

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ASSOCIATION (ILERA) 11TH AFRICA CONGRESS

04 – 05 FEBRUARY 2027

THE CAPITAL HOTEL, SANDTON, SOUTH AFRICA

CALL FOR PAPERS

**THEME: The Future of Work in Africa: Navigating
Transformation, Inequality and Institutional Change**

Labour markets across Africa are undergoing significant change. New forms of work are emerging, including cross-border and digitally mediated employment relationships, patterns of employment are evolving, and longstanding structural challenges such as informality, unemployment and working poverty remain persistent across many economies. While some sectors are experiencing technological transformation and new employment opportunities, large segments of the workforce continue to operate in conditions characterised by vulnerability, insecurity and limited access to social protection.

These developments are raising important questions about how labour market institutions and regulatory frameworks are adapting to changing conditions. Labour law systems, dispute resolution institutions, workplace governance mechanisms and social dialogue structures play a central role in shaping employment relationships and protecting workers' rights. At the same time, these institutions are increasingly required to respond to emerging forms of work, growing labour market inequality and the need to balance worker protection with sustainable enterprise development.

Understanding how these institutional frameworks evolve in response to economic, technological and social change is central to shaping the future of work in Africa. The 11th ILERA Africa Congress provides a platform for scholars, practitioners, policymakers and social partners to critically examine these issues and to contribute African and comparative perspectives to global debates on labour market transformation and the future of work.

SUB-THEME 1: LABOUR LAW REFORM, DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND EVOLVING LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Labour law systems across Africa continue to evolve as governments, courts and labour dispute resolution institutions respond to changing forms of work and evolving employment relationships. In many jurisdictions, policy initiatives and legal developments seek to strengthen protection for vulnerable workers, modernise dismissal and disciplinary frameworks, clarify the status of workers in emerging forms of employment relationships, and promote substantive equality in the workplace.

At the same time, labour law frameworks face pressures arising from unemployment, economic volatility and fiscal constraints. While legal protections may exist in formal regulatory frameworks, enforcement gaps and institutional limitations continue to affect the effectiveness of labour regulation in many contexts. These challenges raise important questions about the capacity of labour law systems and dispute resolution institutions to ensure compliance, strengthen accountability, provide effective access to justice and uphold labour standards in rapidly changing labour markets.

In addition, broader structural developments such as environmental challenges and the transition towards more sustainable economies are creating new regulatory questions for labour law. These developments invite critical examination of how legal frameworks are adapting and how courts, labour tribunals and other adjudicative bodies are shaping employment jurisprudence across African jurisdictions.



With the above context in mind this sub-theme encourages submissions exploring the following topics:

- Labour law reform and policy innovation
- Judicial developments and evolving employment jurisprudence
- The role and effectiveness of labour courts, tribunals and other dispute resolution institutions
- Innovations in mediation, arbitration and alternative dispute resolution in labour disputes
- Regulation of dismissals, retrenchments and disciplinary processes
- Protection against unfair labour practices
- Employment equity, anti-discrimination law and substantive equality
- Public sector employment relations
- Enforcement challenges, compliance mechanisms and institutional capacity
- Labour standards and workers' rights in regional and international trade agreements
- Labour law responses to environmental and climate challenges, and the transition to a green economy

SUB-THEME 2: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND VULNERABLE WORKERS

Across much of Africa, labour markets are characterised by high levels of vulnerability. Informal employment remains the dominant form of work in many countries, and working poverty persists despite labour force participation. Large segments of the workforce operate outside formal regulatory frameworks and lack effective access to social protection systems, including social insurance, income security and labour protections.

Migration is closely intertwined with these dynamics. For many individuals and households, migration is a response to limited economic opportunity. At the same time, migrant workers may face heightened vulnerability through exclusion from labour protections, social security systems and public services. Approximately 63 per cent of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa move within the continent, underscoring the importance of regional labour mobility. Yet significant challenges remain regarding the portability of social security benefits, legal protection for migrant workers and the inclusion of non-nationals in national social protection systems.



In addition, labour markets across the region are witnessing the growth of non-standard and precarious forms of employment, including casual, temporary, and zero-hour contractual arrangements. While these forms of work may create opportunities for labour market participation, they can also generate insecurity, unstable income and limited access to labour and social protection rights. These trends raise broader questions about labour market regulation, institutional capacity and the extent to which existing legal frameworks adequately protect vulnerable workers.

These dynamics invite renewed attention to the relationship between labour regulation, social protection and human rights, including the right to decent work and social security.

With the above context in mind this sub-theme encourages submissions exploring the following topics:

- Informality, vulnerability and labour market segmentation
- Strategies for formalisation and their limits
- Extending social protection to informal, self-employed and non-standard workers
- Labour rights and human rights approaches to worker protection
- Protection of workers in cross-border employment relationships, including access to remedies, jurisdictional challenges and regulatory gaps
- Portability of social security benefits for migrant workers
- Inclusion of migrant workers and non-nationals in social protection systems
- Gendered and intersectional dimensions of labour market vulnerability
- Unemployment, job creation and transitions to decent and secure work
- Regional governance frameworks (e.g., AU, SADC) and their implementation in labour migration and social protection

SUB-THEME 3: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE REGULATION OF WORK

Digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly shaping labour markets across Africa, although their effects remain uneven across countries, sectors and groups of workers. Digital platforms, mobile technologies and data-driven business models are transforming how work is organised, performed and managed. These developments



increasingly transcend national boundaries. While these developments may create new opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and labour market participation, they also raise important questions regarding job quality, employment security and the adequacy of existing labour regulation. These forms of work have also contributed to the expansion of cross-border employment relationships, raising complex questions relating to jurisdiction, applicable law and the regulation of transnational work arrangements.

The growth of platform-based and digitally mediated work is particularly significant. Workers engaged in ride-hailing, delivery services, online freelancing and other forms of platform work often operate in regulatory grey areas where the boundaries of the employment relationship are contested. These developments challenge traditional legal concepts relating to employment status, managerial authority and employer responsibility. At the same time, digital management practices, including algorithmic decision-making and worker surveillance, raise concerns about transparency, accountability, privacy and the protection of labour rights.

With the above context in mind this sub-theme encourages submissions exploring the following topics:

- The growth and regulation of platform work in African economies
- Employment classification and the boundaries of the employment relationship
- Cross border employment relationships in the digital economy, including remote work and transnational platform work
- Conflict of laws and jurisdictional challenges in digitally mediated cross-border employment relationships
- AI-driven decision-making and implications for labour rights
- Worker surveillance, privacy and data governance
- Remote and hybrid work arrangements and their regulation
- Work life balance and job quality in digital contexts
- Trade union and worker responses to digital transformation
- Skills transitions, reskilling and productivity



SUB-THEME 4: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND WORKPLACE GOVERNANCE

Human resource management practices and workplace governance mechanisms play an important role in shaping how work is organised and regulated within enterprises. Organisational policies, managerial practices and internal governance structures influence job quality, working conditions and compliance with labour standards, and contribute to the effective functioning of labour markets.

Across many African contexts, organisations are adapting HRM strategies in response to changing labour market conditions, regulatory developments and evolving expectations regarding responsible business conduct and organisational accountability. At the same time, enterprises face ongoing challenges relating to workforce development, skills formation, occupational health and safety, and the promotion of fair and inclusive workplace practices.

These developments raise important questions about the role of human resource management in supporting sustainable enterprise development, improving job quality and strengthening compliance with labour regulation. They also highlight the importance of effective workplace governance mechanisms in promoting responsible management practices and fostering productive employment relationships.

With the above context in mind this sub-theme encourages submissions exploring the following topics:

- Occupational health and safety in the workplace
- Skills development, workforce planning and employability
- Human resource management strategies and organisational performance
- Linking HRM strategy to sustainable enterprise development
- Workplace governance mechanisms and internal compliance systems
- Responsible business conduct and organisational accountability
- Protecting workers' rights in subcontracting and supply chains through effective accountability and governance mechanisms
- Workplace policies promoting equality, inclusion and fair working conditions
- HRM responses to changing labour market conditions and workforce expectations



SUB-THEME 5: SOCIAL DIALOGUE, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND WORKER VOICE

Social dialogue institutions across Africa vary widely in form, scope and effectiveness. While many countries have established national tripartite structures and ratified ILO Convention 144 on tripartite consultation, the operation and influence of these mechanisms differ significantly in practice. Governments play a central role in shaping the legal and institutional environment for collective voice, yet informal economies, fragmented labour markets and declining bargaining coverage pose continuing challenges for meaningful representation.

These dynamics raise important questions about the evolution of collective bargaining systems and worker organisation in contexts of economic transformation and labour market inequality.

With the above context in mind this sub-theme encourages submissions exploring the following topics:

- National and sectoral social dialogue models and their effectiveness
- Collective bargaining coverage and extension mechanisms
- Trade union strategies for organising and mobilising workers
- Public sector bargaining dynamics
- Majoritarian systems and minority union rights
- Essential services regulation and the right to strike
- Social dialogue in the context of climate transition and the green economy
- Cross border and regional social dialogue initiatives
- Impact of international, continental and regional standards on local jurisdictions

We invite academics, practitioners across disciplines, including policymakers and social partners across the African continent and beyond to submit papers related to the above sub-themes for inclusion onto the ILERA 11th Africa Congress programme.



Abstracts must be submitted by **1 JULY 2026** in line with the requirements set out below.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 1 July 2026

Notification of acceptance/rejection: 31 October 2026

Deadline for submission of full papers/presentations: 18 January 2027.

Registration and Participation Information

All presenters whose abstracts are accepted will be required to register for the congress. A registration fee of **R3,500** will apply and will cover participation in all congress sessions, conference materials, and selected meals. Detailed registration information, including payment deadlines, will be communicated to accepted participants.

Submission guidelines for congress abstracts:

1. All abstracts must be submitted by **1 JULY 2026** to: Lerasa@pscbc.org.za
2. The abstract should have a word count of not more than 500 words, and a biography of not more than 100 words.
3. Authors are required to indicate the specific sub-theme, as outlined in the call for papers, to which their abstract relates or corresponds. Abstracts should be clearly written and logically structured. Submissions should demonstrate engagement with the topic and include some level of analysis or critical reflection, rather than being purely descriptive. While not mandatory, abstracts that incorporate a comparative perspective, particularly between African jurisdictions, will be viewed favourably.
4. The template attached to this Call must be utilised.
5. Abstracts must be submitted in English.
6. The formatting guidelines for the abstract are as follows: use Arial font, size 12, with 1.5-line spacing.
7. Abstracts can be submitted in either MS Word or PDF format



Submission guidelines for congress papers:

1. All full papers must be submitted by no later than **18 January 2027** to:
Lerasa@pscbbc.org.za
2. The full paper should have a word count ranging from 5000-8000 words.
3. Each full paper should be accompanied by an abstract, not exceeding 200 words.
4. Full papers must be submitted in English.
5. The formatting guidelines for the full paper are as follows: use Arial font, size 12, with 1.5-line spacing.
6. Full papers can be submitted in either MS Word or PDF format.

The submission of full papers assists in facilitating deeper engagement with the research presented and enables papers to be shared with congress participants, thereby enhancing discussion during the congress. While the submission of a full paper is strongly encouraged, presenters who are unable to submit a full paper will not be disqualified from presenting at the congress.

