

Biography – Chair of UN-Water

Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization



Guy Ryder, Chair of UN-Water, is the Director-General of the International Labour Organization. Born in Liverpool (UK) in 1956, Guy Ryder studied Social and Political Sciences at the University of Cambridge and Latin American Studies at the University of Liverpool. He speaks French and Spanish as well as his mother tongue, English.

He started his professional career in 1981 as assistant at the International Department of the Trade Union Congress in London. From 1985, he held the position of Secretary of the Industry Trade Section of the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET) in Geneva. In 1988, Guy Ryder became Assistant Director and – from 1993 - Director of the Geneva office of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Guy Ryder first joined the International Labour Organization in 1998 as Director of the Bureau for Workers' Activities and, from 1999, as Director of the Office of the Director-General. It was during this time that the ILO's Decent Work Agenda was launched and won support from the international community.

In 2002, he was appointed General Secretary of the ICFTU, leading the process of global unification of the democratic international trade union movement. He was elected as first General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) when it was created in 2006. He headed international trade union delegations to high level talks with the UN, IMF, World Bank and WTO and to the G20 Leaders' Summits.

In September 2010, Guy Ryder came back to the ILO in Geneva as Executive Director, responsible for international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work. Among other activities, he supervised the application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations. He also headed several high-level ILO missions to address a range of issues related to labour standards in countries such as Bahrain, Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Greece, Myanmar and Swaziland.

Guy Ryder was elected as ILO Director-General by the ILO's Governing Body in May 2012 and took office on 1 October 2012. On taking office, he pledged to position the Organization as a determined actor translating principle into action and ensuring that it had the capacity to make a major difference to the working lives of people on all of the continents. To support this he launched a major reform process geared to assuring the ILO's authority on matters falling within its mandate.