

## Launch of Joint Regional Spotlight Initiative between the Caribbean Employers' Confederation (CEC) and the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL)



International  
Labour  
Organization

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The Caribbean part of the Spotlight Initiative, which is a global programme or initiative, focuses on gender-based violence and harassment in the family setting. So, one might ask oneself what role an organization like the ILO and especially workers and employers' organizations have in this work, given its area of focus.

The reason why it is important and of course, my colleagues, Mr. Mr. Lewis and Mr Chen have already pointed to it. The why it is important that organizations such as the CEC and the CCL are involved is that there is a clear link between home and workplace which cannot be ignored. Whether it is about a workplace as an arena. Where attitudes and opinions are formed and acted on, or the workplace as a possible haven from abuses is happening at home.

So just a few points from my side on the linkage between the home or the family context and the workplace.

For many, the workplace is where we spend at least half of our waking hours during the week and therefore it is.

However, much we talk about, separating and work life balance, the workplace is a fundamental part of our lives. In our interactions with co-workers, colleagues and in the signals that are delivered from management, attitudes and opinions can be shaped and acted upon.

The workplace is therefore an important venue to raise awareness and contribute to changing attitudes on issues such as gender-based harassment and violence.

Domestic or family violence comes also with a cost. First and foremost, to the victims of it, but also to their workplaces and by extension to society. Among others due to workdays that are lost and productivity losses as examples.

The workplace can contribute to be a support structure for survivors of gender-based violence, or it can contribute to further victimize. The latter for instance, if the person ends up dismissed due to missing workdays caused by injuries from harassment and violence at home.

Or the former, if it provides a safe space and even advice, legal support and other areas of support to the victims.

Last point, in this session on the linkage, is of course the importance that work and income, has, to provide an opportunity to survivors of domestic or family setting violence to leave the situation they're in. Economic dependence often keeps women in situations and relationships which are damaging and, in some cases, even dangerous. So, work and income is and can be an escape route from these situations.

While my colleagues from the CEC and CCL, and I've given you a bit of an overview of the work that will be carried out jointly in the context of this component, I will take just a few minutes to say some words about the first international treaty aimed at addressing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. The ILO's Convention, number 190, which is aptly named the Violence and Harassment Convention and its accompanying recommendation number 206. They were both adopted in 2019 and entered into force in June last year.

Just for information, an ILO Convention enters into force one year after two countries have ratified it, so that's why it takes a bit from adoption to entry into force.

So why was it deemed necessary to develop an instrument of this type?

It is based on the recognition that violence and harassment, sadly, including gender-based violence, is present in all sectors in all countries.

And it is fundamentally incompatible with decent work.

It is a threat to equal opportunities and its completely irreconcilable with safe and healthy and productive working environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as we all know, has been a sombre reminder that in times of crisis, the risk of violence escalates

There have been many reports of work-related violence and harassments, and a dramatic increase in occurrences of domestic violence and, importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has also since so many people had their home become their workplace, myself included during the last two years.

This further blurred the lines between work at home and the and made in a sense domestic violence and harassment, also workplace violence and harassment.

Convention 190 establishes then a common framework for preventing and addressing and eliminating this devastating phenomenon. It constitutes a formal commitment from the international community towards achieving a right of everyone to a world of work, free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

I once again want to refer to that linkage between the home and the workplace, which also the Convention and the Recommendation points to.

For instance, Recommendation 206, which is the accompanying guidance document. If you may, to the convention. Points to measures that can be taken to support victims of domestic or violence in the family setting in the world of work.

- For instance providing leave for victims of domestic violence.
- Providing flexible work arrangement and protection for the victims.
- Protection against dismissal for victims.

When that is appropriate to include domestic violence as an element of workplace risk assessments, particularly relevant now that that the workplace for many have also at least partially become their home.

Establishment of a referral system to public mitigation measures for domestic violence, where they exist and also, of course, as mentioned the shaping of attitudes and opinions and so on. The awareness raising about the effects of domestic violence.

So far only eleven countries in the world have ratified this Convention. It is still very new and none of them are from the Caribbean.

There was a lot of interest. I think there still is a lot of interest from several of our Countries, but then as we all know, the pandemic came and shifted the priorities of the Governments and also workers and employers organizations in the region to other more acute issue.

But in our campaigning for the ratification of Convention 190, there is now clearly renewed interest and engagement, and we hope to soon have the first Caribbean ratification of this important Convention.

I will stop there and once again congratulate CEC and CCL on this joint work that we're embarking on and wish us the best of success in going forward in helping preventing gender-based violence in the Caribbean.

Thank you.