



Declarations Are Major Milestones

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This site presents information of special interest in the U.S.

The *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* is the third such instrument in the ILO's 80 years. The first was the Declaration of Philadelphia, which was adopted in 1944 and equipped the Organization to deal with postwar workplace issues. It presaged the United Nations Universal Human Rights Declaration, and was later annexed to the ILO's Constitution. President Roosevelt told delegates to the 1944 International Labor Conference in Philadelphia that the Declaration they had just adopted "sums up the aspirations of an epoch which has known two world wars." Referring to the American Declaration of Independence, he said, "The Declaration which you have formulated in Philadelphia may well acquire a similar significance. In it you have reaffirmed principles which are the essential bulwarks of any permanent peace."

The second such instrument in ILO history was the "Declaration Concerning Action Against Apartheid," adopted in 1964 and rescinded in 1994, the same year that South Africa rejoined the ILO after a thirty-year absence. It reaffirmed the principle of the Declaration of Philadelphia stating that "all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.

The anti-apartheid Declaration called upon the South African government to end apartheid and establish workplace policies, laws and regulations free from discrimination. Among its other provisions was the requirement that the ILO's Director-General report annually to the International Labor Conference on the situation in South Africa and that he recommend measures to end apartheid.

Constant ILO attention focused on apartheid in South Africa is credited with having contributed to its demise. The current President, Nelson Mandela, recalled these times when he said: "We thank [the ILO] that you refused to forget us. We thank you that you did not tire in your struggle."

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