndustriALL Mid-Term Policy Conference

Cape Town – South Africa  
20–22 June 2023



related to industrial transition and sustainable development, particularly around re-skilling and re-qualification matters;

- Advocate for labour rights, wage equity, and equal opportunities in transformation processes as well as in trade policies and practices for which labour safeguards must be a priority area of action.

## Issues related to finances:

IndustriALL has the lowest affiliation fees amongst the GUFs with CHF 1.35 per active member (2024). The total affiliation fee income in 2022 was CHF 11.2 million. The total affiliation fee income in 2016 was 15 million CHF. This represents a drop of 25 %.

Very few GUFs have an affiliation fee that is below CHF 2 per member. The former members of ICEM paid CHF 2.94 per member already in 2012. Quite a few affiliates are also affiliated to other global unions where they pay substantially higher affiliation fees than they do to IndustriALL. If IndustriALL had CHF 2 per member as affiliation fee, the affiliation fee income for 2022 would have been CHF 17 million. If the affiliation fee was the same as for ICEM before the merger, the total affiliation fee income would have been CHF 25 million.

The following proposals have been made as possible future prospects:

- 1) Increasing and re-purposing revenues and assets:
  - a) Considering affiliation fees
  - b) Organizing and campaigning fund
  - c) Allocating funds from our portfolio in the bank
  - d) Expansion of external donor funding:
- 2) Reduction of costs:
  - a) Re-organization of internal work
  - b) Relocation of the Head Office

Within this framework, IndustriALL will:

- Continue to regularly and seriously address financial challenges due to a decline in membership and subscription income;
- Rationalize resources, explore new funding sources, and reallocate funds in line with the priorities identified;
- Ensure transparent and efficient use of funds for the benefits of affiliated organizations;
- Conduct a financial, legal and personnel based due diligence process to be presented to Congress in 2025 on relocation of the head office;
- Give priority to the items as described in this document and determine what kind of work and activities cannot take place any more due to the limited sources of the organization;
- Explore synergies and opportunities to ensure more efficient internal work inside IndustriALL, in line with the resources.