

April 10, 1969 – 50th Anniversary of ILO

From the official Ethiopian post office presentation folder:

The International Labor Organization (ILO) was founded in 1919. Its Charter was drawn up during the World War I peace conference, being approved on 11 April 1919 as Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Organization was founded to bring together governments, employers and workers for united action in the cause of social justice and higher living standards. Universal peace, declares the Charter, can be established only if it is based on social justice.

In the period between the wars the ILO functioned as an autonomous part of the League of Nations. It was the only major League body to survive the Second World War, and in 1946 it became the first specialized agency associated with the United Nations. Ever since it has been recognized within the United Nations family as having special responsibility for social and labor questions.

The post-war reinvigoration of the ILO was heralded by the declaration of Philadelphia, drawn up in 1944, which set out a new definition of the organization's aims and purposes. The Declaration boldly asserts the primary of the social objective in international policy. It proclaims the right for all human beings "to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity." The ILO's motto – "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere" – is taken from this document.

The main task assigned to the ILO at the outset was that of improving the conditions of life by building up a comprehensive code of law and practice. This standard-setting function is still performed by the ILO. Since 1919 the International Labor Conference – supreme deliberative body of the ILO – has adopted 259 conventions and recommendations regulating many aspects of labor administration, social welfare and human rights.

These instruments collectively form the International Labor Code, and international *corpus juris* of social justice which has been, and remains one of the formative influences on the development of social legislation throughout the world.

The second main task of the ILO is to participate actively in the war against want. Its operational program, aimed at promoting economic and social development side by side, has rapidly grown to large proportions. Currently the ILO spends over US \$ 16 million annually on technical cooperation projects, almost 40 per cent of which is devoted to the Africa countries.

This program concentrates on three main areas: developing human resources, building up social institutions and improving conditions of work and life: A large part of the effort is devoted to training the key personnel – from skilled workers to senior managers – required for economic development. The ILO's work in the social sphere is designed to ensure that the benefits of such development are shared fairly by all people in terms of higher standards of living.

A major role in this training program is played by the ILO's International Center for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training in Turin, Italy, and The International Institute for Labor Studies in Geneva.

Today the ILO's membership has grown to 119 – 37 of the member states being in Africa. The International Labor Office, the ILO's permanent secretariat, is staffed by officials of some 80 nationalities.

In Africa – where some 300 ILO experts are now at work – the Organization has set up a decentralized administrative system with regional headquarters in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia has been a member of the Organization since 1928.