



# ▶ Record of Proceedings

8B

International Labour Conference – 110th Session, 2022

Date: 11 July 2022

---

## World of Work Summit

### Contents

	<b>Page</b>
High-level panel discussion on tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience: Summary .....	3
Addresses by Heads of State .....	11
Address by His Excellency Mr Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles .....	11
Address by Her Excellency Ms Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras .....	13
Conversation on tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience: Summary .....	15



Friday, 10 June 2022, 10 a.m.  
President: Mr Moroni

## The President (Original Spanish)

I have the honour to declare open this special plenary sitting dedicated to the World of Work Summit of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. I wish you a warm welcome to this high-level event, the theme of which this year is “Tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience”.

Today’s sitting will begin with a high-level panel discussion. We will then have the honour of hearing addresses from His Excellency Mr Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and Her Excellency Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras.

These addresses will be followed by a conversation between Ms Passchier, Chairperson of the Workers’ group of the Conference; Mr McCoy, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation; and Mr Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of this 110th Session of the Conference.

## High-level panel discussion on tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience: Summary

### Moderator

- Ms Sharanjit Leyl, journalist and presenter

### Panellists

- Mr Pierre-Yves Dermagne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Economy and Employment, Belgium
- Mr Bhupender Yadav, Minister of Labour and Employment, India
- Ms Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- Ms Foni Joyce Vuni, Research Lead at the Refugee-Led Research Hub, Kenya
- Ms Saïda Neghza, President, General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises, Algeria
- Mr Omar Faruk Osman Nur, General Secretary, Federation of Somali Trade Unions, Somalia

---

In his opening remarks, **the Director-General** of the ILO, Mr Guy Ryder, underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic had worsened existing social, political and economic uncertainty and profoundly impacted countries, workers and enterprises. The world had barely recovered from the COVID-19 crisis when a new crisis, resulting from the conflict in Ukraine, sent shock waves and compounded challenges facing governments, workers, and employers. He emphasized that the recovery observed in labour markets over the past year was fragile, uneven, and even going into reverse in some countries and regions. He cautioned that the collective goal set at

last year's International Labour Conference for sustainable human-centred recovery was now under threat.

He stated that the number of hours worked globally in the first quarter of 2022 was 4 per cent below pre-pandemic levels, equivalent to the loss of 112 million full-time jobs compared to pre-pandemic levels. In his view, this was a significant cause for concern since behind these statistics were people, families and communities. Low and middle-income countries were particularly bearing the brunt. He highlighted the fact that because of these crises, food and energy prices were increasing, and rising inflation along with increasing interest rates and disrupted supply chains were further exacerbating the current situation.

The Director-General underlined that these issues exerted enormous pressure on labour markets, and particularly on vulnerable groups such as women, refugees or displaced persons and young people. Before the pandemic, many people had already been facing the challenges of inequality, unemployment, chronic informality, lack of social protection, and limited labour rights and social dialogue. He referred to the ILO's Constitution which states that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere".

He signalled that while the outlook was uncertain and bleak, policymakers should not lose sight of the future of work, given that the hopes and aspirations of millions of people depended on it. He called for stakeholders to come together to deliver on a better, fairer, and more inclusive future for all. He added that decent work must be assured to everyone, especially the most vulnerable. There was a need to strive to collectively achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He concluded by stating that the way forward was to have a human-centred recovery which is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

An introductory video was shown which captured the multifaceted crises facing the world of work, including demographic shifts, the uneven spread of technology, COVID-19, and the global fallout from the Ukraine conflict, which was contributing to food, fuel, and financial disruptions. There were some 207 million people unemployed in 2022 and returning to a pre-COVID-19 world would be difficult. The video highlighted the differentiated impacts felt by women, young people and refugees, alongside workers in the informal economy and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It urged stakeholders from the Governments, Workers, and Employers to participate and make their voices heard at the World of Work Summit and to operationalize the Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

**The moderator** introduced an innovative aspect of the Summit – the "ILO Events" application – through which the audience could interact using the "audience poll". She invited participants to answer the first poll question, "What is the key challenge facing the world of work?" The response options were:

- (a) high levels of informality and unemployment, and inadequate social protection;
- (b) growing inequalities between countries and within societies;
- (c) lack of adequate social dialogue and respect for labour rights;
- (d) the climate emergency;
- (e) the global food, finance and fuel crises.

Thirty-four per cent of respondents voted in favour of option (a): high levels of informality and unemployment, and inadequate social protection. Twenty-six per cent selected option (b): growing inequalities between countries and within societies.

**The moderator** posed the first question to the panellists: “From your perspective (as a worker, employer, government, etc.), how is this combination of *old* and *new* challenges playing out? How are these multiple crises and challenges shaping the world of work? What are the consequences you see from where you stand?” She clarified that old issues included the climate crisis, conflict, and the demographic and technological divide, while new issues included the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine crisis, and rising inflationary pressures, among others.

**Mr Dermagne** began by highlighting the decades of deregulation and the loss of power by public authorities, including the State. He further stated that the deregulation around climate change has particularly worrying effects that had been obvious in recent years. Generally, countries in the southern hemisphere were most affected, yet the impacts had also accelerated in the north. He drew attention to the recent floods in Belgium in 2021 which caused 41 deaths, the greatest natural disaster in the country’s recent history.

He further stressed his concern for the increasing inequality, which tended to have knock-on effects, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic struck the most vulnerable across nations and was more complex in countries that did not have adequate health or social protection systems.

Mr Dermagne emphasized that globalization of the value chain was an additional challenge, especially considering the deregulation and loss of control by States and public authorities. He added that this was further intensified by high environmental costs, which are not accounted for within market prices.

He noted that the conflict in Ukraine had further accentuated these interconnected challenges. Therefore, immediate priority actions were required by the international community, similar to those undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preserving employment and creating new jobs was as critical as it had been throughout the pandemic. He stressed how governments must move swiftly to adapt to changes in the world of work that are linked to societal and economic challenges. He further noted that there has been an expansion of teleworking and the incorporation of artificial intelligence, and these required renewed attention by governments. Governments must also provide policy frameworks to support the development of new skills to help workers tackle the environmental transition and the digital transition in Europe.

He underlined the importance of skills development for the success of the global digital transition, with a specific focus on certain target groups on the margins of, or more isolated from, the labour market, in many cases women, migrant workers and young people. He gave the example of the European Green Deal, which aims to create 1 million new jobs by 2030, as a critical test in ensuring decent work.

Mr Dermagne stressed the importance of guaranteeing quality jobs and decent work and emphasized his satisfaction with recent progress in Europe, including with respect to a minimum wage guarantee, provisions for gender equality in the workplace and fair remuneration.

He finally highlighted the challenge of regulating globalized value chains, considering the emergence of new economic players in value chains beyond the direct control of States and multilateral organizations. It was essential that the values and principles of the ILO be understood and incorporated by these players and promoted throughout the value chain.

**Mr Yadav** began his response by noting the dichotomy the world had faced, with the negative consequences of COVID-19 on the one side and the positive impacts of digital transformation on the other.

He continued by outlining some examples of actions by the Indian Government which had been taken to ensure a human-centred recovery from the pandemic. He stressed the importance of having access to good data on informal sector workers and noted India's creation of a digital platform on which 280 million informal workers and their 400 occupations were registered. Due to digitalization, gig workers were emerging as a new type of workforce. He further explained the importance of having a legal definition for this category of worker. He noted that his country's new Labour Code also aimed to provide informal sector workers with adequate social protection.

Mr Yadav further stressed the importance of mobility and migration and how technology could be used for this category of worker. He gave the example of India increasing its efforts to understand better the reasons for migration through a migrant labour survey, which would help in designing an appropriate action plan. He provided another example of how informal sector workers (street vendors, rickshaw pullers etc.) access universal social security schemes, including pensions, such as the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana scheme.

Finally, he pointed out that current global demographic changes reinforced the importance of ensuring adequate mobility of workers and establishing the conditions necessary for successful labour migration.

**Ms Durant** stressed the difficulty of prioritizing among these challenges, as they were all interrelated while creating a vicious circle. Therefore, they needed to be analysed and dealt with holistically. She argued that the most important and common aspect of these challenges was the centrality of human life. Therefore, access to food was vital for human survival; thus, the food crisis was the priority issue to address. International cooperation was needed to deal with rising prices and interest rates. The debt crisis and social protection issues were intrinsically linked.

Ms Durant reflected on the issue of formality and informality from different country perspectives. She noted that informality in the developed world was mostly about "Uberization", while in developing countries it was about economic opportunities and digitalization for millions of marginalized people. She emphasized that there was a need to break this vicious circle at the global level by working together.

**Ms Vuni** also highlighted the difficulty of choosing one main challenge since they were all interlinked. Based on her interaction with refugees over the past six years, she summarized how these challenges were experienced and felt by people on the ground. First and foremost, people and especially refugees wanted dignity. Their priority was not access to technology but to food, security, and self-sufficiency.

Another key priority was the marginalization of women and children, especially in public spaces. Access to education was one way which could empower this community. Accountability and progressive policies were essential to overcome these challenges. She further emphasized that people on the ground had already thought about solutions to their problems. She concluded by stating that the benefit of creating a bridge and taking back this conversation to the community level would be highly useful.

**Ms Neghza** noted that every action undertaken should have a human-centred dimension. She added that how the world responded to the COVID-19 crisis provided a symbol of hope for

humankind. She stressed that a strategy or policy would only be successful if it recognized the importance of developing the skills and strengths of everyone.

She warned that many good initiatives had failed in the past because they did not consider the human dimension. Disparities between rich and developing countries were growing due to the multiple current crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation in Ukraine. Giving the example of Algeria, she intimated that although there was hope of recovery, the war in Ukraine had held back this recovery. A reduction in the tax burden was something that employers had been asking of the Government.

**Mr Osman Nur** presented a comprehensive picture of the challenges in the Somali context. He stated that within Somalia, the existing challenges due to conflict and unemployment had combined with the new crisis of COVID-19 to exacerbate gaps in labour protection, social protection, healthcare, productive employment and vaccine access. Seven out of ten people in Somalia were classified as poor, while youth unemployment stood at a massive 67 per cent. Nine out of ten Somali households were deprived of at least one essential human need, such as education, money and water. Some 73 per cent of children were stuck in a cycle of poverty, while insecurity and terrorism were rampant. About 43 per cent of women were actively engaged in the labour market, as compared to 67 per cent of men.

He then highlighted unresolved issues in the informal economy, such as lower pay, high levels of working poverty and lack of rights. He made specific references to the disproportionate impacts on women. He highlighted that no government-led social protection existed and that over 90 per cent of the population was not covered by social security. Additionally, natural disasters such as flash floods, droughts and locust attacks, which resulted in crop damage, had introduced new disruptions. These challenges spoke to issues within Somalia but were also prevalent in other African countries.

After this first part of the discussion, which centred around identifying the challenges, **the moderator** transitioned to the second part of the session, which focused on finding solutions. She introduced a second audience poll question, “What is the top priority for the international community to enable a human-centred recovery?” The response options were:

- (a) getting the multilateral system to work better together;
- (b) increasing financial flows to least developed and other developing countries;
- (c) ensuring environmental sustainability;
- (d) better implementation of international labour rights;
- (e) more socially responsible private investment.

The audience overwhelmingly voted for option (b): increasing financial flows to least developed and other developing countries (36 per cent) and option (a): getting the multilateral system to work better together (25 per cent).

**The moderator** then posed the second question to the panellists: “In the poll, we looked at five key actions to advance a human-centred and resilient recovery. From your perspective, how do these actions combine or how should they combine to achieve this goal? And is there any one action more important than the other, where we – and the ILO – should place our focus?”

**Mr Dermagne** began by recalling a quote from Winston Churchill: “Never let a good crisis go to waste”, and argued that policymakers must learn lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that it was key for public authorities to protect workers from COVID-19 and its

repercussions through effective social protection and healthcare systems, and through collective bargaining and social dialogue, which were fundamental instruments to mitigate the human and economic impact of the pandemic.

He continued by emphasizing the importance of actionable regulatory frameworks for authorities at the international or multilateral level and commended the ILO Director-General for his work on that front. Promoting social protection on the one hand and imposing austerity policies on the other would not work. He further stressed the importance of consistency between messaging and action, as well as increasing the financial flows to countries needing assistance.

He asked policymakers to reflect on the kind of contributions that multinational companies could make, and highlighted the example of the proposal by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to implement a global tax on multinational companies in the digital era. He underlined the pivotal role played by the ILO, emphasizing the specific features that made it unique among international organizations with its tripartite structure and social justice at the core of its mandate. The ILO should be strengthened to better fulfil its role in facing the combined challenges of the future.

He concluded by praising the role of the ILO in promoting decent work in Belgium and reiterated his support for the UN Secretary-General and the ILO Director-General for their advocacy of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition.

**Mr Yadav** began by echoing the point raised by Ms Durant on the issue of formal sector access and livelihoods. He outlined three stages – or priorities – for refugees or workers with precarious backgrounds: dignity, decent jobs, and technological skills.

He emphasized that developing countries need consistent financial assistance and technology transfer as well as strengthened legal frameworks. He drew attention to the impact of climate change on the future of migrant labour in vulnerable countries as it would profoundly affect working conditions.

**Ms Durant** was not surprised by the result of the second poll, in which over a third of the audience considered increasing financial flows to least developed and other developing countries to be a top priority. This result underscores the importance of negotiations within international financial institutions. In order to address gaps in social protection, there needed to be sufficient revenue but debt service obligations were placing a significant burden on many countries in this regard. The International Monetary Fund was the primary actor in facilitating debt relief. She cited the example of Sri Lanka, where social and societal problems have emerged due to default on debt payments.

Ms Durant further discussed the debt-for-nature approach and stated that climate change required profound reflection. She saw the upcoming World Trade Organization ministerial conference discussions on fisheries subsidies as crucially important for allowing people to live and work while protecting the ocean. Finally, she shared her thoughts on energy transition and urged that the Ukraine war should not prove a setback to the current energy transition between and within countries. She also urged that the voices of developing countries be heard concerning financial assistance. She suggested that if these challenges were not adequately addressed, it could lead to a decrease in trust in the international system and further instability.

**Ms Vuni** stated that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the resilience and the unfulfilled needs of communities. As most of the current challenges were atypical and serious, there was a need to think outside the box and find innovative solutions, since our current system might not be able to resolve them. She illustrated her point by giving two examples of



successful refugee group initiatives, one from Uganda and the other from Zimbabwe. She stressed the importance of returning to the community level to find solutions, especially via investing in education for peacebuilding.

**Ms Neghza** stated that the General Confederation of Algerian Enterprises took measures to benefit the most vulnerable people and lobbied for tax exemption for those with lower earnings. She added that an allowance system had been established with provisions to stimulate investment and promote recovery. She called for more international solidarity and respect for values in the face of growing famine, migration and forced displacement, since having an inclusive global social dialogue about the acceleration of sustainable development for all could ensure a peaceful world for the future. She stressed that the ILO and employers could play an essential role by mobilizing forces to combat global warming, climate change, and even sandstorms. She concluded that everyone gathered at the session had a common destiny. The ILO had been profoundly helpful in providing much-needed support, especially to African countries.

**Mr Osman Nur** stated that the interventions thus far had all been pertinent from the Workers' perspective. Better implementation of labour standards had gained traction in Somalia, which had ratified seven ILO Conventions in the previous year, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155). He underscored that the biggest challenge, however, was the domestication and implementation of these labour standards. The ILO Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), should be used to address crises and foster resilience.

With regard to the reforming of the multilateral system, international financial institutions such as the World Bank provided immediate relief but not long-term solutions in Somalia. He called for coherence and better coordination within and among international organizations to avoid duplication of efforts. He added that workers desired a new social contract with respect to job creation during the post COVID-19 recovery. Strategic partnerships were critical and formed the bedrock for institutionalizing both bipartite and tripartite social dialogue, which Somalia was actively adopting at the federal level.

On the question of climate change, he quoted the African Development Bank's research finding that Somalia had the highest potential in Africa for producing renewable energy, given the country's long coastline, ten hours of sunlight per day and high-speed winds. He was optimistic about the opportunities in this sector. He concluded by stating that policymakers needed to move away from empty words to action.

**The moderator** then opened the floor to the audience for discussion:

- (a) Mr Juan Ramón Lira Loayza, Minister of Labour and Employment Promotion, Peru, posed the following question: "How can 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) act as a mechanism to provide impetus for global recovery?"
- (b) Mr Farooq Ahmed, Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer, Bangladesh Employers' Federation, asked: "How can one balance the trade-off that informal work is poorly protected and disordered but provides jobs and livelihood opportunities to millions?"
- (c) Ms Tess Upperton of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions posed the following question: "In Belgium, there exists a system where wages and inflation are indexed to each other. Has this system been effective, and can it be adopted in other countries?"

- (d) A representative from the South African delegation asked: “How can we proceed from identifying challenges to actual solutions?”
- (e) A representative from Uruguay posed a question on financing: “What resources will match our goals? Multinational corporations that dominate trade and raw materials are a big part of the problems we are reviewing. How will developed countries promote development in poorer countries?”

The panellists proceeded to tackle briefly one or a combination of the questions posed by the audience and added their concluding remarks.

**Mr Dermagne** addressed the question from the representative of New Zealand regarding wage indexation. He started by mentioning Belgium’s automatic indexation of wages and benefits, which were linked to a consumer price index, excluding tobacco, alcohol and fuel. The mechanism had been established at the end of the First World War to deal with periods of high inflation.

He continued by highlighting the effectiveness of this system, despite its flaws. It had enabled Belgium to resist certain inflationary pressures.

**Mr Yadav** responded to the question posed by the representative of Bangladesh on how to reconcile the formal and informal sectors. He also commented on other questions from the audience and reiterated the importance of data and of establishing a legal definition for “informal worker” in order to implement effective social security schemes.

He reminded the audience that Mahatma Gandhi had said that “this Earth has the capacity to fulfil everybody’s needs but not everybody’s greed”. In light of that quote, he stressed the importance of the local entrepreneur and the value of an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

**Ms Vuni** also considered the question of formality versus informality. In her opinion there was no perfect balance, but there was a need to recognize and create a system for people working in the informal sector. The challenge was for people to assess the problem and understand the solution. She alluded to an innovative framework for the solutions to trickle down to the people in order to understand and benefit from them.

**Mr Osman Nur** responded to the question the South African delegate had posed. He stressed that policymakers should move beyond promises to action and accountability. He stated that trade unions did not shy away from naming and shaming.

**Ms Durant** also responded to the question of formality versus informality, stating there was a need to go beyond the notion of community security. In particular, it would not be possible to tackle informality without building a social security system. She further referred to accountability and stated that people were increasingly rejecting promises made and not kept, making it very important but highly challenging for the multilateral system to find appropriate solutions to the multiple crises.

**The moderator** thanked the panellists and handed the floor to the Director-General for his concluding remarks.

**The Director-General** summarized the conclusions emerging from the panel discussion in three points. First, he pointed out that the challenges countries were facing relating to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine had come on top of several major pre-existing challenges related to technology, the environment and demographics, among others. The ILO did not have the primary responsibility in the international system for any single one of these issues; however, these disruptions were combining in ways that had profound implications for the world of work. They were contributing to a social crisis which was clearly within the scope of

the ILO's work and responsibility. Therefore, these problems had become issues that the ILO needed to tackle.

Second, the Director-General looked at reform of the international system. Such reform might be needed, and policy coherence among multilateral organizations was certainly sometimes lacking. But what was most fundamentally required was a common political purpose and a willingness to invest adequate resources to realize the goals that had been set. At a time of crisis and tension, the crucial issue was to unite around this common goal.

Finally, he stressed the importance of continuing to bear in mind the human realities of this crisis. For millions of people, this was about survival, dignity and autonomy. And, as access to decent work was a fundamental requirement of human dignity and autonomy, it was essential to remember how much depended on the work undertaken at the International Labour Conference.

**The President** thanked the panellists and the Director-General and introduced the second session of the Summit, the virtual addresses by Heads of State.

## Addresses by Heads of State

### Address by His Excellency Mr Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles

#### Mr Ryder

#### Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference

It is a pleasure to introduce His Excellency Mr Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles. Seychelles has been a Member of the ILO since 1977. In collaboration with the ILO, through its Decent Work Country Programme, the Government has been championing sustainable development, job creation, particularly for young people, inclusive growth and economic diversification, and it has been determined in its efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change. Under the leadership of President Ramkalawan, Seychelles is now on a path of recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its national strategies have been focused on increasing productivity, empowering the people and facilitating the creation of decent jobs that have had widely shared benefits, and we certainly look forward to hearing the President's address.

#### Mr Ramkalawan

#### President of the Republic of Seychelles

I feel honoured and privileged to be given the opportunity to address this very important Summit, at such a critical time in the world's history. On behalf of the people of the Republic of Seychelles, I wish to congratulate the ILO for making this platform available, allowing Member States, together with key partners, to discuss our experience and learn from each other. Such a forum has become more relevant today, as we all come together to share our perspective on the very fitting theme of "Tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience".

Seychelles has had its fair share of challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic made its appearance on our shores. The situation quickly deteriorated for our small nation. Overnight,

the airport was closed and our tourism industry – the mainstay of our economy – crashed by over 80 per cent. Businesses struggled to keep their workers and the country's economy found itself gasping for survival. We managed to maintain workers through the Government's financial stimulus to businesses, coupled with brave political and economic decisions, taken at the right time to permit our fragile economy to get back on the road to recovery.

The vaccination programme saved our country, and with the opening of our economy in March 2021, the country was back on its feet. Two years down the road, as is the case globally, we are still to some extent feeling its effects. With the ongoing Russian Federation–Ukraine situation, our biggest challenge is uncertainty as far as the cost of food is concerned.

As we seek to give our people a good standard of living, the price of commodities is the biggest current we are swimming against. Maintaining the balance between economic and social challenges has become an art we are struggling to master.

All this culminates in insecurities, created by the likes of elevated food and energy prices causing serious inflation, that are affecting not only Seychelles but countries the world over. Therefore, while the initial impact of the pandemic was first and foremost health-related, it was obvious that the real challenge of fiscal sustainability would be the elephant in the room.

The Government promoted a change in mindset and empowered our fellow Seychellois to take up formal employment, which supports decent and stable work. This made it possible to moderate the economic costs of the pandemic, while simultaneously managing the health risks and avoiding a cost burden on future generations. I must say, there is an acceptance that the overall cost of the pandemic would have been far greater without such a proactive approach. It was made possible by a substantial rise in visitor arrivals, an increase in labour demand, the vaccination of the population, the dedicated efforts of our health workers and our efforts in setting expectations in times of high uncertainty. Having a vision and a plan mattered.

The global pandemic has shown how insecure jobs can be. Workers who are usually the drivers of the economy were the hardest hit. Overnight, our people became worried about their future, which became uncertain. Since the outbreak of the pandemic to date, we have received so many applications for redundancy. At the same time, the Government coffers have been fast emptying, causing a further strain on welfare assistance.

Young people who normally face challenges to secure a first job, women who interrupt their work experience due to family responsibilities and workers in precarious jobs due to a lower level of education attainment are the frontliners who feel the inequality and adverse effects of the crisis more than others.

In addition, more work needs to be done, as the pandemic has highlighted the risks and challenges of a small island State that depends entirely on tourism. Economic diversification is indeed the new message. This will not be an easy task, but one that needs to be addressed today, which will also enable us to maintain our hard-earned gains from the past decades. How can we, as leaders of the world from big or small countries, commit to leading our people to better times?

Our message should be one of hope. Our actions and policies should present hope for our people, while we fight the scourges of corruption, exploitation and injustice. Seychelles attaches herself to the ILO's commitment to such standards. Workers are at the centre of the recovery process. They must not be left out. On the contrary, they must be given prominence and protection. Such an approach is important because it means that there is a willingness to listen to our people's voices. It means that we are committed to providing them with a future

where their rights at work are protected, employment opportunities are created, access to social protection is available for all and harmonious industrial relations are promoted through social dialogue.

Let us give our youth the encouragement that they deserve and are waiting for from us. I am encouraged to see that many young people of Seychelles have persevered during these difficult times. I refer, for example, to the jobseekers of our skills development programme, which was funded by the ILO during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are today happily working or pursuing their studies further.

This is testimony that recovery from the crisis relies on partnership and networking with our multilateral partners. Let us pursue these, in order to meet the aspirations of our people.

**(The speaker continues in French.)**

Over the last two years, what we have lived through has been horrendous, to say the least. This will continue unless we all agree to work together at this crucial time, with the aim of safeguarding peace so that we can focus on rebuilding our nation and on giving our people a better future. With the support of our partners, such as the ILO and other United Nations institutions, we will continue to grow and build our resilience to avert any future disasters that may come our way.

In conclusion, I must say that, as a nation, the people of Seychelles have been admirably resilient in the face of this inconceivable adversity and I am proud to stand before you today as their Head of State and to say that I am confident that we will succeed. Seychelles remains committed to delivering for its people and we join other Member States in working towards a human-centred economic recovery.

## **Address by Her Excellency Ms Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras**

**Mr Ryder**

**Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference  
(Original Spanish)**

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce Her Excellency Ms Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President of the Republic of Honduras, a country that is a founding member of the ILO. President Castro, the first female President of Honduras, has demonstrated her commitment to promoting respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work, defending the environment, tackling migration issues and protecting the most vulnerable groups. We are greatly encouraged by her efforts to reduce poverty, her solidarity with the most vulnerable and her spirit of cooperation, multilateralism and inclusion. We look forward to listening to her address with great interest.

**Ms Castro Sarmiento**

**President of the Republic of Honduras  
(Original Spanish)**

To the distinguished representatives at the World of Work Summit of the International Labour Organization, I send, from Honduras, fraternal greetings in solidarity with the working classes.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has demonstrated that the capitalist system disregards the people's right to health and that it is interested only in the needs of the market.

The hegemonic system has been unable to respond to the pandemic; rather, it has deepened historical structural inequalities and poverty in our nations. Financial monopolies and oligopolies – whose loans exclude millions of people from the right to work and limit access to the production and consumption of goods and services – are resulting in increased numbers of caravans of emigrants to the major cities of Europe and the United States of America.

Against this backdrop, the war in Ukraine has resulted in three additional major crises – food, energy and financial crises – which are hitting the poorest countries hardest.

By way of example, in combating COVID-19, the least developed countries invested around 4 per cent of their gross domestic product, compared with 8 per cent in developing countries and 16.3 per cent in developed countries. This is a huge difference, of a factor of up to 477 in absolute terms.

Crop yield forecasts for our countries are up to 50 per cent lower than normal as a result of the war, which has disrupted food and fertilizer supplies and led to price increases. Oil and natural gas prices have risen by almost 50 per cent since the start of the year. Developing countries that import food are paying 2 percentage points more than exporting countries.

Currently, we are having to review so-called “free” trade agreements. I say “so-called”, because those who are impacted most are the workers of the countries that are lagging furthest behind, which are characterized by their dependence on traditional agriculture. Our small-scale producers cannot compete with major corporations that are subsidized by the capitalist system and enjoy economies of scale.

In this system of exclusion, it is the women and children who are hit hardest within the population. The informal economy and child labour have both increased as a result of the crisis.

The only way of changing this state of affairs is through radical transformations and by rescuing public institutions that have been absorbed by privatizations. The market does not look out for the common good, where social welfare must prevail. To achieve justice and peace, work must be decent and fair.

The Government that I am forming is committed to freedom of association and collective bargaining and to increasing the numbers of workers affiliated to the social security system.

Furthermore, the Prior Consultation Act seeks to protect indigenous and aboriginal peoples' ancestral rights concerning the lands and territories on which they live. We support domestic workers' rights and will combat violence and harassment in the world of work, using social dialogue as the best instrument of democracy and civilization.

We have already repealed the most degrading law in terms of workers' rights: the Hourly Employment Act. We are also repealing the State Secrets Act, which encouraged corruption, and the Act on Employment and Economic Development Zones, under which our territory was being sold off to multinational enterprises. Occupational safety and health, apprenticeships and the social and solidarity economy also have our support.

I would like to conclude by stating that in Honduras we are in the process of dismantling a dictatorship that was imposed in 2009. We resisted 12 years of crime, persecution and death squads, which murdered environmental activist Berta Cáceres and dozens of journalists.

I would like to close with a quotation from Honduran poet Alfonso Guillén Zelaya: “Within justice there can be no labour aristocracies. In our labours, we are all levelled by the regulatory force of life that distributes gifts and drives activities. Only the iniquitous organization of the world stalls and causes the transitory failure of human effort.”

## Conversation on tackling multiple global crises, promoting human-centred recovery and resilience: Summary

**The Director-General** asked the two interlocutors, Ms Catelene Passchier (Chairperson of the Workers’ group at the International Labour Conference) and Mr Danny McCoy (CEO, Irish Business and Employers Confederation), to reflect on the key issues and messages conveyed by the high-level speakers and how those messages could help in tackling multiple crises.

**Mr McCoy** highlighted that the current crises were developing within an interrelated environmental, social and governance context. He suggested that to have a human-centric approach to recovery, there was a need for: (1) natural capital (environment); (2) human capital; (3) social capital; and (4) traditional capital, such as technology and machinery. He stated that discussions about environmental crises tended to be framed in terms of an ecocentric or natural capital-centric world view. He observed that the previous session had focused more on the human and social capital dimensions than the technocentric approach. He admitted to belonging to the technocentric world view, while the ILO was mainly focused on a human-centric approach, but said he was willing to be challenged on this.

Responding to the Director-General’s question, **Ms Passchier** said that the key message that emerged from the panellists’ observations was the importance of life and survival. In today’s context of crises and wars, the right to life should be central. Workers should not be dying at work. She regretted that workers’ rights were not perceived as the top priority in the poll conducted during the preceding panel discussion. In her view, the issue of security was a top priority; next was dignity and enabling rights, and then jobs and social protection. But to have adequate social protection, jobs must pay an adequate living wage, as stated in the ILO’s Constitution – yet billions of people still did not have adequate living wages. To have social protection, workers needed to be able to pay taxes, and this depended on their having jobs that paid an adequate living wage. While businesses asked for tax reductions, workers asked for fair taxes. Debt relief was another important issue.

**The Director-General** asked what was meant by a technocentric approach. What actions would this imply, and if these were taken, would everything else follow?

**Mr McCoy** reiterated that an ecologically centred view can sometimes be limiting for human development. He deplored the inadequate investment in social and human capital, but observed that a technocentric approach could enable the creation of favourable conditions for natural and human capital. He highlighted that too often capital and labour were seen in juxtaposition, whereas if technology was fully embraced, then people could have an opportunity for working shorter hours with the same output. He stated that sometimes ecocentric and human-centred perspectives undermined the capacity of the capitalist system to generate the resources which ultimately were required to support progress in living standards and effective responses to crises. Therefore, he considered himself more technocentric than eco- or human-centric.

**The Director-General** questioned if there was a choice that needed to be made between techno-, eco- and social- or human-centric approaches.

**Ms Passchier** stated that technology was an instrument in the hands of humans, who could either make good use of it or do terrible things with it, as in the case of wars. She cautioned, therefore, against the world being technology-driven per se, and supported the human-centred approach advocated by the ILO. Even so, the discussion must not be centred solely on humans, as what would happen if there were no jobs? And moreover, humans could not live on a dead planet. Millions of species were disappearing and the environment must also be a priority. Concrete actions in this respect were needed as well.

Alluding to Ireland's economic ups and downs, **the Director-General** asked Mr McCoy if he thought the current set of crises were analogous to an aeroplane passing through a zone of turbulence in which we simply needed to fasten our safety belts, or if there was a bigger risk of a hard or even crash landing. What would it take for a safe landing within the technocentric paradigm?

**Mr McCoy** replied that it was more than a question of turbulence. We were on the cusp of a global recession related to supply chain disruptions generated by COVID-19 and the Ukraine war. More fundamentally, this crisis was also about the future of work because when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, central banks and monetary authorities believed that the pandemic would require work to be shut down. What had not been fully appreciated was the great extent to which technology would enable people to work from home. As a result, the world economy had held up relatively well and there was now an excess of liquidity, and a recession would need to be induced to absorb it.

**Ms Passchier** said it was difficult to predict, but that there had been an enormous increase in feelings of insecurity among the public. She cautioned that if we did not address this, there would be more economic and social turbulence. History could provide lessons in this regard, as in 1919 and 1944 when collaborative efforts and concrete actions were taken to ensure that everyone contributed and that frameworks were established to ensure fairness and social justice. Workers were currently perceiving that they were not being treated fairly, with poverty increasing while corporate profits soared. People needed to actively participate in finding solutions because if the matter was not taken in hand, the consequence would be further societal unrest.

**The Director-General** asked about the lessons to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic for the world of work and whether the world of work should be different or should change.

**Mr McCoy** said that the lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic was that the global labour force had become more educated in the last three decades and was more adaptable to technology. Unskilled workers were declining as a proportion of the labour force, while semi-skilled and skilled workers would be in further demand in the post-COVID-19 era. Lessons had been learned to embrace technology, with the emergence of artificial intelligence and robotics.

**Ms Passchier** thought that in the post-COVID-19 world there were likely to be changes in travelling and tourism. There should, and hopefully would, be a reduction in superfluous travel. However, in-person meetings would continue and were needed, with the International Labour Conference providing a good example of the importance of this human dimension. There could not be reliance solely on technology to solve all the world of work problems, as the finding of solutions often required face-to-face discussion and collaboration. Finally, referring to care sector workers' tireless efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, she highlighted the need to pay more attention to the role of women. During the world wars, when men went to war, women replaced them in factories; however, when the wars ended and the men returned, women had



to go back to providing care and support and raising children. She warned that this should not happen again.

**The Director-General** warmly thanked Mr McCoy and Ms Passchier for finding the time to make their important contributions to the work of the International Labour Conference.

### **The President** (Original Spanish)

I warmly thank you for attending this World of Work Summit of the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. The discussions we have witnessed have been most enriching and the conclusions we have been able to draw from them will no doubt remain firmly etched in our memories.

**(The Conference adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)**