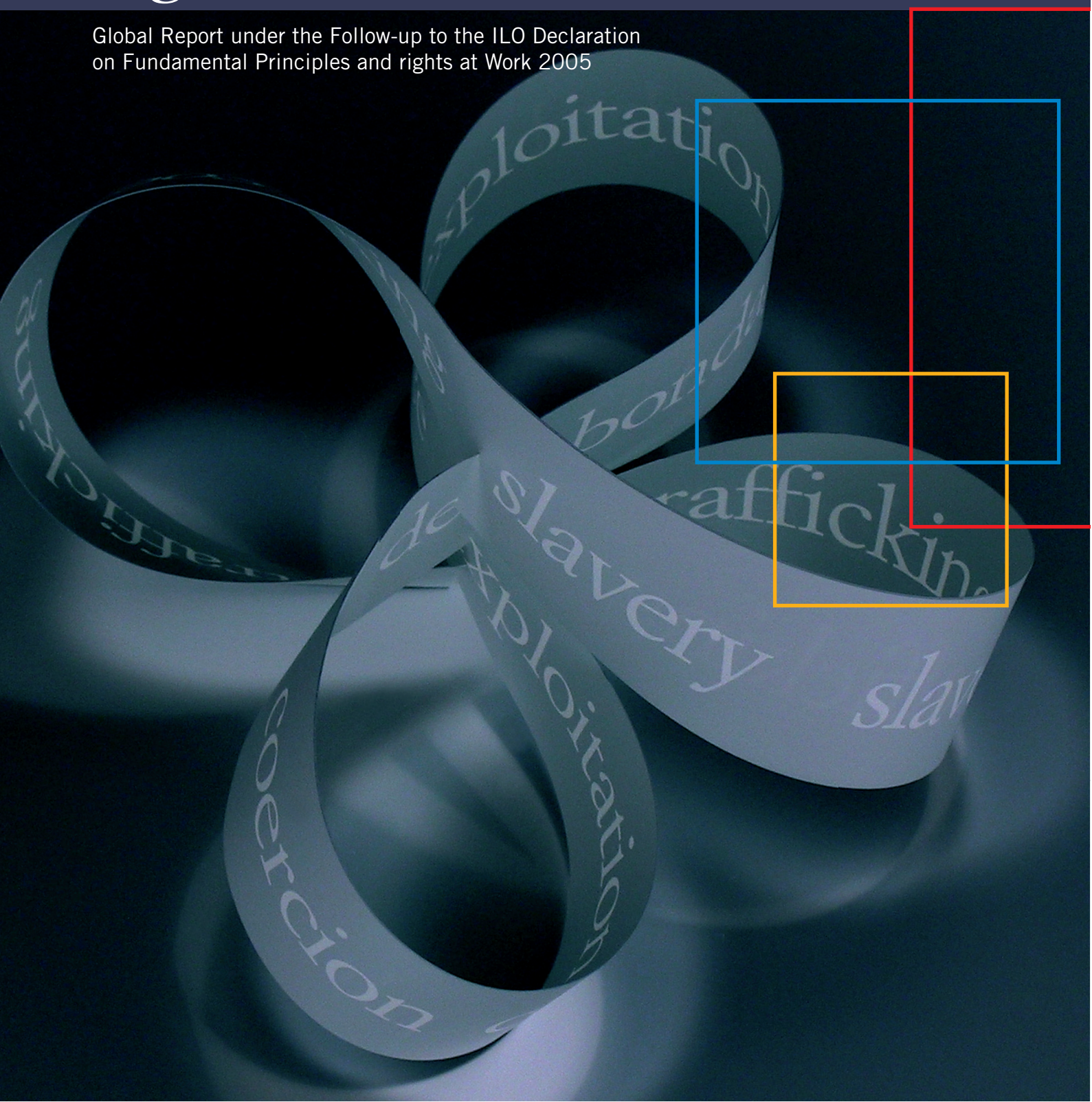




International
Labour
Office
Geneva

A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour

Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration
on Fundamental Principles and rights at Work 2005



A global alliance
against forced labour

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration
on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
2005

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Introduction

1. Four years ago, the first Global Report on forced labour drew attention to the gravity of the problems of forced labour in the modern world, with “ugly new faces” such as human trafficking emerging alongside the older forms.¹ Since then the ILO has sought to mobilize world opinion behind the goal of a fair globalization, in which people come first, with full respect for the core labour standards embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work adopted in 1998. Tackling forced labour head-on is one very practical way of contributing to achievement of this global goal.

2. On the basic characteristics of contemporary forced labour, much has been learned over the period. Importantly, the ILO is now less alone in calling attention to new forms of forced labour and slavery-like practices. There are encouraging signs of commitment, by ILO member States, employers’ and workers’ organizations, and the international community, to addressing the problems. Important developments have included the first national action plans against forced and bonded labour, for example in Brazil and Pakistan. There has been growing commitment to the adoption of new laws or policies on the subject,

3. These are all significant developments. And yet, in terms of real knowledge and awareness of modern forced labour, we seem still to see only the tip of a disturbing iceberg. The warning signals sounded four years ago seem to be even more justified today. Forced labour is present in some form on all continents, in almost all countries, and in every kind of economy. There are persistent cases of what may be termed “traditional” forms of forced labour. These include deeply entrenched bonded labour systems in parts of South Asia, debt bondage affecting mainly indigenous peoples in parts of Latin America, and the residual slavery-related practices most evident today in West Africa. There are also various forms of forced labour exacted by the State for either economic or political purposes. Forced labour today also affects sizeable numbers of migrant workers who are transported away from their countries or communities of origin.

4. Older forms of coercion and compulsion are transmuting into newer ones. The bonded labour systems of South Asia remain very much in evidence today, and account for the greatest number of forced labourers in the contemporary world. But

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