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Outcomes of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee:
Employment

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Saturday, 11 June 2022, 2.30 p.m.

President: Mr Moroni

Presentation and discussion of the outcomes of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment

The President (Original Spanish)

Welcome to the 13th plenary sitting of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference.

This afternoon we will consider for adoption the outcomes of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment, namely its proposed resolution and conclusions, the texts of which are contained in *Record of Proceedings No. 6A*. The summary of the Committee's proceedings can be found in *Record of Proceedings No. 6B*.

It is my pleasure to welcome the Officers of the Committee, namely: Mr Gómez Ruiloba (Panama), President; Mr Kyriazis (Greece), Employer Vice-Chairperson, replaced today by Mr Ricci Muadi (Guatemala); and Mr Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Worker Vice-Chairperson; as well as Mr Blackman (Barbados), Reporter.

I now give the floor to Mr Blackman so that he may present to us a summary of the work of the Committee. The Officers of the Committee will then take the floor.

Mr Blackman Reporter of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment

I have the distinct honour of presenting to the Conference for adoption the outcomes of the work of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment, in other words, the proposed resolution and conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment. These conclusions are the result of the Committee's strong commitment to its objectives, tripartite approach and hard work over 11 days. That is correct, 11 days. We held 14 plenary sittings and the drafting group held sittings over two very long days. We had very rich and interesting debates, and while there were some differing views and opinions at times, we were able to find common ground, in the true spirit of social dialogue, a key hallmark of this institution.

A decisive factor that allowed our committee to accomplish its work was the guidance provided by the Chairperson, Mr Gómez Ruiloba of Panama, and the resolve of the two Vice-Chairpersons, Mr Kyriazis and Mr Dimitrov, and of the representatives of the regional government groups and individual Member States to find consensus. I wish to thank all members of the Committee for their commitment and constructive inputs, often working late into the night. I also wish to thank the members of the drafting group, who proposed for the Committee's consideration a set of draft conclusions that reflected its deliberations. I would also like to acknowledge the work done by the Office to facilitate the achievement of the task entrusted to the committee.

The report submitted to the Conference for discussion provided a comprehensive and forward-looking set of issues to consider. In addition, the Secretariat's competence and dedication have indeed been remarkable assets to our work. In particular, I wish to thank the representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Oumarou, the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Lee, and all the staff of the Secretariat. I think they deserve a hand.

The Social Justice Declaration remains a powerful reaffirmation of ILO values and the ILO's key role in helping to achieve social justice through the four interrelated and mutually supportive strategic objectives of employment, social protection, social dialogue and fundamental principles and rights at work. In the framework of the follow-up to the Social Justice Declaration, the recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment was held for the third time. Our debate was enriched by the human-centred guidance provided by the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. It also profited from several outcomes of Conference discussions since the last recurrent discussion on employment held in 2014, including the most recent ones on social protection, skills and lifelong learning, and inequalities.

I would now like to turn to the proposed conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment, which are submitted for adoption, and share with you some highlights on its substantive provisions. The conclusions start with a section on context and challenges. We agreed that in the area of employment there has been some progress, albeit uneven, since the last recurrent discussion in 2014. However, and a big however, the COVID-19 crisis and the recent series of economic and geopolitical crises reversed many of the achievements. Unfortunately, decent work for all is yet to be a reality. This is why the work of this committee was particularly timely and also relevant, with an important task of providing guidance to the ILO, reaffirming its mandate and leadership in the area of employment.

Part II of the conclusions provides guiding principles for coherent, comprehensive and integrated employment policies in a rapidly changing world. Many of the guiding principles of the recurrent item discussion on employment in 2014 are as relevant as ever. However, they need to take into account new realities, including the consequences of the multiple crises as well as the future-of-work drivers, while ensuring that employment policies can help to overcome persistent labour market challenges. The guidelines highlight the urgency of ensuring that no one is left behind during recovery and also structural transformation processes towards environmentally sustainable and inclusive economies. This includes taking into account the needs of workers and enterprises in the informal economy. The principles emphasize the importance of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, and they ensure that employment policies are gender sensitive and also gender responsive. And above all, they stress the importance of embedding the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of employment policies in strong social dialogue and tripartism.

In Part III, the conclusions list potential elements that countries should consider integrating into their employment policy frameworks. This includes, and is not limited to, pro-employment macroeconomic, industrial, sectoral, environmental, trade, and public and private investment policies to facilitate structural transformation; policies to protect workers during transitions and to ensure their fundamental rights, adequate minimum wages, limits on working time, and safety and health at work; policies to enhance entrepreneurship, productivity and innovation; skills and lifelong learning policies; active labour market policies; strong alignment with social protection policies; and environment policies, to name just a few.

Given the critical role of social dialogue for employment policy implementation, Part IV outlines how social dialogue can contribute to the success of employment policies, including in fragile settings where they are key for promoting peace and resilience.

Finally, the conclusions provide a framework of action for the ILO and outline the areas in which the Office needs to strengthen its support to Member States. In short, this Part ensures that in all policy areas outlined in Part III, the ILO strengthens its research efforts, its

implementation support, its capacity-building efforts for constituents, and its standards-related activities. Now of note: it puts specific emphasis on: (a) the promotion of coherent macroeconomic and sectoral policies for a human-centred recovery and the creation of jobs, including in green, circular, digital and care economies; (b) enhancing the capacity and guidance on the financing of employment policy objectives; and (c) enhancing worker protection and ensuring the quality of employment and tackling inequalities. The conclusions highlight the need for the Office to play a global leadership role in employment policies and to enhance policy coherence and global advocacy.

The conclusions are very rich and provide strong guidance for Member States and the Office alike. The covering resolution requests the Director-General of the ILO to prepare a plan of action giving effect to the conclusions, for consideration by the Governing Body; to communicate the conclusions to the relevant organizations at the global and regional levels for their attention; to take into account the conclusions when preparing future programme and budget proposals and also mobilizing extrabudgetary resources; and to keep the Governing Body informed of their implementation.

I now have the honour and privilege of submitting to the International Labour Conference for adoption the proposed resolution and conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment.

Mr Ricci Muadi

Employer (Guatemala), replacing the Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment (Original Spanish)

I would like to present the apologies of our Committee Vice-Chairperson Mr Kyriazis, who cannot be here with us today as he is currently flying home. He has conferred on me the honour of addressing you on his behalf. Allow me, on behalf of my group, to start by congratulating Mr Gómez Ruiloba on his able, patient and solution-oriented leadership as Chairperson of this Committee. Very good work my friend César. I would also like to thank Mr Dimitrov for his commitment towards our common goal, which was to draft a clear and impactful resolution for the recurrent discussion on employment. I must also acknowledge the contributions of Governments, providing views and positions reflecting the various approaches to the needs and challenges of each national context and region. All in all, despite some divergent views on specific points, we have achieved an outcome that we can be satisfied with and proud of as an outcome of social dialogue.

The challenging times that we are living in have put employment regulatory and policy frameworks at the forefront of our policy agendas. It has become more relevant than ever to take decisive actions that are output oriented. There is an urgent need to ensure that our policies are adapted to current circumstances, trends and the dynamic evolution of the labour markets so that they can take due account of the pressure that most of our economies are still facing.

The development of comprehensive, coherent and integrated employment policy frameworks requires strategies that put employability at the forefront. Coping with trends, rapid changes, new paradigms and shifting mindsets, modern employment policies need to be fit for purpose, which is the creation of decent and productive employment. In order to achieve full and productive employment, we need to face the future with courage and an acute sense of responsibility regarding the handling of solutions.

We cannot work on the basis of rights-based approaches to employment if at the same time we do not provide the means to enable these rights and do not acknowledge that enabling environments for the sustainability of business are required. Although the achievement of full and productive employment must be a goal, many countries, especially developing ones, will only be able to advance gradually; it will be difficult for them to do so if they lack policy frameworks that are fit for national contexts and structural challenges, such as the high levels of informality seen in many of our nations and less favourable education and access to technologies.

Reforms are needed, but the progress of policy frameworks on employment plans will occur under different circumstances and at different speeds. Each country must develop its own model and national employment plan and must find the appropriate policies and regulatory frameworks to achieve employability in a consistent manner and in line with the fundamental ILO instruments, but also in line with the need to protect business sustainability as the main source of employment, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which represent 90 per cent of enterprises as a whole and over 50 per cent of employment worldwide. Formal SMEs contribute to 40 per cent of gross domestic product in emerging economies.

We need to protect the sustainability of enterprises, support business continuity and enhance entrepreneurship, productivity and innovation. In doing so, an enabling environment for business to create decent jobs constitutes an underlying condition for the achievement of full and productive employment. While the formal economy is the main source of financing, an approach focusing on transitioning to the formal economy and addressing the root causes of informality remains key. As long as more than 60 per cent of the global workforce is in the informal economy, we will never be able to make decisive progress. There will be no decent job creation where there are no healthy enterprises driving prosperous economies. We should leverage social dialogue, adequate policy frameworks and national employment plans to move towards formalization and the employability of workers, especially those in vulnerable situations, including women, migrants, people with disabilities, young people and older people. Efforts must be made to support those individuals who are most at risk. We must also empower women and young people in order to achieve inclusive and more resilient labour markets. However, we need to avoid restrictive frameworks that prevent smooth decent work transitions. At the same time, we must be mindful of the need to face current challenges in a manner that prevents putting unreasonable pressure on business.

A large part of our economies is driven by SMEs. If we do not take care of their resilience and sustainability, we will simply fail in our endeavour to achieve full and productive employment for all. Only through effective social dialogue and good governance will we find policy responses to accommodate changing realities. It is crucial to focus our efforts on solutions that prepare workers and employers for change and the opportunities of work transitions, while boosting employability and job creation. In this context, coordination between employment and labour market policies and active inclusion policies to promote decent work and the formalization of employment remains of utmost importance.

We should leverage new and diverse forms of employment, digitalization and new business models to build economies that are better aligned with the rapidly changing world of work. Focusing on the challenges without looking at the opportunities may put at risk the appropriate design of policies to boost entrepreneurship, facilitate work transitions, foster economic growth, and achieve full and productive employment for all. Policy coherence is needed to develop long-term solutions. The design of coherent, comprehensive and integrated policy frameworks is only possible in coordination with other policies, in particular education

policies, also taking into account the elements that put pressure on decent job creation potential, such as demographic shifts, the digital divide and climate change. We should also look at the best practices of those who are doing well in overcoming challenges posed by these structural changes.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the regulatory frameworks of developed economies will not necessarily adjust to the realities of developing and less developed economies. The use of all existing means to strengthen employment policy frameworks deserves thorough consideration. The recipe and reforms needed to achieve sustainable economic growth and employment generation will not be the same for every country or region. The ingredients available will have to be intelligently mixed so that each country can set its framework for action and chart its own path to sustainability. Each nation or region will need to assess where it is now, where it wants to be in the future and how to get there.

Providing clear guidance to the Office for tailored, effective and output-oriented programming required this Committee to identify areas where the allocation of resources and action can leverage the most relevant impact on enabling environments for business to thrive and continue to deliver its contribution to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth, and with that decent job creation. Among these, we particularly highlighted policies to leverage the use of technology and its potential for job creation, much more adapted and responsive education and skilling frameworks, productivity and innovation, support and dedicated incentives to boost entrepreneurship, along with targeted labour market policies for employability, and the sustainability and resilience of SMEs. Yet, I must say that, during our debates and for some of the conclusions, we failed to do so in a more balanced manner nor with full awareness of the multiplicity of policy implications for certain topics linked to employment.

We failed by succumbing to the temptation of opening policy debates that were not the objective of this recurrent discussion, but rather broad topics to be addressed in specific forums or, in any case, in a general discussion. While these conclusions represent the substance of thorough debates on the policy priorities, it is worth noting that, unfortunately, we observed that the readiness of some groups to use the recurrent discussions to pre-empt outcomes of technical debates remains. We also regret that some groups and governments keep trying to use this recurrent discussion to drive national and ideological agendas for the benefit of some, but to the detriment of a coherent approach to the global need to achieve full and productive employment for all. Nevertheless, we hope that the ILO will make intelligent and coherent use of this resolution, and our group will continue to contribute to the implementation of its conclusions in a constructive spirit of tripartism.

To conclude, tripartism is key, and should be part of every decision process, of policymaking and of the development of global strategies and responses to face existing and new challenges. The diversity of national contexts requires strong engagement by all regions. It is only with the insight of every region that we will find appropriate solutions to their specific needs. The Employers' group remains committed to engage constructively in developing a results-based employment programme and to provide constituents with the appropriate tools to secure full and productive employment and decent job creation for all. I would like to thank the Office, especially the Deputy Director-General for Field Operations and Partnerships, Mr Oumarou, the Director of the Employment Policy Department, Mr Lee, and his technical team, especially Ms Pal and the other members of her team for their professionalism and profound commitment to the work of this Committee. The Employment Policy Department of the ILO has done an outstanding job. I express my deepest thanks to the other Employer

members of this Committee and to the drafting group, who contributed with dedication and wisdom to the results we present today.

Mr Dimitrov

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment

I would like first to extend my thanks to the Chairperson, my Employer counterpart and all of the supportive governments who shared the collective ambition and goodwill to find common ground. I also thank the Office for its tireless work to help us during that difficult discussion. Together, we have managed to agree on solid conclusions that set out a strong framework for action, both at country level and for the ILO, on employment policy for the coming years. I would also like to extend my thanks to my fellow members of the Workers' group, as well as to Evelyn Astor and Marieke Koning from the Workers' group secretariat and colleagues from the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Michael Watt and Hilma Mote; this was truly a collective effort.

I must say that this good cooperation was also perhaps linked to the fact that the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson from the Employer side and myself all had a past life working at sea; all have been linked somehow to the sea, in Panama, Bulgaria and Greece. All of us therefore understood first-hand the tough conditions that workers around the world face, and the necessity of promoting employment policies grounded in decent work.

When this Committee first began its work, I spoke of the necessity for governments and the ILO to promote a "high-road strategy" for job creation on the basis of labour standards, rather than job-creation strategies grounded on deregulation, low labour costs and downward competition. The Workers' group is very happy to see that this high-road approach was reaffirmed.

We feel that the main priorities of the Workers' group have been effectively addressed in these conclusions.

First, at the macro level, we are pleased that the conclusions reaffirm the importance of comprehensive employment policy frameworks that are guided by the objective of full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all. They emphasize the need for bringing together pro-employment macroeconomic, industrial, sectoral, environmental, trade and investment policies that facilitate inclusive structural transformation for creating decent jobs, including in the care economy and the digital and green economies. There is a strong focus on the need to strengthen the links between economic growth, productivity, employment and labour income to ensure that workers receive their fair share of the gains made.

Second, and equally important, is the focus on quality employment. The conclusions look at the need to promote not just the quantity of employment, but also the quality of employment, including through tackling insecure forms of work. The Workers' group knows well that such forms of work have proliferated in recent years, exacerbating inequalities, poverty and vulnerability, and we are happy that the conclusions call for reversing this trend.

The conclusions emphasize the need to ensure adequate protection to all workers, irrespective of their employment status. They also call for the correct classification of employment relationships, and pay specific attention to the vulnerabilities of platform workers.

The issue of improving conditions in supply chains was also specifically addressed. The conclusions affirm that Member States and the ILO should promote decent work in global supply chains, including through transparency, human rights due diligence, grievance and

remedy, in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, and that States should advance fundamental principles and rights at work, occupational health and safety, an adequate minimum wage, maximum limits to working time and stable employment.

Moreover, the conclusions affirm the importance of collective bargaining to ensure a fair distribution of gains where value added is generated across supply chains.

The conclusions further emphasize the importance of supporting work–life balance. We won agreement that Member States should promote frameworks for requesting flexible working time arrangements and telework, as well as enhancing protections for workers disconnecting, and explicit agreement that the ILO will work to support Member States on this as well.

The impacts of new technologies on working conditions were also addressed. We secured agreement that the ILO will support Member States in addressing some of the risks that these new technologies, such as algorithmic management, pose.

Third, in respect of wages, which are a critical aspect of quality employment, the conclusions have a very strong focus on ensuring adequate, fair and non-discriminatory wages. The conclusions emphasize that this should be done through ensuring adequate minimum wages, as well as support for collective bargaining at all levels, in other words not just at the enterprise level, but also at the sectoral and central levels. There is also strong emphasis on addressing wage inequalities.

Fourth, the conclusions underline the importance of addressing inclusive labour markets. In particular, there is great emphasis on the need to ensure gender equality in the labour market, including through addressing gender-based occupational segregation, promoting equal pay for work of equal value, ensuring adequate maternity and parental leaves and ensuring affordable, quality childcare. The conclusions also point to the need to foster support for people with disabilities and call specifically on the Office to document good practices including financial incentives, assistance and even quotas or targets where appropriate. Overall, there is very strong emphasis on tackling discrimination in all its forms.

To sum up, we are mindful that all of these conclusions will have an impact on the direction of future ILO work. The guidance reflected here should serve as an important reference for future ILO discussions, including the upcoming expert meetings on platform work and supply chains. Of course, these conclusions will need to be translated into a plan of action and reflected in the Office's programme and budget, in order to ensure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated to them.

In this respect, I want to take a moment to speak specifically about some of the key actions that were decided in terms of the Office's work, which the Workers' group particularly welcomes and where we have high expectations.

First, we secured agreement that the ILO's flagship report on social dialogue should be published annually. While this had originally been decided by the Conference in 2018, there have been delays in the publication. Social dialogue, and collective bargaining in particular, is critical for enhancing the quality of employment and also essential for the design of job creation plans and industrial strategies. The Workers' group is therefore pleased that the Committee reaffirmed that the Office should make this social dialogue report a mainstay of its research agenda.

We are also happy that the Committee agreed for the ILO to undertake dedicated research on public investment in supporting structural transformations in the labour market and creating quality, productive jobs. This is an issue of key interest for many unions around the world, who are calling on governments to take proactive policies and make the necessary investments to create decent work.

Lastly – and this is by far the most important issue in the eyes of the Workers’ group – we secured concrete commitments for the Office to work on living wages.

One hundred years ago, the ILO Constitution outlined the importance of a living wage. The Declaration of Philadelphia also recognizes the solemn obligation of the ILO to ensure a minimum living wage to all employed and in need of such protection. However, in practice, the Office has not adequately dealt with the living wage issue up until now. While many other initiatives on the issue have been developed, at the national and international level, to define and estimate living wages, the ILO has been conspicuously absent from these activities, because of a lack of consensus between constituents.

We finally managed to find this consensus this week, breaking a long-standing deadlock. We have secured agreement that the Office will undertake research on definitions and estimations of living wages, in order to contribute to a better understanding of what “living wages” actually means at the international level. The Office will also provide support to Member States, at their request.

We consider this a monumental victory, not just for us as the Workers’ group, but for all the workers of the world who are unable to make ends meet – there are over 630 million of them, or one in five workers – whose wages are insufficient to lift themselves and their families out of poverty, let alone secure a dignified livelihood.

This is a first, but very important, step towards achieving greater coherence internationally for securing living wages, as well as informing wage setting discussions at country level. It is a step towards social justice.

Mr Gómez Ruiloba

Chairperson of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment (Original Spanish)

I congratulate Mr Moroni, from the sister Republic of Argentina, sister of Panama, on behalf of the President of Panama, Laurentino Cortizo, and the Minister of Labour, Doris Zapata, who send their special greetings. I would also like to offer greetings to our distinguished Vice-Presidents, to the Secretary-General and Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, friend of Latin America and of Panama, and to his distinguished Deputy Directors-General.

The truth is that I am still surprised to be here. I had not been nominated to any post and it had not occurred to me to lead this interesting, difficult and complex Committee. The Minister, Doris Zapata, or her Deputy Minister, Roger Tejada, had been appointed to this position, this responsibility, but for very compelling reasons in our country they were unable to travel. I told them that I could not do it, that I had a personal interest in the subject of apprenticeships, because I came through an apprenticeship programme, and in the subject of the social and solidarity economy, because I was born into a family that promoted and continues to promote cooperativism at the national and international levels, including my parents, who continue to do so at 86 years of age. But the Minister told me that she wanted Panama to chair this Committee to demonstrate that social dialogue works well in our country,

even though we may sometimes have differences of opinion. And that is how I came to chair the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment, and I have no regrets at all.

I have learnt a lot in these two weeks. I have learnt a lot about people and I have learnt a lot about ILO employment standards, thanks to Harry and Plamen, who, with their ongoing detailed remarks, passionate at times, and with sincerity, conveyed to us their different realities and points of view. I would like to share some observations and some of the things that I have learnt.

Let me begin by saying that this discussion could not have been more timely, in view of all that is going on in the world at the moment. This third recurrent discussion on employment was held in the context of multiple crises, crises of all types, in all regions of the world, not just in one. Armed crises, social crises and economic crises are going on in all regions of the world at the moment and we must stop them. This Organization has a responsibility in this regard; these crises have jeopardized recovery and progress towards fairer and more equitable labour markets, just as some countries were beginning to show signs of recovery and progress after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussion was held at a time when we were still far from ensuring that the mega drivers of change in the world of work, for example demographic realities, globalization, and technological and climate change, work for people and ensure an improvement in their lives. Long lasting labour market challenges persist, such as high levels of informality and working poverty, low increases in productivity, skills mismatches, labour market inequalities and various forms of discrimination. Any discrimination that discriminates against a human being has no sense, wherever it comes from.

However, it is also true that we have witnessed unprecedented efforts by countries to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; more specifically, through employment policies and a remarkable increase in integrated employment policy frameworks. Both developments underlined what we in this organization know very well: employment policies matter, and if well designed and implemented they make a difference to people's lives; if not, they are simply words.

Sustainable Development Goal 8 advocates full and productive employment and decent work for all. Yet, decent work deficits remain across the world and in all countries, deficits that have in fact increased due to the multiplication of crises in recent times. In order to build back better we must promote a human-centred approach to the future of work, and we must keep it focused on people. We can focus on the environment, we can focus on many things, but people, human beings, must be at the centre of all that we do. This is why it is important that we make progress towards the achievement of Goal 8. The recurrent discussion on employment has allowed us all, and me in particular, to look at how to move towards the achievement of this goal.

The Committee was inspired by the human-centred approach to the future of work put forward in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. Consequently, our Committee was well placed to call on all constituents to review their respective employment policy frameworks, and to call on the Office to strengthen its support to Member States in this worthy, honourable and important endeavour.

Now, let me highlight a few points to complement the excellent accounts of our work in the Committee that you just heard from the Reporter and my dear brother, Chad Blackman of Barbados, from our region of the Caribbean, and the two Vice-Chairpersons: Harry, although

he is not present today, but he appointed Guido Ricci Muadi, also from our region, and this for me has been very important, and my dear brother and friend, the great Plamen, Plamen Dimitrov, the man who talks tough but has a noble heart, who reminds me of my grandfather and I told him so during the sittings. He knows that we managed to establish a good channel of communication. I saw sincerity in him, his intentions are sincere, but he talks tough, he talks tough, that is just how he is. So we adapted to his way of talking and he adapted to the realities that we were discussing and debating in the Committee.

The two weeks of the Committee's deliberations were extremely productive and constructive, and the debates, although at times challenging, were always cordial, passionate and guided by a spirit of collaboration. I learnt that people's egos often stop us from reaching solutions. I learnt that egos prevent us from seeking mutual benefits, and I saw it, I felt it, I saw it in myself and I saw it in the members of the Committee. This prevents us from having peace of mind, and we discussed this during the Committee, and these things were important for me. I realized that when we try and we manage to control the ego through peace of mind, with the force of love that we all carry within us, that comes from deep within us, common objectives can be achieved, because we cannot live thinking about and going on with this struggle between workers and employers; there cannot be work without enterprises and enterprises cannot produce without workers; even if technology is able to replace them, this is impossible, human beings cannot be replaced.

The conclusions that we submit to the Conference for adoption are a testament to the commitment and excellent work of the Committee. Most importantly, they are vivid proof that it is possible to forge tripartite consensus, and this was apparent throughout the debate, even on highly controversial, historically controversial points, as the Employer Vice Chairperson and Guido Ricci Muadi just said in their statements, but we achieved it. This was only possible because we had a common goal of wanting to achieve truly meaningful conclusions. There was also a common understanding of the importance of the subject matter: coherent, comprehensive and integrated employment policy frameworks are an important means of recovering from crises and ensuring inclusive structural transformation processes.

The guiding principles contained in the Conclusions underscore, among many other points, the crucial role of these comprehensive frameworks, and stress that they need to be based on solid and sincere social dialogue in order to ensure that they reflect the needs of workers and enterprises. They confirm the urgent need to focus on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. They remind us that employment policies must strengthen the connection between inclusive economic growth, employment, labour income and productivity, so often overlooked; that employment policy frameworks must be gender sensitive, agile and responsive to crises, as we have experienced with COVID-19; that decent job creation needs to go hand in hand with social protection measures to ensure that no one is left behind, the phrase I often hear the Director-General Guy Ryder saying; and, lastly, that employment policies need to ensure just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies.

The conclusions discuss crucial elements of such frameworks, including macroeconomic, microeconomic and sectoral policies, and both demand-side and supply-side interventions. Anchored in an integrated approach that builds on the necessary contribution of all, the conclusions set out a clear road map for the Organization and for us its Members.

The conclusions reaffirm the ILO's mandate and leadership in issues related to employment and employment policies within the multilateral system with a view to promoting policy coherence and a systematic focus on process interactions.

This session of the International Labour Conference has been like no other, with its hybrid format, which caused us some problems during the sittings. I again apologize to one of the distinguished Government members who was not able to take the floor as nobody saw the raised hand icon on Zoom. When we were told the following day, we had to readjust, as the member was entitled to take the floor, but we could not return to an issue that had been approved, and I found that very disturbing.

While many delegations returned to Geneva, with a positive spirit and a sense of relief at being able to meet again and hold discussions in person, many others were only able to participate remotely; but thanks to the goodwill of all we were able to adjust and everyone was able to participate.

I would like to thank the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Sangheon Lee, and the entire Secretariat, in particular one person who kept me entirely up to date with all documents. I do not know how she did it, she wrote to me at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 o'clock in the morning, at all hours, and the following day was available for me from early in the morning. I am speaking of Ms Karuna Pal. Karuna, carry on with the faith that you have in this organization. The ILO needs people like you who are not afraid of anything. Keep working with this strength. My thanks for your dedication and excellent work to you and all your team, for having facilitated my work and the deliberations of all members of the Committee.

While our work at this session of the Conference has almost come to an end, our real work has only just begun. The Organization and its Members need to act with urgency to close existing decent work gaps. We must focus heart and soul on ensuring that the outcomes of this session of the Conference are reflected in national employment policy frameworks that will allow us to improve people's lives and keep the promise so often repeated by the Director-General of leaving no one behind.

The President (Original Spanish)

I would like to thank the Reporter and the Officers of the Committee for their hard work. Having heard these statements, I now declare the discussion open.

Ms Issa **Government (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Africa group** (Original French)

The COVID-19 pandemic has considerably undermined the efforts made on the global labour market in recent years, with negative consequences for progress achieved in the areas of employment and decent work. It is apparent that, on the one hand, the pace of economic recovery at the global level varies depending on country, sector of activity and region and, on the other hand, that worker dismissals and reductions in working time have resulted in lower household income and enterprise closures. Holding the third recurrent discussion on employment at this juncture has been timely as it has allowed us to identify the challenges and the actions to be taken for recovery.

Regarding the quality of the results achieved, the Africa group would like to express its gratitude to all the tripartite constituents for their efforts throughout the work and commends the consensus that prevailed during the Committee's deliberations. The group also wishes to thank Mr Gómez Ruiloba, the Chairperson of the Committee, for his leadership, the other

Officers, the Secretariat and the interpreters, who have spared no effort to achieve the objectives of the Committee.

With a view to an inclusive, sustainable and resilient human-centred recovery, the Africa group recognizes the need to place extra emphasis on global frameworks inspired by the fundamental principles and rights at work and the relevant ILO standards. Efforts should be directed towards developing skills, professional retraining, employability, matching training to jobs, lifelong learning, developing entrepreneurship, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and industries, the transition from the informal to the formal economy, and the improvement of social protection frameworks and social dialogue.

The main objective of the conclusions adopted by the Committee is to guide future actions in the employment sphere. We invite the Governing Body to give consideration to the conclusions and to guide the Office in giving effect to them. Lastly, we respectfully ask the Director-General to prepare a plan of action giving effect to the conclusions for consideration by the Governing Body at its 346th Session.

The Africa group supports the adoption of the resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment.

Ms Olivari

**Government (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries
(Original Spanish)**

The Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment worked both in plenary and in the drafting group with commitment, dynamism and the participation of all the Member States, engaging in lively and enriching debates that resulted in a document on the core issue of employment, with tripartite social dialogue as its cornerstone, a principle that underpins and characterizes this Organization.

The work done resulted in a consolidated document proposing challenges, guiding principles for employment policy in a rapidly evolving world of work, the strengthening, adapting and implementing of comprehensive employment policy frameworks, social dialogue and ILO action.

We hope that these conclusions contribute significantly to employment policy and in this way benefit workers, particularly those who belong to minorities and vulnerable groups.

To conclude, we thank the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Gómez Ruiloba, from Panama, for his leadership and courteous conduct each day, the Vice-Chairpersons and the Secretariat for their interesting and enriching contributions and for all the substantive and logistical support provided, and the interpreters for their dedicated work.

Ms Karvar

**Government (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States
(Original French)**

I speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Candidate countries North Macedonia and Ukraine, the European Free Trade Association country, Norway, member of the European Economic Area, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We warmly thank the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons for leading the discussions on the strategic objective of employment over the last two weeks. We thank the Office for its

support and guidance and also the members of the drafting group for their diligent work. We express our appreciation to the interpreters for facilitating the Committee's work.

Let me again thank the social partners and all other participants for their constructive and engaged discussion in working towards achieving consensus on the conclusions.

We believe that today's final conclusions provide guiding principles for coherent, comprehensive and integrated employment policies in a rapidly evolving world of work where we are faced with new and complex challenges in the labour market.

The timing of this third recurrent discussion on the strategic objective of employment has been very opportune. While long-lasting labour market challenges persist, the opportunities that future work will provide have not yet been fully harnessed. These guiding principles will contribute to sustainable development and a just transition to transform and strengthen economies and labour markets through the creation of decent jobs, while adopting a human centred approach in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019, and the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, 2021.

These conclusions aim to strengthen and provide guidance on employment policies in existing and emerging sectors, such as the care, digital, circular and green economies, and foster the transition to the formal economy.

We welcome the policies to improve decent work outcomes in trade and supply chains and advance respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, which constitute an important development.

A further key aspect is the strengthening of employment policies in the areas of youth employment and the labour market transitions of people over the course of their lives, including those in vulnerable groups, which are responsive to and anticipate labour market needs by way of education, skills development, reskilling, and lifelong learning.

It is clear that social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation, contributes to the creation of decent jobs and is essential in promoting peace, which enables recovery efforts to build back better from crises and strengthens the resilience of enterprises and workers.

The conclusions call for gender-responsive employment policies to tackle gender inequalities and boost women's participation in the labour market, through ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, taking measures to ensure work-life balance, addressing the unequal division of caring responsibilities, and combating violence and harassment in the workplace.

We also welcome the promotion of pro-employment and gender-responsive macroeconomic, sectoral, trade and investment policies within the multilateral system.

The European Union and its Member States acknowledge and support the pivotal leadership role the ILO plays in employment policies. We welcome the actions identified in the conclusions, which urge the ILO to strengthen collaboration with international financial institutions and development partners to enhance policy coherence and, in particular, to develop a better understanding of living wages, by undertaking peer-reviewed research on concepts and estimations and providing assistance to Member States upon request.

We hope that the adoption of these conclusions will advance efforts to enhance and strengthen employment policy frameworks, which will ultimately progress towards the goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment for all.

Mr Kabir
Government (Bangladesh)

Bangladesh thanks the drafting group for its consensus-based conclusions on employment. The ILO's continued drive to address the challenges in the world of work is commendable. However, some long-standing challenges, such as informality, low productivity, skills mismatches and unequal employment opportunities, remain major setbacks to our pace of progress in ending inequalities across societies. We need ILO-wide enhanced efforts to end those in the world of work. During this trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic, disadvantaged groups and people in vulnerable situations, particularly young people, women and migrant workers, deserve our special attention. In this regard, we would request the Office to take additional measures to respond to this specific need.

In Bangladesh, about 2 million people enter the labour market every year. It is a daunting task for us to successfully integrate them into the labour market. Alongside this, the global "new normal" work ambience in a fast-changing landscape is causing their available work opportunities to shrink further. Hence, Bangladesh requests the Office to garner global support to ensure fair and equitable access for workers from developing countries to the global labour market. While we register our appreciation for the continued support, we would ask the Office for enhanced support in the coming days to meet the needs of our new labour market entrants.

Prior to concluding, we would request the Office to enhance measures for global partnership and assistance to realize the goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment for all. Bangladesh supports the resolution.

Ms Arcos
Worker (Philippines)

It is critical that all workers, in all our diversity, can choose full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work.

This forms the basis for entitlements, rights and privileges; for income and benefit determination; for organizing a union or a workers' association; for collective bargaining; or for mutual help and peaceful concerted activities; and for labour claims and protection from retaliatory actions.

The report of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment, with its explicit objective to direct the ILO's important role towards facilitating inclusive structural transformation for creating and diversifying decent jobs – including through a just transition, framed around care and with a mandate to conduct related research – will provide guidance. It can challenge countries like the Philippines in its national employment policy frameworks and master plan for the restoration of the country's labour market, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and will support the workers' agenda of promoting decent work beyond recovery, leaving no one behind.

Also, it will address the challenge of full implementation of such comprehensive policy frameworks, and objectives, within the fragile lifetime of workers.

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, workers have long been faced with a pandemic of unemployment and underemployment; informalization of the economy; vulnerable, precarious, contractual and insecure work; inadequate wages; gender pay gaps in many sectors; and low representation of women in policy formulation and decision-making bodies and mechanisms. COVID-19 exacerbated the situation.

There are those who enter into alternative work arrangements because they serve their needs and objectives. However, many workers are forced to take on whatever job is available, or are forced to have additional jobs or income sources to survive, consequently normalizing work beyond the legal eight hours, risking occupational safety and health and having a negative impact on long-term productivity, personal health, family and social life.

Many of our workers are forced to leave the countries that they are so familiar with and their beloved families in search of decent work.

A common understanding on living wages at the international level can assist in tripartite or bipartite setting of living wages, as well as minimum wages.

Reality bites: not even 35 years of the national constitutional guarantee on a living wage and 33 years of the demand for a living wage under the Wage Rationalization Act as a criterion for minimum wage-fixing can save many Filipino workers' wages from falling below the Government's own poverty threshold figures.

Social partnership in the creation of wealth must include just distribution. We can do this together, in mutual respect and good faith.

Mr Ntshalitshali **Worker (South Africa)**

I am mindful that while the conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment are among the last to be adopted, they are critical to our success. So, we thank this Committee for the wonderful job done.

All the reports before us are critical and necessary. However, most of them depend for their success on an inclusive economic recovery that creates decent jobs and absorbs the millions of unemployed, particularly youth and women. An inclusive economic recovery is a catalyst and is a must for success.

These conclusions are exciting and interesting to read. They tell us most of what we know. They tell us that our economy is sick. In other words, they diagnose our problems. But it does not stop there; they tell us what needs to be done.

Let me mention just three conclusions on the observation of the problem. The conclusions say that despite improvements in some areas of the labour market over the last years, large decent work deficits persist. Progress towards the goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment for all has been noted, but, again, it was compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic. Often, decent work deficits are the root causes of vulnerability, poverty and drivers of social instability, which can lead to conflicts and create vicious downward spirals.

Interestingly, the conclusions answer the question of what needs to be done.

This section is also exciting and interesting to read. It spells out the guiding principles for coherent, comprehensive and integrated employment policy in a rapidly evolving world of work and tables multiple guidelines in this respect. It raises new important issues, such as the living wage, which the ILO should begin work on, and the need for protection of all workers irrespective of their employment status, decent work in the global supply chain, the link between inclusive economic growth, employment, labour income and productivity. It also mentions other necessary interventions but concludes that social dialogue is a must, not an option, for success.

So, these Committee conclusions tell us about the problems and the solutions to the problems; we are so lucky to have them both. The question then is: why, with such information and knowledge in our hands – not for the first time, this is for the third time – is the sickness of the patient not getting better and making a full recovery? Is it because the patient is refusing to take medication?

No, it is because the sickness of unemployment, poverty and inequality is mutating very fast. When we were addressing unemployment, then came the financial crisis, then the future of work challenges, then climate change, then the COVID-19 pandemic and now war and conflict, which means that the challenges are not stagnant but are moving targets.

The pace of implementation of the solutions has to be stepped up; today's solutions may be not relevant tomorrow.

These conclusions should not be put on shelves and gather dust but must be implemented by all of us. Yes, our responsibilities may not be the same, but a differentiated approach is key.

Solidarity among nations is key – those that have and those that have not.

Lastly, ILO constituents should embrace the idea that our success depends entirely on cooperation and working together. With these words, the Workers fully support the conclusions.

Mr Jorajuría Khars
Worker (Argentina)
(Original Spanish)

It is my honour and pleasure to share with you some of the successes of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Employment. Humanity is going through multiple crises as we have already heard, but the most serious crises facing workers are employment and inequality. We have 112 million fewer jobs than before the pandemic and we all know that employment is key to our lives. With this in mind, we covered the subject in its entirety, combining macroeconomic, industrial, environmental and trade policies, promoting public and private investment, and promoting the quality and quantity of employment that is stable, secure and free from discrimination. To this end, we need inclusive structural transformation in the care economy, the digital economy, the circular economy and the green economy, with promotion of the transition to the formal economy. Member States must ensure adequate protection for all workers, regardless of their employment status, and the correct classification of employment relationships, with particular attention being paid to platform workers.

In the face of economic inequality, the mandate of the ILO is to investigate living wages at the international level in order to reach a common understanding. States must guarantee adequate, fair and non-discriminatory wages with wage adjustment mechanisms, through the provision of adequate minimum wages.

Over the last 30 years, increases in wages have been weak and have delinked from productivity, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund itself. Consequently, our Committee recognized the need to strengthen the connection between inclusive economic growth and employment, labour income and productivity.

To conclude, for these reasons the ILO must focus on sustainable financing strategies and solve countries' fiscal constraints in order to strengthen cohesion and cooperation among multilateral and regional development bodies. These are some of the policies we need.

Conclusions concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment: Adoption

The President (Original Spanish)

Let us now proceed with the adoption of the Committee's proposed conclusions, the text of which is contained in *Record of Proceedings* No. 6A.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts the proposed conclusions in their entirety?

(The conclusions are adopted.)

Resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment: Adoption

The President (Original Spanish)

Let us now proceed with the adoption of the proposed resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on employment, the text of which is contained in *Record of Proceedings* No. 6A.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts the proposed resolution?

(The resolution is adopted.)

I would like, in particular, to congratulate the Officers of the Committee and all those who participated for the extensive, complex and hard work that was carried out. The outcomes show that tripartite agreements are possible. My congratulations to you.

(The Conference continues its work in plenary.)