

► **The Director-General**

Mr Thomas Tugendhat, MP  
Chair  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
UNITED KINGDOM

4 May 2021

Dear Mr Tugendhat,

Thank you for the letter of 19 April 2021, which you have sent on behalf of the United Kingdom House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee.

I have also read with interest the [assessment of the UK House of Commons' Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee](#) of the type of reports you refer to in your letter.

In fact, an international workers' organization has submitted similar allegations relevant to the application of the ILO Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. The Committee has noted these allegations as well as the report of the Government of China received in reply. As you will see from the [summary of the allegations in the Committee's direct request on the application by China of C122](#), the Committee intends to examine the various reports in connection with China's regular report on the application of C122 in December 2021 while the [summary of the allegations in the Committee's direct request on the application by China of C111](#) suggests the Committee will examine them in December 2022.

In the light of this continuing process, it is necessary for the ILO Secretariat, myself included, refrain from public statements that would pre-empt impartial assessment by the ILO Committee of Experts and call into question the independence and competence that are the hallmarks of their work.

By virtue of its membership of the ILO, the Government of China has assumed a commitment to respect, promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work, including the elimination of forced labour.

In this context, it will fall to the ILO International Labour Conference and the Governing Body to chart an appropriate course forward once the ILO Committee of Experts has reported its independent assessment of the information available to it. The procedures set out in the ILO Consultation make possible the full examination of alleged violations of international labour standards ratified by Member States. I would note, in this regard that China has not ratified the Conventions on forced labour but has ratified those relating to discrimination in employment.

Within the context of the China Decent Work Country Programme 2016 – 2020, the Office has resumed cooperation with the Chinese tripartite constituents to promote the ratification of the ILO forced labour Conventions.

At an ILO tripartite seminar in Haikou in December 2017, participants benefited considerably from the UK's experience with the Modern Slavery Act and the ratification of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). I thank the UK Embassy in Beijing for making a resource person available on that occasion.

We are currently reviewing with the Chinese Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, a gap analysis of Convention 29 and its protocol with a view to their ratification in due course. Should these ratifications materialize, we anticipate a request to provide assistance with capacity building for law enforcement officials and labour inspectors following the example of the assistance provided after China ratified Convention 111 in 2006.

The ILO Governing Body is actively considering the question of labour disputes in China in the context of a complaint before its Committee on Freedom of Association (No. 3184). The Committee is currently awaiting a reply to the recommendations in its [most recent interim report](#) on the case. China has not ratified either the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), or the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

In conclusion, please be assured that I consider this matter to go to the heart of the ILO's mandate and responsibilities and that the Organization will treat this matter with all the seriousness warranted by the information at its disposal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy Ryder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G' and 'R'.

Guy Ryder



## Foreign Affairs Committee

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**From the Chair**  
Tom Tugendhat MP

Guy Ryder  
Director General  
International Labour Organization

Letter by email: [newsroom@ilo.org](mailto:newsroom@ilo.org)

19 April 2021

Dear Mr Ryder

I am contacting you about reports of government-led forced labour programmes in China. These programmes force members of ethnic groups such as Uyghurs and Tibetans into forced labour at an industrial scale. It is crucial that the ILO takes action on this.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions:

- What assessment have you made of reports of state-led forced labour programmes in China, in Xinjiang, Tibet, and throughout the country?
- Will you speak out publicly to express concern about these reports?
- Will the ILO commit to a full investigation of China's state-led forced labour programmes?
- If the ILO confirms the reports, what actions will it take?
- What plans does the ILO have to strengthen mechanisms for labour dispute settlements within China?
- Has the ILO-China Decent Work Country Programme succeeded in "Promoting fundamental labour principles and workers' rights"?
- How will such programmes be reformed or renegotiated in light of the Chinese state's complicity in forced labour?
- China has only ratified four of the eight ILO fundamental conventions, notably eschewing those related to forced labour. Does China still have responsibilities to prevent forced labour within its borders?

I would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 3 May. I intend to place your response in the public domain.

Best wishes,

**TOM TUGENDHAT**