

Plenary sitting

High-level section: Visits by Heads of State and Government and other distinguished guests on the occasion of the Centenary of the International Labour Organization

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Wednesday 12 June 2019, 10.45 a.m.

Presidents: Mr Dimitrov, Worker Vice-President of the Conference and Mr Elmiger

High-level section

The President

I call to order the fifth plenary sitting of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference.

In order to mark the Centenary of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Conference will be addressed by Heads of State and Government and other distinguished guests, who will gather to reaffirm their commitment to the principle of social justice upon which the ILO was founded 100 years ago and to share with the Conference their own experiences and their vision for the future of work.

However, before we begin our proceedings, let me express our deep sorrow and sympathy with the people of Mali. On Monday, 10 June, they experienced a dreadful terrorist attack which took the lives of over 100 children, women and men. For this reason, President Boubacar Keïta has had to cancel his visit to our Conference.

On behalf of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference, the Officers of the Conference condemn this terrorist attack that took the lives of innocent people in Mali. Such an act of terrorism is an attack on the whole of humanity and on our values, which we resolutely condemn. We express our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, and to the people, the Government and the social partners of Mali. We also wish a speedy recovery to the injured. The delegates attending the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference express their full solidarity with the Government and people of Mali at this difficult moment.

To return to our high-level section, we have the honour and privilege today to receive the visits of six of these guests. Without further ado, I give the floor to the first of them, His Excellency Mr Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Statement by His Excellency

**Mr Andrew Holness,
Prime Minister of Jamaica**

Mr Holness

Prime Minister of Jamaica

Jamaica is honoured to speak at this high-level plenary of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference to commemorate the Centenary of this most important global institution.

Jamaica's democracy was born out of the struggle of the labour movement. Labour is a respected and deeply-integrated partner in the tripartite collaborative culture that is a feature of our socio-political system. Indeed, labour has been a critical partner in overcoming political and economic crises in Jamaica throughout the last century, and certainly since our independence in 1962.

A decade ago, Jamaica teetered on the brink of economic collapse. The global financial meltdown at the time exposed the weak foundations of the Jamaican economy. The truth is that for decades we had defied economic logic in the management of our fiscal affairs, and now we had to reckon with it. Our national debt reached an unsustainable high of almost 150 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), at the time one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world. Our net international reserve fell to dangerously low levels and by 2013, overall unemployment stood at almost 16 per cent and youth unemployment at 36 per cent. In the face of this national crisis, Jamaica engaged in tough International Monetary Fund (IMF) programmes requiring, at the time, rescheduling of local debt, a commitment to a primary surplus of 7.5 per cent and deep structural and institutional reforms of our public sector, pension system and national wage bill.

Success in overcoming this crisis meant that all stakeholders, including the Government, employers and unions, had to make a sacrifice. There had to be a consensus on sacrifice. The Government and the opposition had to agree to faithfully implement a programme of fiscal discipline, regardless of political risks. The private sector had to agree to voluntarily accept a reduction in interest rates and a rescheduling of principal. And unions had to agree to a wage freeze and a general reform of the public sector that included the introduction of a contributory pension scheme.

Building on our history and culture as a collaborative tripartite system, a strong social consensus mechanism was developed. This was supported by formal institutions such as our Economic Programme Oversight Committee which monitored government implementation of the agreed reforms and reported to the public; and the National Partnership Council, consisting of representatives of academia, civil society, employers, labour, the opposition and the Government, which subscribed to a much broader reform agenda that included the rule of law, energy diversification and economic growth.

Today, I can proudly report that Jamaica is in a good, sunny place. We have reduced our debt from 150 per cent to around 96 per cent of GDP. We have also brought down unemployment from 16 per cent to 8 per cent and youth unemployment from around 35 per cent to 22 per cent.

As Jamaica reflects on its economic recovery and the ILO reflects on its 100 years of progress for the working masses, we must also contemplate the pathway to development for the future: the future of the worker and the future of work. Regardless of the economic and social crises that will undoubtedly face us and the changes in technology that will redefine the worker and the workplace, there is an overarching covenant that links the past to our future. It is to be found in the notion of a social contract for inclusiveness and equity, which is as relevant today as it was in 1919. It places a moral and philosophical obligation on democratic institutions and government to ensure that all citizens share in the progress and prosperity of their country.

Undoubtedly, the increasing success of the Jamaican economy owes much to the tripartite arrangements and the pivotal role that the labour movement played in moving the nation towards consensus on shared sacrifice. As the Jamaican economy emerges, the Government recognizes the social contract which binds our stakeholders in consensus. Where there is shared sacrifice, there must be shared prosperity. People must be at the centre of development.

The best way to place people at the centre of development and shared prosperity is to give them the opportunity to work, to be engaged in that sacred process of transforming their labour and creativity into wealth, earning a living from their effort and eating their own bread not by crime, not by immoral means, not by dependency, not by pity, but by work. That is why we are not only seeking to grow our economy; we have actively pursued an economic policy of job creation.

I am proud to say that more Jamaicans are employed today than at any other time in our independent history. The Government is not only seeking to expand employment; we are paying keen attention to the quality of jobs and the conditions of work. We are committed to the Decent Work Agenda and are empowering our citizens with education and training in order to make them marketable, employable and productive in a competitive labour market and economy.

In fulfilment of our Decent Work Agenda, the Government has increased its effort and resources in order to make our citizens workforce-ready through various special training modalities and apprenticeships such as the Career Advancement Programme; the HOPE Programme, which helps our people to excel through housing opportunities, production and employment; and the Jamaica National Service Corps. Tens of thousands of young Jamaicans are being made work-ready and tens of thousands more continue to be trained through the traditional modalities of our National Training Agency.

We have tabled an Occupational Safety and Health Bill, which is making its way through a Joint Select Committee of Parliament. When this bill is passed, it will establish a robust legal framework to protect and enhance the health and safety of Jamaican workers in the workplace. To protect one of our most vulnerable groups of workers, the Government ratified the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which seeks to set employment standards and secure rights for domestic workers. We are also working to address issues of gender discrimination and social protection for all workers. The Sexual Harassment Bill, the primary purpose of which is to protect women from violence, harassment and discriminatory practices in the workplace, is soon to be tabled before Parliament.

Decent work must ultimately mean that workers can create wealth and own assets derived from their effort. To that end, we have removed employee income tax from more than 60 per cent of all workers in Jamaica. We have also sought to empower our workers by making special provision for them to purchase shares in profitable public sector enterprises which are being divested. We have significantly lowered mortgage rates, and minimum-wage earners can access mortgages at zero per cent through our National Housing Trust. In addition, we have introduced the option of an intergenerational mortgage to help older workers in poor households to find housing solutions.

Never before has mankind faced such an enormous and discernible challenge as the likely outcomes of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The scale, scope and complexity of the world of work in the next decade will be unrecognizable. The fusion of technologies will obliterate the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. The humanness of the world of work is diminishing as automation subsumes labour input. Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming almost every aspect of our working lives by enabling enterprises to make faster and better decisions in the boardroom, increasing operational efficiency and innovating new products and services. It is the downside to these transformational changes that will preoccupy our minds in the Caribbean and globally.

From the perspective of labour, this is a grim reminder of the importance of the 100-year-old covenant embodied in the Preamble to the ILO Constitution, which suggests that whenever the conditions of labour bring about injustice, hardships and deprivation among large numbers of people, the existence of world peace becomes imperilled. The Preamble also states that "... the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries".

Hence, the daunting task that lies ahead of us in Jamaica is to embrace sweeping technological change while, at the same time, protecting and preserving the dignity of our labour. One of the most rapidly-expanding job-creating sectors of the Jamaican economy is

the business process outsourcing sector. However, this sector is the one most exposed to the cutting edge of technological change and the replacement of jobs.

Jamaica will not be daunted by this. We understand that we must up-skill our labour force and make the investments in creating our digital and knowledge society in order to compete effectively for the jobs of the future. We recognize that there is much more to be done for the Jamaican worker. However, much progress is being made within a cooperative and collaborative framework of social consensus building and respect for the human element as the centre of the social contract for development. With this understanding intact, Jamaica will boldly face the challenges of the future confident of success.

The leaders of the Caribbean remain conscious that the future and our obligations to the next generation now summon us to seize the moment and draw on the creative imagination that is forever located in the dynamism of a Caribbean tradition that puts people first. In that regard, we are guided by these words from the Declaration of Philadelphia: “[T]he war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare”.

Together, we must ensure that the future of work is managed in a strategic, sustainable, transformative manner that leaves no one behind as we seek to move our people from poverty to prosperity.

**Statement by His Excellency
Mr Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré,
Prime Minister of Burkina Faso**

Mr Dabiré
Prime Minister of Burkina Faso
(*Original French*)

Before I begin, I should like to convey fraternal greetings from Mr Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso, to his fellow heads of State and to the heads of government who are here in Geneva to celebrate the Centenary of our Organization. The 108th Session of the International Labour Conference offers my country, Burkina Faso, the opportunity to voice its full support for the deliberations that have begun on current and future major challenges facing the world of work. I should like sincerely to congratulate the President and all the Officers on their election and on being available to guide the destiny of our Organization throughout the year of their mandate. You can count on my country’s full support. Allow me next to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr Guy Ryder and all ILO organs for the discussions that have led to the drafting of the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, the focal point of the celebrations of our Organization’s Centenary all over the world.

I should also like to pay a resounding tribute to all our predecessors in this organization for their efforts and sacrifice in the cause of giving our society a human face. Since 1919, the ILO, the oldest organization in the UN system, has worked with unceasing courage and perseverance, through the men and women who lead it, to make social justice and peace a reality. This noble struggle, which our Organization has waged and continues to wage, has brought very important results thanks to an operating system based, among other things, on the tripartite principle. Of all the possible types of consultation or negotiation, tripartism as defined by the ILO is a mechanism that promotes fruitful social dialogue capable of delivering, thanks to the convergence of views on sometimes contradictory matters of concern, a consensus aimed at achieving peace and social stability. Governments, employers

and workers will succeed in establishing principles for fruitful collaboration in order to stimulate the economy and ultimately improve working conditions.

This institutional robustness derives from the consistency of its founding Convention and the important accompanying annexes, notably the Declaration of Philadelphia and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. It also derives from the constructive debates that the Organization holds on labour issues across the world. For our Organization to be sustainable, it is important to work at strengthening and readjusting that founding Convention to meet the changes taking place in our world, be they intended or imposed. In that regard, it should be emphasized that we cannot remain indifferent to the studies and recommendations in the Report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work. In this pivotal era when, for three decades, humanity has suffered the devastating effects of global warming and the growing unease caused by economic and social inequality, we all need to make beneficial changes aimed at introducing genuine social justice. Faced with this global situation, asking questions about the future of work means concerning ourselves with the future of humanity, in particular the fate of over 1 billion women, men and young people, the majority of whom live in southern countries, half of them on the African continent. For the future of all these communities, we must revisit our notion of “labour”, restore the proper content of decent work and place human dignity back at the heart of our development paradigm.

Furthermore, while the rights of workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors have been codified, formalized and better protected in an effort to integrate the new forms of work afforded by the virtual economy and new technologies, it is essential, for the sake of social justice, to widen the scope of decent work to include all forms of human activity that contribute to individual and collective life, either directly or indirectly. It is equally essential to widen the scope of the social contract by incorporating in public policies measures that aim to encompass, through legal means, all forms of labour, whether formal or informal, visible or invisible.

It is under these conditions that social dialogue acquires its full democratic and inclusive meaning of leaving no one behind. This is why it should be stressed that one of the major challenges that the ILO has still to tackle as it begins its second century is the reconfiguration of its Governing Body to take account of poorly represented regions, in accordance with the provisions of the 1986 Instrument of Amendment to the ILO Constitution. Burkina Faso shares the position of the African heads of State on this important matter, and I invite the Director General of the ILO to redouble the efforts under that process. Burkina Faso derives great satisfaction from its membership of such a noble and important Organization. Its Government, together with all the social partners, responded to the appeal of the ILO Director-General and held events to commemorate the Organization’s Centenary from 15 to 17 May this year. For those of us from Burkina Faso, it has been important to build on the guidelines of our common Organization in order to ensure a better future in the world of work. It was from this perspective that Burkina Faso solemnly commemorated the 90th anniversary of the ILO in 2009 together with the 60th anniversary of labour inspection.

Since joining the ILO in 1960, my country’s diligent participation in the activities of our Organization has led to it taking various roles in the Governing Body (substitute member from 2014 to 2017, regular member from 1999 to 2002 and Chairperson from 2001 to 2002) and hosting, in Ouagadougou, the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Reduction in Africa, in 2004, and also the first African Symposium on Decent Work, in 2009. Over the past 100 years, the ILO has employed technical cooperation to promote its values and achieve its objectives. Its enormous Decent Work Agenda and related support frameworks have enabled many countries including Burkina Faso to enjoy progress in that area. My country’s shared history with the ILO is particularly notable for the gains made in different fields of cooperation. Without claiming to be exhaustive, these activities have

included: a Decent Work Country Programme, the second phase of which is being finalized; an ILO governance project, currently under way; the promotion of social dialogue and the extension of social protection; and the enhancement of living standards for rural women through community-based training for decent work. I duly salute the achievements of our Organization and trust that many other initiatives will emerge to benefit our hard-working populations. Today, Burkina Faso can feel satisfied at being attuned to the cardinal principles and objectives of the ILO.

Beyond the ratification and implementation of Conventions, it has asserted its sovereign role of guaranteeing the right to work by creating the institutional framework needed to promote those principles. I cite as evidence my country's ratification of 44 ILO Conventions, including the eight fundamental Conventions and the four governance Conventions. My Government has turned the promotion of social dialogue into a guarantee sine qua non of participatory management on issues that concern the world of work. Thus, at the national level, a number of mechanisms have been put in place to prevent and manage crises in the world of work. These include the annual meetings between the Government and the trade unions, begun in 2008, the meetings between the Government and the Employers begun in 2017, and the High Council for Social Dialogue attached to the Office of the President, set up in 2017, which has sent a delegation to this Session headed by its Chairperson. In the context of a subregion where terrorism has seen an upsurge, it is imperative to take measures to tackle the poverty, inequality and unemployment that provide it with fertile ground. One of the strongest solutions, because it is sustainable, is to establish a basic economic infrastructure that can promote development and ensure that the population is able to resist this scourge. With this in mind, in 2016 my country's Government set up an emergency programme for the Sahel which aims to use development activities to improve security in a region seriously afflicted by terrorism.

We have seen some remarkable results which convince us that this programme should be extended to other regions where there is a large security deficit. The results, while certainly encouraging, would be even more striking if partners concerned with peace, fraternity and friendship among peoples were generous enough to provide us with support for this emergency programme. My country hopes that the Centenary Declaration that will crown our efforts here places particular focus not only on improving the governance process at the ILO but also, and above all, on strengthening the support mechanisms for member States aiming to achieve the Decent Work Agenda. I am firmly convinced that the future of work lies in our capacity to adapt to technological change and to exploit those modern tools for development. To turn words into actions, my Government has embarked on a process to modernize its labour administration and job market, using two key tools. The first is the National Observatory for Employment and Training, which assists with the publication of employment opportunities and provides job-search support for those involved in the world of work. The second is an application called the Automated Labour Inspection System, developed for the Labour Administration. This tool, still being tested, is intended ultimately to enable electronic management of the entire labour inspection process, the production of reliable statistical data, and online entry to labour inspection services by users.

To close my address, I should like to reiterate my congratulations to the members of the Governing Body, the Director-General and all ILO staff, who, since the launch of these commemorative activities, have spared no effort in preparing this special meeting for us. I would remind you that much is still expected of our Organization over the next 100 years on the existential questions of social justice and decent work in the world. Accordingly we must, more than ever, fashion the future of work around the principle of inclusion of all parts of the world and, especially, by incorporating all types of work. Given the experience gained in the 100 years of the ILO's existence, I have faith in our ability to achieve this. With that, I wish us every success in our work and thank you for your kind attention.

**Statement by Her Excellency
Ms Ana Brnabić,
Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia**

Ms Brnabić
Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

I am honoured to represent Serbia at this esteemed gathering marking the 100th anniversary of the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO). I am also proud to represent the country that, 100 years ago, was present as one of the founding members of the ILO. At the time, along with national representatives and employer and worker delegates, Serbia committed to fully and faithfully meeting its obligation, in line with the fundamental Conventions, to protect workers' rights and promote decent work. The progress we have seen in the past 100 years on equality, on diversity and on prosperity has been in large part due to the efforts of the ILO and the social partners around the world. As we look forward to the future of work for the next 100 years, I am delighted that Serbia is once again present here to take this step forward with all of you.

Over the past five years, Serbia has implemented difficult but much-needed reforms in order to achieve macroeconomic stability, improve the business environment and reduce unemployment, which stood at over 25 per cent and is now down to around 12 per cent. Like many nations, we are struggling with high youth unemployment rates, but we have seen improvement in recent years through specifically targeted efforts and have almost halved youth unemployment, which, seven years ago, stood at 51.1 per cent. We have grown small and medium-sized enterprises and have introduced viable incentives for entrepreneurs, and especially young entrepreneurs, to start new businesses and employ more people, particularly in the digital sector. In real terms, average gross salary has increased by 6.7 per cent compared to last year, and over the past five years we have increased the minimum wage by 35 per cent, making a significant difference in the bottom line for many families.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts there is still a long way to go to reach genuine equality, fairness and security in every workplace. In that respect, I want to thank the ILO and the representative organizations of workers and employers that worked with us to develop the Decent Work Country Programme for 2019–22, adopted in March of this year, which will help us to achieve the highest work and social protection standards. In collaboration with the ILO and the social partners in Serbia, we have also extended the “Rise up: Stop undeclared work” campaign to deter companies from operating in the grey economy.

However, recognizing the results achieved over the past several years, I have to say that we still have very considerable challenges that we need to address, most importantly by ensuring that fewer people are in danger of poverty; narrowing the gap between the richest and those in greatest need; making sure that people are adequately rewarded for their work and that all of their healthcare, social and pension contributions are regularly covered by their employers and that they work in safe environments; applying and respecting all safety-at-work standards; and thinking of ways to strengthen pension funds in the long term.

Still, the most pressing challenge which all of us are facing, regardless of the country or continent in which we work and live and regardless of our qualifications, education, gender, sex or age, is the challenge brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and digitalization. Compared with the agricultural economy and previous industrial revolutions, the current technology revolution is bringing unprecedented changes in how we live and work at an unprecedented pace.

Without a doubt, this industrial revolution will replace people's jobs as never before. This will happen through job automation, artificial intelligence, big data, machine learning and 3D printing. Jobs are already not for life, and careers are no longer for life either. It is expected that the work pattern for young people currently in high school will consist of more than ten very different professions in several very different fields, something that was inconceivable to our parents and is still difficult to comprehend today. Education as we know it today, focused on preparation for one profession or one field, is already obsolete. According to the World Economic Forum, kids that are in primary school today will have jobs which do not even exist at present.

Labour laws will have to change in order to reflect the new realities of the modern workplace. More and more people will not have regular employment but will work as freelancers instead. Serbia is, according to the World Bank, in the top three countries in the world with regard to the percentage of freelancers. More and more people will work remotely. You will be able to live in one country and work for a company in another country, making it very difficult to justify, for example, why a company which is registered in Country A should have to pay social contributions and contribute to pension funds in Country B, where some of its workforce is based.

The uncertainty that these comprehensive changes bring and the question of how we should respond to them is, in my view, what we all should be focusing on together under the umbrella of the International Labour Organization. As leaders of governments, we have a duty to do everything in our power to prepare our citizens for the changes in the world of work. The focus of the Serbian Government for the past two years has been almost entirely on preparing our society, our workforce, our youth, our companies and our public administration for the challenges brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In my view, there are two key areas in which we need to invest in order to prepare for the future which has already started; one is education and the other is creativity.

Never before has the famous statement by Mr Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, been more appropriate: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance". We need to reform the education system so that it prepares young people for the jobs of a future that we do not yet even comprehend. We do not know what those jobs will be. We do not know what they will entail, what they might look like, so we need to invest in education which will teach kids how to think instead of what to think. We need to teach them analytical reasoning and logic based on algorithms; equip them with decision-making skills and the self-confidence to question things, and also authority; open-mindedness; and the flexibility to combine the skills and knowledge that they have in order to produce new skills and knowledge. We also need to inspire them with a desire for lifelong learning.

These are the skills that the next generations will require in order to thrive. This is why we in Serbia have introduced coding and programming as mandatory subjects in primary schools. Today, 10- to 12-year-olds in Serbia learn Scratch and Python and 13-year-olds are starting to learn Pygame. That is why we have provided secure Internet access to all primary schools in Serbia and are investing an additional €20 million – this year alone – in high-speed Internet access for the first 500 primary schools and 10,000 classrooms that will go fully digital by 2021. We have already increased five times over the number of specialized IT classes in high schools, and still more will be available as student interest grows year by year. And we are not doing this because all young people will be IT experts or IT engineers, but because these subjects will provide the kind of skills and knowledge that I mentioned.

As well as investing in education, good government must also create the right environment for the private sector to thrive, so we have allocated over €100 million for infrastructure investment in order to enable a better environment for start-ups, innovative companies, and research and development. This includes the construction of groundbreaking science and technology parks, research institutes, laboratories and supporting start-up

centres throughout Serbia, not just in the capital city. By doing this, we want to encourage a broad knowledge-based economy, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. We want our young people – and our people in general – to have the confidence to create jobs and be part of this industrial revolution and exciting future.

We are also using government resources to finance retraining so that people have a chance to gain new skills and knowledge and are better equipped for the fast-paced world in which they find themselves. Our retraining programme has already helped approximately 1,500 people and a further 500 are currently being trained. This is seeing results: after retraining, about 35 per cent of people were able to change their career paths and find better or more rewarding jobs, or find employment for the first time.

We are changing tax policies to support investment in research and development, innovation and education. As of 1 January this year, we have introduced significant tax incentives for companies to invest in research and development, start-ups and intellectual property produced in Serbia. Serbia wants to become a home to people who think above and beyond the boundaries of what we consider to be reality, people who change the world for the better, bit by bit, every day.

Creativity, innovation, inventiveness and ingenuity are crucial for our development, and will be crucial for the development of the world and the world's workforce in the times ahead. Creativity will play a crucial role in the new world created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, simply because it cannot be outsourced or automated and is not part of the race to the bottom for cheap labour and services that often affects developing countries. Creativity, to my mind, is a fundamentally human feature and in an increasingly digital world, its value will become enormous. As Prime Minister, I am 100 per cent committed to supporting education, culture, science, innovation and creative sectors in Serbia because I think that these will chiefly determine the quality of life of our societies and our citizens in the not-so-distant future.

So I must say that, despite the new challenges brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution that are facing all of us, I am an optimist. People fear that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will mean fewer jobs. On the contrary, I think there will be more jobs, but they will be very different from the jobs of today. And if we face these challenges today and together, and understand just how crucial investments in education and creativity are and that we have to make those investments now, I think we will have more and better jobs in the future. Those jobs will not be boring. They will not be repetitive or back-breaking. That kind of work should and will be replaced by machines. Jobs for humans should and will be more creative and more versatile. Humans used to do the manual labour instead of washing machines, telephones, grain harvesters and cement mixers and those people were also worried about losing their jobs, but with every shift, in every revolution, the work done by people has changed for the better. Yes, directly automated jobs were lost, but the overall number of jobs and the quality of work done by people increased and I believe that this will be the case this time as well.

If we are smart and prepare well, people will have more time for themselves and by automating many processes, we will be able, at some point in time, to talk about things such as universal income. Machines and automation can allow people to focus our time and energy elsewhere: on creativity and, hopefully, human interaction. When we are unburdened of manual work, we have the chance to explore the space where humanity has something to offer that computers and machines will never replace.

As leaders of countries and of global institutions, trade unions, academia and business, we all have to design the future of work that we want to see and create opportunities for rewarding, meaningful human-centred work. And as we prepare our citizens for the future, we need to have an open dialogue to be sure we are making the best investments in people.

The time for action is now because every day, every year that we are not investing in that future will leave our citizens further behind. Global leadership from organizations, including the ILO, is essential. Governments alone cannot solve these issues. Business, social partners or workers alone cannot face these challenges. We have to face these changes together. We have to shape the future of work that we want to see.

Lastly, I would like to say that technology is a powerful force for equality. There are fewer vested interests, no monopoly on innovation and no limit to great ideas. Unlike previous economic shifts, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a chance for countries like Serbia to catch up with the more developed world. Every nation can be the home of the next leaders in innovation. The rules have changed. We live in exciting times and I see a winning future for Serbia. And I also see that the paradigm shift created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution can, at the end of the day, help all of us to create a world which is more free, more fair and more fun.

(Mr Elmiger takes the Chair.)

**Statement by Ms Sharan Burrow,
General Secretary of the International
Trade Union Confederation**

Ms Burrow
General Secretary of the International
Trade Union Confederation

Imagine the context of 1919 with the despair of the social and economic tragedy inflicted by the First World War. How visionary were our predecessors, how courageous to rise beyond their national interest and secure a new global architecture for all of us! The ILO was mandated to establish a social floor of rights and the dignity of work as the recipe for peace. The commitment to work together – to ensure democratic rights and freedoms and work for social justice – was again reinforced by the Declaration of Philadelphia in 1944 during another period of great despair. Our leaders of the era saw that if labour was not to be a commodity, then rights and a wage on which you could live must be fundamental guarantees. We can only pay tribute to these leaders, representing governments, workers and employers, and to their commitment to what was to become a social contract that would be developed and monitored by a unique tripartite structure.

The challenge of the twenty-first century for this organization and the world of work faces all of us. As President Macron said yesterday in his call for change in both the economic model and the global architecture that serves it, the challenges today are as severe as those that the world saw in 1919: a failed model of globalization with the resulting historic levels of inequality driven by the dehumanizing exploitation of global supply chains; increasing conflict and military spending; displacement of people at levels never before seen because of arrested or constrained development; and the climate crisis and massive disruption from technology.

Can we achieve a consensus of today's leaders, across governments, employers and trade unions, to meet the global risk in our world today? Can we make the necessary changes to the economic model? And can we ensure that no one – no one – is left behind?

If we are to succeed, then we must recognize that – despite global wealth that has multiplied many times over – development, human and labour rights and social justice have been denied to too many. More people go to bed hungry today than, as global leaders will tell you, they have lifted out of extreme poverty. The concentration of wealth has been

fuelled by a corporate greed that has dire effects on people, on small to medium-sized enterprises, on sustainable development, and therefore on economic futures.

Up to 94 per cent of the workers in global supply chains are a hidden workforce; their low wages and insecure, often unsafe and even informal work in those supply chains, and even the tragedy of modern slavery, are obscured. Add to this the evidence of a global slump in wages and collective bargaining, with 70 per cent of people excluded from universal social protection, and you have stagnant demand and emerging social unrest arising from despair in many, many countries.

We are, I am afraid, on the edge of an age of anger that comes from despair and a lack of hope and as the social contract continues to break down, the challenge for us is to reaffirm, redevelop and renew it. But even as we look for solutions to manage the global shifts and disruptions of climate change and technology – disruptions faced by all nations – we must recognize that the global workforce is in trouble today. Up to 60 per cent of that workforce, including new informal platform businesses as part of an economy that will grow, are denied formal work. This amounts to excluding the majority of the world's workers from the decent work that is the core responsibility for all of us.

Thus, the responsibility to meet the urgent challenge of putting a floor of dignity under all workers lies with us. We welcome the Commission's report and endorse the call for a human-centred approach to the future of work with a universal labour guarantee – a guarantee for all workers as the floor of a renewed social contract, a contract fit for the twenty-first century and, as I have said, for the core mandate of the ILO – as its centrepiece.

As we negotiate over the next ten days, I ask you to think of the plight of millions of workers as represented by one woman, Ayesha. Ayesha earns just US\$20 a month while working for a European multinational with a global market. She has three children and even in her country, where the wages are the lowest in the world, she cannot feed and clothe her family. The Government has recognized this and while I will not name it, it is increasingly a model for others: it has heeded the call of unions and has actually agreed to put in place an evidence-based minimum wage mechanism.

But all governments must look to their responsibility for an evidence-based minimum wage on which people can live with dignity. We know that 84 per cent of workers tell us that the minimum wage is not enough to live on. Well, it is not worth having a minimum wage if it is not a living wage; 60 per cent of families all across the poor and middle-income spectrum are living on the edge, and that of course is undermining our economy. Collective bargaining rights are in decline and unless they are strengthened in order to ensure that prosperity can be shared and safe and secure working conditions can be agreed, then I have to say that the world will become more unstable. I remind everybody that without the right to freedom of association and the right to strike, workers are enslaved. That is the reality. Exploitation is the risk that people face every day in those circumstances.

The current model of globalization has also been at the centre of the theft of tax dollars and the consequent denial of government capacity to implement universal social protection and vital public services. It is not hard to understand why people have lost trust in institutions, and even in democracy itself. Many leaders acknowledge this crisis and the crisis in multilateralism and by supporting the need for multilateral coherence here this week and recognizing the need for change, they have challenged us to take this on.

Multilateralism itself has changed profoundly over the years. Its historical roots go back to those dark days of the twentieth century that we have mentioned. The multilateral system that was built then reflected the idea of a social deal: nations around the world would cooperate with the aim of managing markets in order to make sure that economic development was also equitable development and that economic progress was widely shared.

The 1948 Havana Charter, the first effort to create what would become the World Trade Organization (WTO), also prioritized full employment. Governments recognized that “all countries have a common interest in the achievement and the maintenance of fair labour standards related to productivity, and thus in the improvement of wages and working conditions as productivity may permit”.

The Bretton Woods Institutions are also committed to the goal of full employment. However, when 74 per cent of nations prevent workers from joining a trade union, when 72 per cent of countries actually deny workers access to justice and when our young people in too many countries may never see a permanent job, this is not what was envisaged. This is not the world our predecessors wanted. And on the World Day Against Child Labour, when too many children are denied their childhood, it must change.

The consequences of big business gaining the reins of power by transcending the level of nations and national sovereignty are there for all to see: a global slump in labour income share with the poorest 50 per cent of people facing another decrease of just 11 per cent in 2018. There is a massive breakdown in permanent employment and we cannot forget the biggest market failure of all: climate and the ecological disaster threatening life and the planet as such.

Yesterday, Chancellor Merkel addressed the need for reform of the WTO; a fair competition floor will require respect for fundamental rights and environmental standards and coherence with the ILO. President Macron called for both reform and coherence across the multilateral institutions. And, we urge, we must both ensure new rules for global trade and mandate due diligence with the further pillars of grievance and remedy that make up the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

In summary, the failure of the social contract under this model of globalization has put people and the global economy, as well as multilateralism, at risk. And today, without a guarantee of just transition measures for climate and technological shifts, we are putting social cohesion at even further risk and are therefore leaving workers even further behind.

It is time. It is time for a new social contract, time to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 and the related goals. The promise of the Centenary Declaration must ensure a human-centred agenda so that the recommendations of the Global Commission on the Future of Work are actually heeded.

For workers, it requires a reaffirmation of the independence and mandate of the ILO pursuant to its Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, and of the commitment to fundamental rights, social justice and decent work set out in subsequent declarations. It requires a new or renewed social contract for governments, business and workers with a universal labour guarantee and a universal social protection floor for all workers. This will require respect for rights, jobs and decent work, a minimum living wage and collective bargaining, quality public education and lifelong learning for all, and will ensure that we have the skills that are necessary for the future.

We need to make sure that this Declaration recognizes that informal work must be formalized. Workers must have some control over working time and, as I have said, social protection coverage must be universal. We also need businesses, multinationals, to take responsibility for the due diligence and accountability that will both benefit our workers and increase the profitability of small and medium-sized enterprises.

We must ensure that women’s equality is realized – it is time, it is time – and that modern slavery is eradicated. Never again can we fail to do everything possible to eliminate forced labour and child labour in our societies. And we know that only social dialogue, together with just transition measures – including building climate and technology skills and

respecting the right of everyone, including displaced peoples, to work and the right to equal treatment – can ensure this.

The global disruption caused by digitalization and emerging business models is a denial of employment responsibilities. It requires new standards, and we must work together to that end. The monopoly power of the global tech giants serves no one's interests. It requires nations collectively to use competition policy to break them up, and we need a global body with a capacity to regulate data, the ownership of data, the value of data and the protection of data that is vital to ensuring privacy. We need to accept that technology must not determine the future; humans will determine the future. We want a human-centred century where technology serves societies and their economies, not the alternative.

The Preamble to the ILO Constitution states that “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries”. In other words, ensuring decent work is a joint endeavour.

Labour, my friends, is not a commodity. Labour standards cannot be mitigated or denied by the market. We ask you all to support a renewal of the social contract with a universal floor of rights and just wages and, as I have said, with a minimum living wage, collective bargaining and social protection for all workers.

Guy Ryder, you are indeed the champion of social dialogue and it is more critical than ever for a just and prosperous future. I am pleased to greet my colleague and counterpart, Roberto Suárez Santos, and I ask governments to support the joint request of the International Organisation of Employers and the ITUC for Permanent Observer status at the UN and to join forces with all of you in implementing the SDGs.

We ask all of you to remember that freedom of association is the core of human dignity – indeed the core of our democracies – and that the capacity to act collectively for social justice is therefore central to both peace and democracy. This will mark a new century for the ILO and if we are committed to working together, the promise of the dignity of work will be fulfilled. Our sons and daughters deserve no less.

Statement by Mr Roberto Suárez Santos, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers

Mr Suárez Santos
Secretary-General of the International
Organisation of Employers

I stand proudly before you today as Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE). The IOE was created immediately after the ILO was established. In fact, next year we will celebrate our 100th anniversary. We are sincerely proud to belong to the ILO family.

The IOE is made up of 158 independent and representative business organizations in 148 countries. These represent more than 50 million companies. But believe me, it is not the number of companies but the influence that these big national players have in the world of work which matters. The IOE, as one of the largest representatives of the business community, can effectively help to make a difference on fundamental principles and rights at work, and we have proved it.

The IOE was born from a first movement of enterprises that had a strong social commitment – I would say the first movement of enterprises with a strong social commitment. We believed then, as we still do now, in free enterprise. We believe in the market economy as the driver of prosperity and welfare, but we also have in our DNA the values and ideals that the International Labour Organization brought, especially the Decent Work Agenda.

The ILO was founded as the world emerged from the First World War and the devastating loss of millions of lives. Never before had war caused so much destruction. Millions of companies were also literally in rubble and, with that, millions of opportunities for workers disappeared.

The ILO was established to help chart a new course. The Employers' first spokesperson, Mr Jules Carlier from Belgium, explained at that time the significance of the ILO to bringing a peaceful solution to solve the conflicts between employers and workers. The way forward, he said, is "to gather together at the same time in conferences representatives of the Governments, of the employers, and of the workers, so that each of these groups may make its voice heard and ... come to an agreement and find a fair compromise".

This message is as relevant today as it was then. But we are not here just to celebrate. The ILO has a great opportunity to strengthen its leadership, its credibility and its influence, but it has to move forward with courage and together with the three constituents. It takes time, as we well know. It takes resources and a lot of patience as well as tension to achieve consensus in the ILO, but once this consensus is reached, with the full involvement of all constituents, its strength is undeniable. Once global ILO standards enjoy strong ownership by the three constituents, in my experience, in our experience, it helps to transform enormously the situation on the ground of workers and employers. Our policy resolutions, when fully endorsed by constituents, also have a critical influence on shaping national policies.

At the IOE, we are proud that we were the ones who proposed the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This Declaration has helped to better focus on the basics: the fight against child labour, fight against forced labour, discrimination, and promotion of freedom of association. There has been real progress on implementing these fundamental principles and rights, even though the remaining challenges are still huge.

The ILO has also taken robust and vital actions to build the capacities of employers' and workers' organizations. Thank you for that. It is helping to produce more solid, professional and independent workers' and employers' organizations. This is the foundation of a productive social dialogue. This is the foundation of sustainable social peace in many areas of the world. Also, the ILO has protected and continues to protect these organizations when they are under threat, intimidation, violence, interference or marginalization, which is not rare, including for employers' organizations. Freedom of association helps companies. We see each day how important this freedom is in countries like Venezuela and in many other parts of the world where the private sector is threatened and attacked on a daily basis. A hundred years on, my members and I thank the ILO for this protection and commitment.

But let us look at the future. Transformations in the world of work are becoming disruptive for many, worrying for some and frightening for others. But we cannot let fear be the only driver for managing the future. The negative assessments that we often read in literature, including the ILO literature, does not help, and too often ignores the gains that have been made.

We should also look at the past with pride. We should not ignore the billions of people who no longer live in poverty and have moved into a decent life and decent working

conditions. This is the result of important standards that create a fair playing field that protects workers and employers, and it is also the result of a conducive environment for companies to grow.

Believe me, the future offers more opportunities than before. Millions of workers, individuals and companies will have unprecedented access to education, to skills and to business connections. If we maximize the benefits of these new opportunities, even more people will be lifted out of poverty. We must not put the brakes on the future and respond out of fear. Be aware that if we simply restrict entrepreneurship, we will harm not only the future jobs but also creativity, innovation and prosperity.

I agree with Sharan that there is unfinished business that the ILO must undertake. More than 60 per cent of people in the world work in informality, work “on the black”. These individuals and companies do not enjoy decent work, freedom of association or proper working conditions. And informality is not always decreasing in many countries, for complex reasons. For the ILO to remain credible, it needs to upscale its action to address this elephant in the room. We have a good basis: the Recommendation that we approved in 2015.

Also, the ILO cannot be relevant in the future if it does not position itself as a leader in effectively providing guidance on skills. The future of labour markets depends on skills anticipation and our capacity to constantly learn, and to learn quickly. Policies that effectively promote transitions from one job to the other will be the winners of the future. This is not just about identifying the future of technical skills, it is also about helping countries to change the mindset of individuals, workers and employers, to be flexible and move quickly on developing “soft competencies”. The ILO needs a proper department specialized in skills for the future, helping countries, sectors, and especially developing economies, to develop this agile skills capacity. Inaction on this is no longer acceptable.

The ILO also needs to assume, accept and fully recognize – and that is very important to us – that without a proper and sustainable environment for companies to grow, there is simply no decent work. There are two sides to the decent work coin: employment and economic growth. More than 80 per cent of jobs come from the private sector. The ILO will fail in its mandate if it does not help companies to create jobs. That must be clear in any future Declaration.

This is not just about words or aspirational statements, it is about action, and action on three areas. Firstly, it is time for all of us, and also for the ILO, to reflect in an objective and balanced manner on how a new ILO standard or a new policy that is being discussed will impact the capacity of companies to create employment. This is far from being a systematic approach in our house. Secondly, we need the ILO to do more to build a strong business environment together with other international organizations. This is especially important for small companies which struggle with layers of legal and administrative obstacles in a sometimes very hostile environment. These are also the forgotten heroes. The authority of the ILO can enormously improve the situation. Thirdly, ILO research must also examine, with more diligence, employers’ needs. It must be much more balanced in its approach.

But in general, the ILO must also become the house of the employers. Managers and officials of the ILO should be more familiar with and sensitive to the new realities of business. More ILO staff should be recruited from the private sector. If this specific issue is fairly addressed, we can help to respond to the legitimate concern of the Employers that the Office is not impartial, despite its mandate requiring it to be so.

Another central message that I have for you today is to join my Worker counterpart, Sharan Burrow from the ITUC, in making a joint appeal. Sharan and I ask for the help of all ILO member States, firstly, to inform the different UN agencies and institutions about the

value of regular tripartite dialogue with international workers' and employers' organizations. Secondly, we ask you to help in achieving the IOE's and the ITUC's goal of gaining permanent observer status in the UN General Assembly. As the UN system undertakes its reform process by reinvigorating its coherence, it is essential that the role of the social partners expands and is not limited to the ILO. The social partners need to be able to contribute effectively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sharan and I appeal for the IOE and the ITUC to have a recognized and dedicated role across other arms of the UN system, as well as in every country around the world. This is not just for us, but also for the UN to increase its impact.

There is much talk of the need for partnerships between governments and civil society in tackling the world's most pressing issues. SDG 8 on decent work is not an isolated topic. It covers broader human rights and development challenges that cut across many of the SDGs, including Goal 1 on "no poverty", Goal 4 on "quality education" and Goal 10 on "reducing inequalities". The engagement of employers' and workers' organizations is critical to the achievement of these ambitious goals.

How companies will adapt to technological and other global challenges such as demographic shifts, climate change and the skills gap will be helped through business networks like ours which are powerful and balanced. The IOE is well placed to collaborate with the UN on engaging with the private sector through our network in 148 countries.

Allow me to conclude by again quoting the Employers' first spokesperson, Mr Jules Carlier: "Believe me ... when I say we have the same aims and purposes. We can only achieve the wish of everybody by going hand in hand. And we want to do this – we want to do it with all our hearts. We ask you to give us your hands, to put your hands in ours, which we extend to you loyally and sincerely." A hundred years on, the union between employers, workers and governments is as important as ever. Let's go forward hand in hand.

**Statement by His Excellency
Mr Mohamed Shtayyeh,
Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority**

Mr Shtayyeh
Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority
(*Original Arabic*)

On behalf of Palestine, the Palestinian Authority, our partners the trade unions, civil society and business people, I would like to congratulate you on the Centenary of the International Labour Organization, your pioneering Organization which was established on the basis of joint action by the social partners.

I would also like to congratulate and thank the Director-General of the ILO – whom I received when he visited Palestine last year – for inviting Palestine to participate in this high-level session. I also thank the members of the Global Commission on the Future of Work and its co-chairpersons, the President of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Sweden. The Commission's recommendations are important for Palestine and its future, in particular when the occupation comes to an end and we are able implement them properly.

The first trade union activities took place in Palestine in 1929, in Jaffa. Today in Palestine, there are trade unions in all areas of activity. We are proud of this because workers are the mainstay of the Palestinian national movement against injustice that seeks social and political justice for Palestinians based on ending the occupation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of refugees to return.

Palestine is experiencing a unique situation. It remains under military colonial occupation and has no control over either its economic resources or crossing points or border points out of the territory. In Palestine, Israel controls all of the factors of production – including land, water, technology and capital – and pursues a colonial policy based on confiscating land, pushing the farmers who cultivated it into unemployment and into selling their muscle power on the Israeli labour market. The confiscation of land has transformed farmers, formerly landowners and stakeholders in the production process, into threadbare proletarians.

Palestinian workers work in Israel under difficult and complex conditions and are deprived of the most basic conditions of safety. Last year, 25 Palestinian workers lost their lives in Israel. In addition, Palestinian workers are subjected to financial extortion through the sale of work permits, which give them access to the Israeli labour market, at a cost of some US\$700 per month. In addition to these inhumane conditions, workers are obliged to cross checkpoints set up by Israel at the entrances to cities on a daily basis. Therefore, these workers must be provided with a safe environment.

Palestine is suffering seriously from acute poverty and unemployment, particularly in the Gaza Strip where, because of the blockade, which prevents workers from accessing the factors of production, 52 per cent of the labour force is affected, in comparison with 18 per cent in the West Bank. Unemployment rates are the highest among young people, close to 54 per cent, in particular among young people in the age group 19–29 years, most of whom are university graduates. The labour market is also biased against women, who constitute only 19 per cent of the total labour force.

Moreover, a financial war is being waged against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and against the Palestinian Authority. Israel has taken measures to reduce the social aid that the Palestinian Authority distributes to the orphans of martyrs and the families of prisoners, in violation of the Paris Economic Protocol that we concluded with Israel, making the situation yet more difficult and complex. As a result of these measures, in recent months we have only been able to pay employees half of their salary. People are patient because it is a matter of national dignity.

The aim of this financial war is to impose a political solution, which has been called “the Deal of the Century”, which the Palestinian leadership rejects because it is biased against the national rights of the Palestinian people and, in particular, the right to self-determination by the establishment of a Palestinian State.

These conditions have made it difficult for the Palestinian economy to create employment opportunities. Some 50,000 jobs per year need to be created, while circumstances and the Israeli measures allow only 10,000 jobs per year to be created, which contributes further to unemployment and has negative political and social consequences.

The economic and employment crisis calls for a political solution relating to the extent of the control that the Palestinians can exercise over their resources and the extent of their access to development zones that are closed to them. Israel considers these zones, which cover 62 per cent of the West Bank, as a geographical reservoir for the expansion of Jewish settlements. Furthermore, the blockade of the Gaza Strip must be lifted and workers allowed to move freely within the Palestinian labour market.

In this context, it should be noted that for the first time in three years, the salaries of Palestinian Authority employees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been aligned.

In the light of the foregoing, the Palestinian Government is working hard to restructure the Palestinian economy and gradually distance itself from the relationship of colonial dependency imposed upon it by the occupation, moving towards a strategy of disengaging

from the Israeli economy and developing its local production with a view to achieving self-sufficiency by means of import substitution.

Strategies such as this will enable us to focus on agriculture and industry, productive sectors which will create employment, generate income, increase the purchasing power of citizens and address labour market imbalances.

The Government has also adopted a cluster development strategy in order to achieve balanced development in the different geographical regions of the Palestinian territories and accumulate the comparative and competitive advantages of each region. For example, we have designated the Bethlehem region as a touristic cluster and intend to do all we can to achieve this. Other regions will form part of the agricultural cluster, while yet others will form part of the industrial cluster, and so on. Strategies such as these will enable us to break away from our dependent relationship with Israel and promote horizontal development in our physical and social infrastructures and the relevant vertical development in the various economic, productive and services sectors.

In this framework, we will focus our efforts also on the transition from need to productivity, whereby needy households are transformed from being consumers to producers by providing them with small amounts of financing, training them and empowering them in economic terms through entrepreneurship.

As part of the programme to invest in human capital and in order to confront unemployment, we have established a special committee to study the outputs of the educational process and their relevance to the local labour market. We will focus our efforts on vocational training that will enable unemployed Palestinians to engage in self-employment or entrepreneurial activities without needing to wait to find formal employment.

As part of the institution-building programme, the Government will found a university college offering vocational training in addition to the existing training centres, and place them under a single national programme which will enable us to create new forms of work.

The Government has decided to create an investment bank for development in order to provide long-term financing for productive projects in different regions, because the majority of banks offer consumer credit but not loans for productive projects. In order to enable workers to find employment, numerous new employment agencies have been opened and a web portal which details the Labour Market Information System has been created. Moreover, a new Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Empowerment has been established, tasked with centralizing scattered activities relating to the development and financing of employment- and income-generating projects.

Strengthening and investing in individuals and institution-building are important to Palestinians; we want to develop these areas because we are building a State that we want to be successful, able to serve its population and respond to their needs. We ask you to help us with this.

Palestine values its excellent and long-standing relationship with the ILO, where Palestinian trade unions, the Ministry of Labour and employers are represented. We appreciate the technical and material assistance that the Organization provides for the development of a comprehensive social protection system, which includes a pension scheme and social security coverage the final details of which are still being discussed. Social policies include not only cash transfers but also economic empowerment, through small projects to make families resilient, and investment in the material and social infrastructure.

The ILO's annual report to the Conference is important and reflects the situation of workers in the Palestinian territories. We hope that the report will include annual

recommendations for implementation and that these will be followed up with the occupying authorities and discussed at meetings. I also hope that the situation faced by workers under military occupation will be mentioned in the concluding statement; this is the situation in Palestine, the last colony in modern history.

On another note, Israel sought to defend goods coming from settlements when European countries labelled them, arguing that the settlements employed Palestinian workers and that the boycott would exacerbate the unemployment crisis. We do not accept this reasoning, because the settlements in the Palestinian territories are illegal and unlawful. The fact that they create employment opportunities for workers does not justify their existence, in particular considering that some are working in settlements built on land confiscated from their families by Israel. This is physical and psychological torture.

Moreover, Palestine hopes that the ILO will closely monitor the situation of Palestinian workers in the Israeli labour market, in particular with regard to their dues and compensation, since Israel pays scant heed to these and spends part of workers' dues on the construction of military roadblocks at crossing points, which is insulting and humiliating to say the least. Moreover, Israel withholds up to one third of workers' wages, from which they derive no benefit.

We hope that you, the tripartite partners and the Organization will help our workers to obtain decent working conditions and protect their dignity and humanity. This can be achieved by: ensuring that crossing points into Israel are humane, not humiliating; stopping the very costly trade in workers' permits and ensuring that Israel works with Palestinian Authority officials, not brokers; providing safety for workers and creating humane working conditions that preserve their dignity; and guaranteeing that workers are paid the dues to which they are individually entitled, as the Palestinian Authority is already trying to do. At this point, I call on the ILO to set up a group to examine the material rights of workers.

Palestine reaffirms its full commitment to all of the instruments that it has signed relating to human rights, the right to organize, good governance and, most importantly, social protection. The lives of Palestinians are based on dialogue, whether political or social. Social dialogue is easier because it is based on finding win-win solutions, which makes reaching agreement easier. We would like to keep this form of democracy vibrant, because we want democracy to be based on dialogue in a framework of partnership between the parties.

In conclusion, I look forward to the day that Palestine becomes a full member of all international forums, institutions and platforms, including the International Labour Organization. We believe in the slogan: "No one should be left behind."

(The speaker continues in English.)

No one should be left behind; Palestine, also, should not be left behind.

The President
(Original French)

On behalf of my fellow Officers and all Conference delegates, I wish to express my profound gratitude to you for having honoured us with your presence today and having shared your thoughts and your vision.

I hereby adjourn this high-level section, organized as part of the fifth plenary sitting of the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference.

(The sitting adjourned at 1.05 p.m.)