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International Labour Conference – 110th Session, 2022

Date: 15 June 2022

Plenary sitting

Opening of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference

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Friday, 27 May 2022, 1 p.m.

Presidents: Ms Jardfelt, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Mr Moroni

Opening of the session

Ms Jardfelt

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

Welcome to the first sitting of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. For those of you who may not know me, my name is Anna Jardfelt and I am the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden here in Geneva. In my capacity as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office for 2021–22, it is my honour to declare open this 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Although this year's session of the Conference is being opened virtually, you are all aware that it marks a return to the face-to-face discussions that we traditionally hold at this highest tripartite forum. As of Monday, sittings will take place in person, with the possibility of remote attendance for those who have been unable to travel to Geneva this year. After two years, we are coming together to discuss topics of major significance for the post-COVID-19 recovery and the future of work. I am confident that this year's session will live up to the expectations, trust and efforts that have been placed in it and in all of us.

Election of the President of the Conference

Ms Jardfelt

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

Without further ado, let us move to the first item on our agenda for this afternoon, under which the Conference is called on to elect its President. I will now give the floor to Mr Garcia, the Government representative of the Philippines and current Chairperson of the Government group, to put forward his group's nomination.

Mr Garcia

Government (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Government group

On behalf of the Government group, and as its Chairperson, it is my honour to put forward the candidature of Mr Claudio Moroni, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Argentina, for the position of President of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. Mr Moroni's nomination as President of this session of the Conference has the unanimous support of the Government group.

With a long record in public service, Mr Moroni has served his country in numerous capacities: as Head of the National Social Security Administration; as Federal Administrator of Public Revenues; and as General Comptroller, among others, prior to his current post, to which he was appointed in 2019. A lawyer by profession, Mr Moroni was a Professor of Administrative, Procedural and Labour Law at the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. Author of numerous publications on labour and insurance law, social security and workers in the informal economy, he has served in various interregional entities, focusing on issues ranging from insurance legislation to regulations relating to occupational safety and health.

With his experience in social dialogue, the Government group is confident that Mr Moroni has all the necessary skills and experience to successfully guide the work of this 110th Session of the International Labour Conference, and is honoured to nominate him as President.

(The proposal is supported by the Employers' and the Workers' groups.)

Ms Jardfelt

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

The nomination put forward by Mr Garcia, with the unanimous support of the Government group, has met with the agreement of the Employers' and Workers' groups.

In the absence of other proposals, I have great pleasure in declaring Mr Claudio Moroni, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Argentina, President of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I offer Mr Moroni my warmest congratulations and invite him to take the chair.

(Mr Moroni, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Argentina, is elected President of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference and takes the President's chair.)

Mr Moroni

President of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference

(Original Spanish)

It is a great privilege both for me and for Argentina that you have chosen to honour me today with this election to the position of President of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Allow me to extend my sincere thanks to the group of the Americas for the important vote of confidence given to me. I will spare no effort to ensure the success of our work.

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference

The President

(Original Spanish)

Without further ado, we will now proceed to elect the Vice-Presidents of the Conference. I give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference, Ms Dimitrova, who will read out the names of the candidates proposed by the three groups.

Ms Dimitrova

The Clerk of the Conference

(Original Spanish)

The nominations for the three positions of Vice-President of the Conference are as follows: for the Government group, Mr bin Samikh Al Marri (Qatar); for the Employers' group, Mr Furlan (Brazil); and for the Workers' group, Ms Egúsqiza Granda (Peru).

The President
(Original Spanish)

If there are no objections, may I take it that these proposals are approved?

(The proposals are approved.)

The President
(Original Spanish)

I now give the floor to the three Vice-Presidents of the Conference, so that they may briefly introduce themselves.

Mr bin Samikh Al Marri
Government Vice-President of the Conference
(Original Arabic)

It is a great pleasure for me to represent the Government group during this session of the Conference. I should like to thank and express my appreciation to the group of the Americas for nominating me. I should also like to thank all the other Governments that have placed their trust in me. The International Labour Conference is an international forum that brings together the three groups – Governments, Employers and Workers – in order to come up with practical solutions to the problems that are facing them in the world of work. This session is an important one. It is especially important because it is providing us with an opportunity to take part in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the pandemic has caused an international crisis that has had a major impact on the labour market, I hope that, at this session, the Conference will be able to achieve the desired results, come up with recommendations, and take the necessary measures in order to bring about a recovery for all the countries in the world. I will make every effort, together with my fellow Vice-Presidents, and with all the groups, to ensure that the work of this session of the Conference is a complete success.

Mr Furlan
Employer Vice-President of the Conference

After a long period of participating in sessions of the International Labour Conference, I am deeply honoured by the nomination and the trust placed by the Employers in me for this role. As an industrial entrepreneur, I have enjoyed representing employers in Brazil for years, as Vice-President and Director of the National Confederation of Industry of Brazil, and as President of its Council on Labour Relations and Social Development. Furthermore, in recent years, I have been honoured with the mission of being the Vice-President of the International Organisation of Employers for Latin America. With this experience, and with confidence, I can assure you that the participation of Employers in this 110th Session of the International Labour Conference is marked by the purpose of achieving positive results for all. After the last few years, a period in which significant challenges were launched for the world of work, due to the pandemic and also technological and social transformations, I am sure that we have an excellent opportunity to seek consensus, thinking about the future. So I close by wishing you all good and fruitful debates, from which we can reach conclusions on the essential topics dealt with in this session of the Conference.

Ms Egúsqüiza Granda

Worker Vice-President of the Conference
(Original Spanish)

It is an honour for me to represent the Workers' group and to say a few words on this occasion. I am the secretary for advocacy of the Autonomous Confederation of Workers of Peru and the organization secretary of the Single Union of Inspectors and Workers of Peru. I am honoured to be able to represent workers. This session of the Conference has many challenges, as we are returning to in-person meetings. We have demonstrated our capacity of resilience by having been able, in some way or another, to maintain the rights already acquired and we have to continue doing so through social dialogue. It is also important to state that we must cooperate fully to be able to understand and conduct debates, at this session of the Conference, on such key issues as occupational safety and health; we are, after all, talking about the lives and health of all workers, of both sexes, throughout the world. Likewise, it is important to devote our best efforts to achieving the best possible level of understanding in all the committees and debates taking place at this session of the Conference. It is a challenge to have got through this pandemic, which has presented us with a new set of circumstances, and it is only through tripartite social dialogue that we will be able to achieve the best possible scenario for us all.

Nomination of the Officers of the groups

The President

(Original Spanish)

We will now move to the nominations of the Officers of the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups. The groups are, of course, autonomous in their choices. I once again give the floor to the Clerk of the Conference, who will read out the names of the candidates proposed by the groups.

Ms Dimitrova

The Clerk of the Conference

The names of the candidates proposed by the groups are as follows:

Government group

Chairperson Mr Garcia and Mr Bello III (Philippines)

Vice-Chairperson Ms Stasch (Germany)

Employers' group

Chairperson Ms Hornung-Draus (Germany)

Vice-Chairpersons Mr Matsui (Japan)

Ms Mugo (Kenya)

Mr Echavarría Saldarriaga (Colombia)

Mr Mackall (United States of America)

Mr Matthey (Switzerland)

Secretary Mr Suárez Santos (International Organisation of Employers)

Workers' group

Chairperson	Ms Passchier (Netherlands)
Vice-Chairpersons	Mr Ntshalintshali (South Africa)
	Ms O'Neill (Australia)
	Mr Norddahl (Iceland)
	Ms Chang (Canada)
Secretary	Mr Beirnaert (International Trade Union Confederation)

Constitution and composition of Conference committees

The President

(Original Spanish)

As provided for in the Standing Orders of the Conference, the following standing committees are established each year: the Finance Committee, consisting of one Government delegate from each Member of the Organization represented at the Conference; the General Affairs Committee, which is tasked with the consideration of agenda items VII and VIII; and the Credentials Committee.

The Conference may also wish to establish the following technical committees: the Standard-Setting Committee, to undertake a first discussion on the issue of apprenticeships; the Recurrent Discussion Committee, on the strategic objective of employment; the General Discussion Committee, which this year will deal with the issue of decent work and the social and solidarity economy; and the Committee on the Application of Standards.

The composition of the Committees is communicated to participants in document [ILC.110/D.3](#), available on the Conference website.

If there are no objections, may I take it that these proposals are approved?

(The proposals are approved.)

Endorsement of the operational arrangements for the 110th Session of the Conference, including suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders

The President

(Original Spanish)

We shall now turn to the next item on our agenda, which is the approval of the operational arrangements for the 110th Session of the Conference, including the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference.

These operational arrangements, published in document [ILC.110/D.1](#), were approved by the Governing Body. They are specific to the 110th Session of the Conference and exceptional in nature in the light of the context, which is marked by remaining sanitary and travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a shortage of meeting rooms in Geneva due to the ongoing renovation works.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference wishes to endorse the operational arrangements for the 110th Session of the Conference and to suspend certain provisions of its Standing Orders, for the purposes set out in document ILC.110/D.1?

(The proposals are approved.)

Opening address by the President of the Conference

The President

(Original Spanish)

It is an honour for me to preside over this assembly. My country was one of the 42 founding Members of the ILO, contributed to the adoption of the first international labour standards, and has ratified all the fundamental labour Conventions. Continuing with that tradition, our Government's administration is based on the tripartism and social dialogue that characterize this Organization.

This session of the Conference is particular in that it is the first to be held in the aftermath of the pandemic, which has been leaving emotional, social, economic and cultural scars on all our communities. Furthermore, recent international events – which we believed belonged to a past age – have worsened this situation and are also generating food emergencies.

Inequalities and situations of poverty have been exacerbated, leading to the continuation of forms of existence that are unfair, owing to the absence of development options, which are the starting point of any aspiration to establish a human-centred agenda.

Implementing the “new normal” that we preach about so often, and placing human beings at the centre of our concerns, requires the urgent adoption of inclusive policies and a system of international standards and agreements that promote growth and the fair distribution of its benefits.

It is not acceptable that the international financial architecture creates imbalances instead of supporting the real economy. We must bring an end to this unfair situation. It is therefore essential that the development processes to which I referred previously be supported by international credit. Sustainable growth and fair distribution are concepts that are worth repeating, even where the correct rhetoric of discourse is affected. Joint coordinated efforts with multilateral organizations must be undertaken to change this model, with specific proposals that improve the economic and social situation of our peoples.

We cannot continue to support economic measures that undermine human dignity and condemn those families with the greatest needs.

In this spirit of striving for concrete results, we must address the issues that are on the agenda of this session of the Conference, consideration of which cannot be postponed in any development model. This includes the incorporation of occupational safety and health as a fundamental right, because it is a dimension of labour citizenship. This also applies to forms of learning that, in an increasingly competitive and demanding world, must help the labour force to adapt to technological change and new forms of production based on solidarity, while incorporating decent working conditions, in order to meet the growing demands of our employers and workers.

The diagnoses have been made and the objectives defined, and now, at this session of the Conference, we must show our determination to take the specific steps to re-establish the values of social justice and decent work and the prevalence of productive capital over any other option that would undermine the foundations of a social contract that, through dialogue, respects the identities of capital and labour, and guarantees the growth of all people.

The time has come to demonstrate through our commitment that this objective goes beyond words and is also actually on the way to being achieved.

Presentation of the Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office

The President (Original Spanish)

I now have the honour to give the floor to the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr Guy Ryder, who will present his vision of the work to be accomplished at this session of the Conference, over the next two weeks, and to present his report entitled *The least developed countries: Crisis, structural transformation and the future of work*, together with its Appendix entitled *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*.

Mr Ryder Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference

Let me begin by congratulating Mr Moroni on his election to preside over this 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. It is one further chapter in the record of the leadership of his country, Argentina, in the ILO. We know that we are in very good hands as we embark upon what is undoubtedly a challenging agenda, in a more than challenging context. My congratulations of course extend to all others who have been elected to office by the Conference.

This opening sitting is predominantly a virtual event. We have got used to them over the last two years. But the good news is that now we will be welcoming back large numbers of delegations in person here in Geneva. After the postponement of the session in 2020 and the challenges of last year, this is truly a major step forward. Ours is an organization that thrives on personal interaction. We need it to produce optimal results. And while doing everything to provide a level playing field for those participating remotely, we are once again able to have this face-to-face contact.

Yet, it would be profoundly wrong for any of us to conclude that the impact of COVID-19 on our Organization and on the world of work is a thing of the past. Of course, we have made important progress. But, globally, labour markets are still operating at levels of hours of work that are substantially below pre-pandemic levels – 3.8 per cent below, according to our latest estimates, which is the equivalent of 112 million full-time jobs lost. Recovery has been very uneven. Advanced economies have mostly bounced back quickly and strongly. But middle- and low-income countries have not. This great divergence is making an already unequal world more unequal still. Six out of ten workers are in countries where income from labour has not got back to pre-crisis levels.

This is bad enough. But with the effects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine making themselves increasingly felt throughout the global economy, there is all too

likely worse to come. Possibly much worse, if fragile recovery becomes full-blown recession. From the depths of the pandemic back in 2020, I think that we all wanted to see a way forward to a new and a better normal, and to engage collectively in building forward better, in a sort of straight line to the type of future work that we envisaged in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work.

But things have turned out differently. On top of the lingering social and economic symptoms of COVID-19, we must now contend with the impact of the war against Ukraine. The Appendix to my report *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories* is one reminder that there are many conflicts in the world and that they all bring suffering and damage to working people and to enterprises. Yet, the fact is that the situation arising from the aggression in Ukraine is generating global crises in respect of food, energy and finance, with a renewed disruption of supply chains, surging inflation and extraordinary levels of uncertainty, insecurity and tension. The human-centred recovery that we advocated at our session last year did not foresee – indeed could not have foreseen – any of this. But it is the harsh reality of the moment and we must confront it.

I can see two general implications of this situation for the work of this Conference. The first is that it has put international cooperation under considerable and maybe unprecedented pressure. We – all of us – must show ourselves and this Conference to be capable of rising above that pressure and of delivering the results that show that multilateralism – which in this house is allied with tripartism – actually works. That we need it. That it is indispensable. The second is that the rule of law must prevail. That, just as the flouting of the Charter of the United Nations by military aggression is not to be tolerated and must not prevail, so the violation of international labour standards must not go unanswered.

There are multiple reasons why the work of the Committee on the Application of Standards at this session of the Conference matters enormously. The Committee goes to the essence of the historic normative role of the ILO. It is where the rules we have set for over a century, and where our idea of how work should be organized, take concrete shape. It is the place where all Member States, big or small, powerful or less so, rich or less affluent, are held to the standards that you – the governments, employers and workers of the world – have decided should apply to us all.

I have seen this unique process in operation at the ILO for four decades. I have seen its achievements, and I have seen its difficulties. I have seen the controversies it has generated, and the deliberate and ill-disguised efforts to weaken its authority and its effectiveness. These efforts continue, and I regret that the controversies have not yet been resolved. This is because this system of standards supervision is what matters most to this Organization. So I look forward with particular interest and confidence to the successful and important examination by the Committee on the Application of Standards of the individual country cases that are brought to it and also to its examination of the General Survey prepared by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, entitled *Securing decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers, key actors in the care economy*. What more fitting subject could there be than the working conditions of the women – above all women – and the men who have played such a key role since the pandemic hit.

Together with its crucial normative work, our Conference will be tackling an agenda of technical items, which, taken individually, are each of evident significance to the world of work, and would be at any time. But looked at as a whole and in the difficult context I have outlined, I think that they acquire an even greater collective significance. Because in distinct but

complementary ways they all contribute to the construction of a human-centred recovery and a better future of work.

It is good, I think, that our recurrent discussion this year is on the strategic objective of employment and is focused in particular on a new generation of comprehensive employment policies. It is good, because we are seeing complex and sometimes confusing developments in employment, with labour shortages in some areas and high unemployment elsewhere. We know that employment policies must address the transformative changes of digitalization, decarbonization and formalization and must navigate demographic shifts. But there is danger also that, in tackling the challenges and the disruption that we face today, employment objectives – including the objective of achieving decent work for all under Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) – will take a back seat, as has happened too frequently in the past. Employment objectives will become the passive variable, as competing policy objectives – financial ones in particular – get priority attention. Comprehensive employment policies are one way of stopping that from happening and I believe that they merit the attention of our Conference.

One crucial component of these employment policies needs to be skills and lifelong learning. There seems to be the broadest and the strongest tripartite consensus in the ILO on the criticality of this theme for all Member States and clear determination that our Organization should take international leadership on it. That is why we are embarking now on the discussion of a new standard, or standards, concerning a framework for quality apprenticeships. This is significant both because of the substantive issues to be addressed and because the discussion takes forward and ensures the continuity of the Conference's standard-setting function. So, I welcome the discussion on both of these counts.

I welcome equally the fact that the ILO will return as well to the role of the social and solidarity economy in generating decent work. I have detected an upsurge of international interest in this topic recently. It has been referenced explicitly in solemn declarations adopted by this Conference in recent years. But, let us not forget that it is a topic that is deeply rooted in the history of the ILO and has been from the very beginning. What is important is that the organizations of the social and solidarity economy be recognized not as secondary, or artificial or unsustainable entities, or as temporary instruments of crisis response, but rather as fully fledged competitive enterprises that not only serve to promote equity, participation and social objectives but are permanent and valuable sources of decent work. Seen in that light, these organizations are, self-evidently, a major actor in the world of work, and partner for the ILO.

The idea of including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work has been around for a long time; indeed, I seem to remember that it was around when the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work was adopted in 1998. The idea resurfaced particularly in the context of the Future of Work Centenary Initiative and specifically in the resolution adopted by the Conference in 2019. Since then, as a result of intensive preparatory work – and I want to thank our tripartite constituents for their engagement in that – the Conference now has before it a draft resolution that would have the effect of amending the 1998 Declaration to include safe and healthy working conditions – or a safe and healthy working environment – alongside the right to organize and collective bargaining and protection from discrimination, forced labour and child labour.

We have become familiar with the challenges that this process has thrown up, including with regard to the precise terminology to be used, the Conventions that should be considered fundamental and how the unintended consequences for trade agreements that reference

fundamental principles and rights at work should be addressed. These are significant, of course, but they are far from insuperable. We are very nearly there. If we weigh these remaining challenges against what is at stake – the 3 million lives lost each year because of work and the ILO's constitutional obligation to ensure “the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment” – then the responsibility we share is stark and clear.

The 1998 Declaration has demonstrated its power to advance fundamental principles and rights at work for nearly a quarter of a century now. By extending its coverage to occupational safety and health, that power can be brought to bear in an area where, I feel we can all agree, it is most badly needed. We will be saving lives.

These are the issues that you, the ILO's tripartite constituents, have, through your representatives in the Governing Body, selected for discussion by the Conference. I believe that you have chosen very wisely. However, it falls to me as Director-General to choose the subject of my own report to the Conference. Over the last ten years, I have sought to put before the plenary issues of strategic significance that, on the basis of the guidance provided by the Conference, have subsequently taken up an important place in the overall direction of the work of the ILO.

This year, in the same spirit, I have devoted my last report to the Conference to the issue of the least developed countries (LDCs). At first glance, this might seem surprising. Only 45 of the ILO's global membership of 187 countries come into this category. So what has this to do with the rest of them? My answer is, a great deal, and I have explained why at the beginning of my report.

Institutionally, we are approaching the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries has already been approved by the General Assembly, which has called on the ILO to contribute, and to contribute significantly, to its implementation. I think we must respond.

We are also well into the last decade of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations is appealing to us all to “rescue” the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda exhorts us to leave no one behind; and my report argues that it is the LDCs that are the most in danger of being left behind. So, if we are serious about the 2030 Agenda, we must be serious about the LDCs, because it is in these countries, above all, that the fate of the 2030 Agenda will be played out.

I argue too that labour market conditions in the LDCs present a very particular test for the ILO. The question is whether the Organization's established means of action – tripartism, and international labour standards and everything that stems from them – can be truly and demonstrably effective in addressing situations where informality touches 90 per cent of the working population, the rural subsistence economy often dominates, institutions of work are weak and sometimes absent, and poverty is widely present. How can the ILO contribute optimally to the processes of structural transformation that are needed to move the LDCs forward? This is not a small question. In a very real way, the ILO's credibility as holder of its universal mandate for social justice depends upon the answer that we give to it. So, this concerns all ILO Member States.

Let me conclude by reverting to what I said at the beginning of this intervention about the context in which we meet. I believe that our circumstances constitute a sharp reminder of the foundational truth upon which the ILO was constructed and which has been borne out time and again over the last century, and is being borne out again today, namely that lasting peace

depends on social justice, and that the achievement of social justice depends upon peace. Those who resort to war deny social justice. And those who obstruct social justice endanger peace. I think that the veracity of these propositions is surely self-evident. I hope that we will all be guided by them in the course of this session.

I wish you all success in your work.

Presentation of the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body

The President (Original Spanish)

I now have the honour to give the floor to the Chairperson of the Governing Body for the period 2021–22, Her Excellency Ambassador Anna Jardfelt, who will present her report on the activities of the Governing Body over this period. The report has been published on the Conference website as document [ILC.110/I\(C\)](#).

Ms Jardfelt Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

It is my pleasure to present to you my report to the Conference, which covers the work of the Governing Body under my leadership. In it, you will find a summary of some of the important discussions held by the Governing Body since the 109th Session of the Conference, in 2021.

The report covers the short session of the Governing Body, held in June 2021, and the two substantial sessions, held in November 2021 and March 2022. Today, I will focus on some of the matters considered.

I would like to start by paying tribute to the members of the Governing Body for the commitment they showed to the tasks before them. The subjects that were examined this year were made even more challenging by the mostly virtual format of the sessions. The engagement of all those involved was key to ensuring that progress could be made.

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed to the holding of meetings, the ILO rapidly adjusted to ensure the business continuity of its governance organs. The system put in place in 2020, allowing the Governing Body to adopt urgent decisions by correspondence, was replicated for the November and March sessions. Usual procedures were eventually adjusted to accommodate an entirely virtual setting and were periodically reviewed as the situation with regard to health conditions and travel restrictions started to improve in this part of the world. Thanks to the collective efforts of constituents and the Office, it has been possible to hold fruitful meetings in fully virtual and hybrid formats. It is, however, my strong belief that the return to physical meetings will enhance the decision-making of the Governing Body.

In March this year, the Governing Body elected the 11th Director-General of the International Labour Office. Under unprecedented circumstances, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governing Body made every possible effort to ensure the efficiency and transparency of the election, as well as equal participation opportunities for the candidates and for the constituent groups. In this spirit, in January, candidates for the first time took part in public dialogues broadcast live from Geneva and, in March, they took part in the traditional private hearings with Governing Body members. On 25 March 2022, after two rounds of voting,

Mr Gilbert F. Hougbo was elected the 11th Director-General of the ILO. I would like to offer him, once again, my warmest congratulations.

As the Director-General just reminded us, the ILO was founded on the belief that universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. Social justice can therefore not be realized without lasting peace. In March 2022, following the statement made by the Director-General on 3 March, the Governing Body adopted a resolution concerning the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine from the perspective of the mandate of the ILO. In the resolution, the Governing Body calls on the Russian Federation to cease its aggression and requests the ILO to take measures aimed at protecting workers and employers in Ukraine and to suspend ILO technical assistance to the Russian Federation. The Governing Body will need to ensure the follow-up to this resolution.

I now wish to mention the work accomplished by the Governing Body in the past year with regard to its role in the ILO supervisory system. The Governing Body undertook a third evaluation of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group, which had reviewed five instruments on social security at its sixth meeting, as presented in the report of that meeting. The Governing Body reiterated the importance of the Working Group in contributing to ensuring a clear, robust and up-to-date body of international labour standards and stressed the need for timely follow-up action by Member States and the social partners, as well as by the Office, to its recommendations as adopted by the Governing Body.

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on the developments surrounding the complaints made under article 26 of the ILO Constitution and the representations made under article 24 that were on our agenda over the past year. The Governing Body tackled these issues with the explicit aim of securing the sustainable and long-lasting application of the ratified Conventions concerned. On some occasions, the Governing Body had to make use of all the procedures at its disposal, in accordance with the mandate of our Organization, in the hope that positive change would be brought about in the near future. This was the case with Myanmar and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The Governing Body will need to continue to address these cases objectively at its upcoming sessions.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations and the Committee on Freedom of Association. Both Committees make an important contribution to a more decent world of work.

It was a great source of pride, not only for myself but I believe for my fellow Officers as well – and it was perhaps also high time – that, for the first time in the long history of the ILO, its Governing Body was led by three women. As I will soon be stepping down from this role, it is my hope that this will be a “first” and not a “last”. Working together towards a more inclusive working life, with fewer inequalities between genders, also means leading by example. As the ILO implements its Action Plan for Gender Equality and its Strategic Plan for 2022–25, I am hopeful that its mandate to achieve gender equality will continue to be at the forefront of its internal and external work. The time for equality is now.

The Governing Body continued discharging its role in providing oversight of the work of the Office in order to strengthen the tripartite governance of the ILO, namely by overseeing the appointment of the External Auditor for the financial period 2024–27 and the selection process of new members of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee and considering the 14th annual report of that Committee and the report of the Chief Internal Auditor for the year ended 31 December 2021. These tasks were undertaken with due diligence and a true sense of accountability to the Organization's Member States and constituents worldwide.

I could not conclude the presentation of this report without taking a moment to thank the Director-General and all his staff, both at headquarters and in the field. I wish to thank them all for the excellent support that they have given to me in this role and – more importantly – for the tremendous devotion with which they exercise their duties. It goes without saying that these have been challenging times, which has made it even more important to see that the ILO staff have innovated on several aspects and maintained the highest standards in their work.

What the report perhaps does not reflect is the teamwork and close cooperation required to tackle often complex and difficult issues. For this, I am especially grateful to my fellow Officers, Ms Hornung-Draus and Ms Passchier. While representing the voices and interests of their respective groups, they have remained focused on the best interests of the Organization and its constituents at all times. Renate, Catelene, it has really been a privilege working with you both.

Let me end by saying that it has been a great honour and privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office for this last year. As my mandate as Chairperson draws to a close, it is my sincere hope that the spirit of dialogue and consensus will carry over into the work of the Governing Body at its 345th Session, which will take place on Monday, 13 June.

With these words, I submit to the Conference my report on the work of the Governing Body for the year 2021–22.

Opening statements by the Chairpersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups of the Conference

The President (Original Spanish)

We will now hear the opening statements of the Chairpersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups, who will present their groups' views in respect of the work of our Conference.

Ms Hornung-Draus Chairperson of the Employers' group

On behalf of the Employers' group, I would like to begin by congratulating the President, Mr Moroni, and the Vice-Presidents, Mr bin Samikh Al Marri, Ms Egúsquiza Granda and Mr Furlan, on their election to these important roles at the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. They are presiding over an important session, which is taking place in a period of complex global crisis that presents an existential challenge to the multilateral institutions and their traditions – which were created and developed in the twentieth century – and that may well constitute a turning point towards a future setting that needs to be shaped proactively, including by the ILO. I deeply respect the commitment that they bring to their role.

The entirely virtual session of the Conference in 2021 ended with important results in different fields. We were proud of our joint work and commitment in those challenging moments, but conscious of the difficulties we faced in achieving a solid consensus in a virtual format without the possibility of direct personal interaction. At this year's session, we are still operating in a hybrid – and that means semi-virtual – mode, but with a much larger physical attendance by delegates. This, hopefully, will pave the way towards a session of the Conference in 2023 that will again take place with full, in-person participation. Hopefully, the renovation of the Palais des Nations – which is still not completed and which has forced us to make logistical

arrangements that are suboptimal and rather uncomfortable, I have to say – will also be accomplished by then.

None of us could have imagined at the start of 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, that the measures taken by many governments in their attempts to contain the spread of the virus would have such devastating impacts both on our economies and societies and on people's lives, livelihoods and jobs. However, the measures taken varied across countries and had very different effects on business continuity, unemployment and informality, and on social and societal dimensions. We need to undertake a careful fact-based analysis and an honest evaluation of the different measures taken around the world, of their effectiveness and of their impacts on economies, the social fabric and societies, so that we can learn to avoid ineffective policies with disproportionate negative collateral damages in the future. This is a principle of good governance and good business.

The constraints imposed by the measures taken to combat COVID-19, especially lockdowns, have accelerated changes in the world of work to a pace that we could not have imagined before the pandemic. Digitization allowed for mobile work from home for many activities, and permitted a certain continuity of business and employment during phases of hard lockdown. It also allowed for the social distancing necessary to reduce the spread of infection. In this context, the role of the private sector is emerging not only as a crucial generator of productive and decent employment, but also as an important partner for addressing the challenges brought about by the pandemic. In these turbulent times, private employers have been a trusted partner for governments and society, and an essential information resource for their employees.

As has been said by the previous speakers, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the events linked to it are unfortunately not the only challenge that our economies and societies and the multilateral international order are facing. Employers are very concerned to see that geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts in many parts of the world have increased sharply, and are leading to serious negative economic and social consequences worldwide. Let me reiterate what we already stated during the Governing Body session last March. The Employers urged the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally respect the territorial integrity, borders and sovereignty of Ukraine. The Employers' group strongly condemns the unilateral use of armed force wherever it occurs. In the twenty-first century, conflicts should be solved through diplomacy and within the existing system of international law and multilateral institutions. We are deeply committed to the principles on which the United Nations was built. These principles are the fundamental pillars for a peaceful international order, but also for prosperity and economic and social development, as we can see from the economic and social progress achieved in recent decades, which was unknown in previous eras.

We have high expectations for this session of the Conference. For the reasons I have just mentioned, we need, more than ever, an ILO that supports with even more energy an environment for promoting business development, entrepreneurship, innovation and productivity growth and for tackling informality. This is vital if we are to shape a future of work replete with prosperity and dignity.

The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, which this Conference adopted in 2019 on the occasion of the ILO's 100th anniversary – which was, by the way, when the last fully physical session of the Conference was held before the COVID-19 pandemic set in – spells out the priorities that the ILO needs to develop in order to achieve these objectives. The

Centenary Declaration must serve as the founding basis and the guiding North Star for the ILO's policies in the decades to come.

At this session of the Conference, we will already implement one of the important priorities spelled out in the Centenary Declaration. In the General Affairs Committee, we will discuss the inclusion of occupational safety and health in the framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. The purpose of the discussion is to solemnly affirm that an existing constitutional principle should be recognized as being of fundamental importance for obtaining the objectives of this Organization. We need to keep this clear purpose in mind, as the outcome of our discussion on these matters will have significant repercussions, both within and outside the ILO. The choice of the terminology for the fundamental principle on occupational safety and health, and a decision to recognize all the Conventions on occupational safety and health as fundamental, will also have significant implications. These implications are also likely to occur both inside and outside the ILO, through the ILO supervisory system and also through the trade policies taken by States bilaterally, regionally or unilaterally, in which reference is made to the fundamental principles and rights at work. We need to concentrate our discussion on building consensus around the four pending issues. We, as Employers, are committed to finding a positive outcome and to looking for common denominators that we can all share.

We will also hold the third recurrent discussion on employment. There is a critical need to support ILO Members more effectively, with practical action on employment, especially during this turbulent period with a high risk of substantial job losses due to the sharp increase in energy prices and high inflation rates, but also due to weak macroeconomic policies and poorly designed measures to face climate change. We do not want to open general policy discussions; this would not be in line with the purpose of the current discussion as defined in the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Rather, recurrent discussions are meant to provide an opportunity for the Office to learn and improve its policies through the analysis of existing experiences with local and global employment policies. The recurrent exchanges allow us to guide Office action and better assess priorities for programming. In doing so, we need to pay special attention to the new realities of work, which require different and innovative responses. Therefore, it will be important to ensure that the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment works in a focused and straightforward way, avoiding purely theoretical discussions, and that it comes up with concrete recommendations based on the evidence and progress achieved on the ground.

We are also expecting the first comprehensive discussion on the role of the social and solidarity economy. This general discussion will define the contours of an important sector and acknowledge that it plays a complementary role to that of private businesses in creating decent and productive employment. We look forward to an outcome that considers that enterprises of the social and solidarity economy, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, are not isolated from the private sector; rather, they share both values and challenges. Like those of the private sector, the enterprises of the social and solidarity economy also suffer from weak and inefficient public institutions and infrastructure and they also need an environment that is conducive to growth. Therefore, a differentiated treatment in terms of policy will be counterproductive and lead to unfair competition.

We look forward to the discussions on a new ILO standard on apprenticeships. Apprenticeships bring a substantial added value to youth employment, companies and society. Unfortunately, in many countries, the stigma surrounding apprenticeships often jeopardizes the positive role they play. A strong ILO Recommendation would positively influence policies and stimulate more governments and companies to implement apprenticeship systems. A

robust promotional approach that foresees incentives for companies, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, would certainly have more impact than a rigid regulatory and rights-based approach, as provided for by a Convention. We need the new instrument to make an effective contribution to addressing urgently the challenges of youth unemployment, skills shortages for companies and problems of labour market integration.

The Committee on the Application of Standards is again meeting and holding discussions based on a prioritized agenda. The Committee provides the highest and most authoritative tripartite guidance on implementing ILO standards. More specifically, we look forward to the discussion on the four instruments concerning nursing personnel and domestic workers. This is the first time that the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has examined these instruments in its General Survey, and it comes at a critical time as many countries face serious problems in their healthcare services.

The most demanding work of the Committee on the Application of Standards will of course be again the discussion of the list of individual cases. The Committee will adopt its final shortlist of 22 individual cases on Monday, 30 May. In this regard, I have to mention that there are regrettably several Member States where the ILO's core principle of freedom of association is not respected, where efforts to achieve real and meaningful consensus on actions are blocked and where employers' and workers' organizations are excluded from attempts to build a better, more sustainable and resilient future. We remain committed to supporting progress in this area; we also trust that a case of progress within the 22-case list will be considered. The discussions in the Committee should also provide an opportunity to commend Members' efforts to align law and practice with the Conventions.

As I did last year, I continue to insist on one of the crucial points: in undertaking its work this year, the Committee on the Application of Standards must make it clear that it is committed to balancing supervision and to doing justice to the needs of sustainable enterprises. These needs should be reflected not only in the discussions, but also in the outcomes of the debates. While divergences of views on substantial issues do exist among constituents and between the Committee on the Application of Standards and the Committee of Experts, we, the Employers, will continue to voice our views in mutual respect and understanding. We also trust that the discussion of the individual cases will not be politicized and will be undertaken in the framework of the Convention at stake and within the boundaries of the Experts' observations and the written submissions provided by the constituents.

Last March, the ILO Governing Body elected a new Director-General. The Employers' group very much looks forward to working with Mr Gilbert F. Houngbo, the Director-General elect. We look forward to a new era of solid and reliable leadership in the ILO that can give new impetus to resolving, in a balanced manner and through consensual solutions, difficult matters in the world of work, improve trust and produce new innovative approaches that bring ILO constituents together, here in Geneva, but also – and perhaps most importantly – at the national level.

To conclude, I want to reiterate that our invitation today is to make the best use of our long-delayed face-to-face interaction to bring about impactful outcomes. This session is a defining moment for tripartism and global leadership in a multilateral system, with an opportunity to reshape the economic and social landscape for decades to come. During this uncertain period, let us seize the momentum created by the Centenary Declaration to implement its priorities and thereby reinvigorate the tripartite authority of the ILO and build solid solutions that can meet the decent work challenges of our time through an enabling environment for business development, innovation and productivity growth.

Ms Passchier Chairperson of the Workers' group

Congratulations to the President and Vice-Presidents on their election, and also to the Secretary-General, all of whom will play important roles in the upcoming session of the International Labour Conference. It is good that, very soon, we will finally be able to meet again in person – and I am looking now especially at all those joining via Zoom – at this important assembly, after two years of restrictions and limitations of movement caused by a terrible pandemic.

But let me first congratulate the Office and its leadership for steering us rather well through all the complexities of going virtual during this period, ensuring that the Organization could continue to play its important role in the world of work and the multilateral system, and providing support to constituents at the national and regional levels. A special thanks to our Governing Body Chairperson, Ms Anna Jardfelt, for her very capable leadership in this last year, which was indispensable for the proper functioning of the Governing Body in these challenging times. Thank you very much, Anna.

The issues we will be addressing during this session of the Conference are of profound importance to working men and women worldwide and their economies and societies. The ILO must once more show its vitality and relevance, by dealing with them with tripartite commitment and determination, focusing on finding common ground and solutions to the major issues before us.

Since we last met, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the cracks in our common human security system. Global growth prospects have weakened significantly amid a war in Ukraine, rising energy, food and commodity prices and soaring inflation. The ILO has predicted that global employment will remain below pre-pandemic levels until 2024. The combination of COVID-19, rising inequality and rising food prices could push as many as 263 million people into extreme poverty this year alone.

There are 60 military conflicts raging around the world, with millions of victims. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost in Tigray and Yemen alone. I must also draw attention again to Myanmar, where the military regime is unfortunately tightening its detrimental grip on the country and its population. Some 25 million people have been forced to become refugees outside their home country, and tens of millions more are displaced internally.

In 2022, we are even facing the existential threats of nuclear war, climate change and pandemics, in combination with a toxic mix of rising poverty and inequality, extremism, nationalism, gender violence and shrinking democratic space. Our global systems and structures to provide security, combat poverty and inequality, and prevent human suffering are all too frequently ignored or violated. The world has a choice between an existence grounded in competition, aggression and instability, or one founded in common security, peace and solidarity, based on social justice. We have a shared urgent and very serious responsibility to take bold steps to promote social justice in the interests of peace and prosperity for all. We need a paradigm shift in the global political economy that is currently stimulating corruption and corporate greed at the expense of working people around the world.

We have a unique multilateral tripartite organization that has already demonstrated its relevance in times of crisis. We need to put it to work and play our own respective roles as social partners and governments to tackle these global challenges together. As we have said on many previous occasions, we need new social contracts between governments, business

and labour to tackle the poverty and inequality that are driving conflicts and insecurity, and to build a more inclusive, resilient and peaceful society. We need jobs, rights, wages, social protection, equality and inclusion.

In 2019, the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work outlined the need to prioritize human dignity and workers' rights above market competition. After two years of a pandemic that has led to more insecurity and increased precariousness of labour, we need to place even more emphasis on providing security to working people, including through a labour protection floor for all workers, that includes occupational safety and health as a fundamental human right. A global social protection fund is now more crucial than ever; indeed, strong messages for social protection and rural development came out of the recent Fifth Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, held in Durban. We need to move forward on business accountability across supply chains, and urgently address the need for protection of more than 1 billion workers in informal and platform jobs, including through formalization and regulation. Last but not least, we urgently need to implement a transformative agenda on gender equality.

These are serious challenges placed before us by the Centenary Declaration and that we all have committed to. They are, however, the requirements for lasting peace and shared prosperity, for ensuring the just transition the world needs to overcome the climate emergency, and for the resilience needed to manage and overcome global shocks.

We therefore welcome the Report of the Director-General *The least developed countries: Crisis, structural transformation and the future of work*, as well as the topic of the World of Work Summit next week, on how we should tackle the multifaceted crises we are facing. In this context, I also want to commend the Director-General and his team for the Appendix to his Report, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, exposing a harsh reality, as the already dire situation has become even more desperate as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, without any prospect for improvement, with young people and women the hardest hit. As ILO constituents, we cannot continue to take these annual reports describing an ever-worsening situation for granted. We must bring back to the table at the ILO, and within the wider UN system, what can and must be done to give the Palestinian population some hope for an end to the occupation and a better future. So we have a lot of work to do.

Let me now turn to the other points on the Conference agenda. The Committee on the Application of Standards is the beating heart of this Organization. We must nurture and cherish it. This Organization can only deliver on its mandate if it has the capacity effectively to supervise labour standards for all countries without exception. Only then can we create a level playing field and improve living and working conditions for workers without unfair competition. I must therefore express our serious concern about the inaction of some governments in responding to the recommendations of the supervisory system. Cases of serious rights violations will be discussed by the Committee, and I will not pre-empt those discussions.

However, I do want to draw your attention to the case of Belarus, where recently, after 18 years of inaction to implement the recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry in 2004, dozens of union leaders and officials were detained in April, of whom at least ten remain in custody with limited or no access to their families or trade union colleagues. Aliaksandr Yarashuk, the President of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), and a member of the ILO's Governing Body, is one of them. This is unacceptable. We will have to look together at appropriate measures to ensure that Belarus is complying with its obligation to respect freedom of association for the benefit of the trade union leaders involved, but also to safeguard the credibility of our Organization.

The Committee on the Application of Standards will also discuss the General Survey of 2022 on securing decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers, key actors in the care economy. This is a very timely report, as the Director-General also said, taking into account that these two groups of workers have provided the world with essential work and services, while at the same time being hardest hit by the health and safety risks involved.

This brings me to one of the key issues on the agenda of this session of the Conference, which is the inclusion of occupational safety and health in the framework of the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that occupational safety and health is not to be taken for granted, with millions of workers in healthcare and other frontline jobs sustaining economies and societies, while running major risks for their own health and safety and that of their families. Respect for the safety and health of workers should therefore be at the core of recovery policies based on relevant ILO standards. We can only reiterate that the pandemic has shown the relevance and urgency of declaring occupational safety and health to be a fundamental right. We trust that, following debates in previous Conference and recent Governing Body sessions, we can finally, formally make that inclusion, which has the potential to improve the working conditions and the working environment of millions of workers around the world. This is long overdue, and we hope it does not require further lengthy debates.

We stand ready to find solid and credible solutions for the still outstanding issues. The discussion on apprenticeships is the first one in a two-year exercise, as we will be working on a new standard. This will offer an important opportunity to increase the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships, offer ways and means to improve access to these forms of skills acquisition for all workers, including vulnerable groups, and provide them with genuine opportunities to transition to decent jobs, as well as with protection against potential abuses and exploitation. This is essential not only for so many young workers at the start of their careers, but also – increasingly – for older workers, offering them opportunities for improvement of lifelong learning throughout their careers.

We will also be having a discussion on the social and solidarity economy, an area of work that has been neglected for too long, and that could actually play an important role in facing some of the challenges of the current system, with its strong focus on shareholder value and profit for few, related to inequality and informality. It is crucial that our discussion helps to clarify the difference between organizations in the genuine redistributive solidarity economy and private commercial companies, and helps to create a regulatory framework that facilitates their operations and registration, while ensuring the full application of labour standards. Simply ignoring these alternative enterprise models only drives them into informality and exposes the workers involved to precarious and insecure forms of work and potential exploitation. Our discussion can help make the social and solidarity economy part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

The recurrent discussion on employment policy is extremely important in relation to the current jobs crisis. The only way to build back better in the face of ongoing crisis is to create quality jobs and address the increasingly precarious nature of labour markets, leading to lost generations of young workers faced with a situation in which they cannot afford proper housing or even to start a family. During the pandemic, we have seen a further proliferation of old and new forms of precarious and insecure work hitting women, migrant workers and other vulnerable groups on the labour market the hardest. Now, we must at all costs prevent the recovery from the pandemic being built on a further expansion of such forms of work, as this will inevitably lead to a precarious recovery. We must invest in building forward better with

decent work and jobs that offer adequate protection to all workers, as emphasized in the Centenary Declaration.

We are strengthening the employment relationship and its protection, in which collective bargaining plays a central role. We are proud of our unique tripartite nature. Now, we must live up to the expectations we have ourselves created and show that tripartism can deliver while other institutions get stuck. In a crisis, it is time for solidarity. It is our strong constitutional obligation to leave no one behind. I wish us all a successful Conference session.

Closing of the sitting

The President

(Original Spanish)

This brings us to the conclusion of our opening sitting and the establishment of the various bodies that will enable us to carry out our work over the next two weeks.

The committees will begin their work on Monday, 30 May and the plenary will resume its work on 6 June, in accordance with the programme of work. Until then, I would like to wish the members of the technical committees all the best for their discussions.

I declare closed the opening sitting of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.

(The Conference adjourned at 2.30 p.m.)