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Thursday, 15 June 2023, 6.05 p.m.
President: Mr bin Samikh Al Marri

Outcome of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships: Presentation and discussion

The President

I am honoured to declare open the 14th plenary sitting of this year's session of the Conference.

Tonight's sitting should be a source of pride to all delegates, as we shall be turning our attention to the outcome of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships. As you all know, the Committee is submitting the text of the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships to the plenary for adoption. The text, which was published on 13 June, can be found in [Record of Proceedings No. 5A](#). The report on the Committee's proceedings is contained in [Record of Proceedings No. 5B](#).

It is my pleasure to welcome the Officers of the Committee and its Reporter, namely: Mr Claudino de Oliveira (Portugal), Chairperson; Mr Matthey (Switzerland), Employer Vice-Chairperson; Ms Brown (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Worker Vice-Chairperson; and Mr Ali (Indonesia), Reporter.

I give the floor to Mr Ali, so that he may present to us the Committee's report. The Officers of the Committee will then take the floor.

Mr Ali

Reporter of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

I am honoured to report back to you on the work of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships. This year, the Standard-Setting Committee completed its deliberations in 13 sittings. These deliberations were based on the draft Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships submitted by the Office. The draft Recommendation was itself grounded on the previous year's discussion, and on replies and comments received from constituents after the Committee's first discussion.

Once again, this Committee set an example of what social dialogue can achieve when it is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, with the able leadership of the Chairperson and with the hands-on expertise that the Committee members brought to the discussion. The few contentious issues that were discussed also benefited from detailed clarification from the secretariat, which helped us to achieve consensus.

A total of 120 amendments were proposed, as members were committed not to reopen discussions on the main points that had been agreed the previous year. Many of these amendments were amended further, but always in the spirit of the betterment of the text and the expressed will to ensure that constituents will have a robust Recommendation that sets clear and easily understandable benchmarks for the improvement of apprenticeship systems around the world.

The text that is now before you for adoption is groundbreaking, because it sets ambitious goals for the establishment of apprenticeship systems, the expansion of apprenticeship programmes and the rights and protection of apprentices.

Allow me to mention here the various Parts of the Recommendation that we are now presenting to you.

The Preamble highlights the importance of apprenticeships in the current context of the world of work, and the strong principles and international labour standards on which this Recommendation is based.

The first Part provides the relevant definitions for the rest of the text, including a new definition of “apprenticeship”. It also states that the Recommendation applies to apprenticeships in all enterprises and sectors of economy activity, and that it should be implemented through laws, collective agreements, policies and programmes, among other measures.

The second Part provides detailed guidance on the establishment of a competent authority for apprenticeships, the content of the related regulatory framework, and the required monitoring and evaluation of this framework.

The third Part underlines the responsibility of Members to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work for apprentices, and details the entitlements they should have.

The fourth Part sets out the elements that an apprenticeship agreement should contain and highlights the responsibility of Members to develop a model apprenticeship agreement.

The fifth Part provides for detailed measures that Members should take to promote equality, diversity and social inclusion in apprenticeships, including gender equality and balance, and to combat discrimination, violence and harassment and exploitation in apprenticeships.

The sixth Part provides a list of promotional measures to be taken by Members, including those aimed at improving apprenticeships in the informal economy.

The seventh and final Part lists measures to be taken for cooperation at the national, regional and international levels on quality apprenticeships.

On behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf, I would like to wholeheartedly thank our Chairperson, Mr Claudino de Oliveira, of Portugal, for the exceptional talents he demonstrated once again in facilitating this discussion. He made all Committee members feel at ease, allowed us all to express our opinions and fostered consensus on every paragraph of this text.

I would also like to express my personal appreciation to the two Vice-Chairpersons, the spokespersons of the regional groups and the other Government delegates. This Committee brought us together as a global community working on apprenticeships and we are all proud to have negotiated this text, which contains our aspirations of what apprenticeship systems should be. Several Committee members expressed their eagerness to continue to exchange knowledge and expertise on apprenticeships, and we count on the Office to facilitate future knowledge management on the subject.

We all understand that this Recommendation is non-binding in nature, but I want to reflect here on the high level of commitment of all Committee members to engage in its implementation and to improve national apprenticeship systems.

It is now up to all of us to adopt this Recommendation, which is strongly anchored in other international labour standards and provides detailed guidance on how we can all improve the quality of our national apprenticeship systems.

With this, I now submit the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships for adoption.

Mr Matthey

Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

We, the Employers, are pleased with the process and outcome of the work of this Committee. We especially appreciate the professionalism displayed by all members during the respectful negotiation of this very important matter. Indeed, this is reflected in the fact that this Committee completed its work in just one week – an unprecedented experience – with an outcome that is a win-win for the enterprise, the apprentice and our society.

This is indeed a historic occasion. Apprenticeships have served as a way of passing along knowledge and supporting a living for many generations. Apprenticeships have been proven to be effective models of training for thousands of years. Here, today, we will formally adopt and set a standard to ensure these mechanisms are rooted in quality across our world.

The work of this Committee serves as a true testimony of tripartism and social dialogue that clearly shows that when all parties work together, respectfully, to reach a consensus, it can lead to successful and mutually beneficial outcomes for all. Our achievements at the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference this week will benefit many generations, now and into the future. On this historic occasion, we are inspired by the outcomes this body has achieved.

This Recommendation reflects the joint vision of workers, employers and governments to work together to ensure that apprentices have opportunities to thrive in their economies and in their lives. The Recommendation reflects the joint vision of workers, employers and governments for increased prosperity for all apprentices and broadened access to employment. The Recommendation also reflects the joint vision of workers, employers and governments of the importance of working together, constructively, to promote a culture of lifelong learning, to increase the awareness and attractiveness of apprenticeships to both employers and apprentices, and to address the stigma of apprenticeships being less valuable and beneficial forms of skill and competency development.

It will now be the joint responsibility of this body to ensure that this Recommendation serves as a cornerstone to adapt and develop standards of quality at the national and regional levels, as illustrated across the priorities that have been identified. This body has recognized that quality apprenticeships are an investment in our future generations. We have agreed that quality apprenticeship systems are integral to the cultivation of thriving labour markets. This body has recognized that quality apprenticeship systems require the participation of many groups – from governments and education, workers' associations, employers' associations and intermediaries – in the provision of quality apprenticeships. This body has recognized that steps must be taken, together, to ensure that apprentices are protected, that all apprenticeships are diverse and inclusive, and that there is transparent monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeships to ensure continuous improvement.

There is a common saying across many cultures: that we are privileged to sit in the shade today because of a tree that was planted by those who came before us. Indeed, we have planted many trees during this process that shall benefit many others.

These outcomes could not and did not happen alone. We are pleased by our accomplishments, and we are ever thankful to the colleagues who participated in this process. We are thankful that this body has come together to impact the trajectory of our future by

establishing, through social partnership, a series of principles to ensure the promotion and expansion of quality apprenticeships. We are thankful for the social partnership and the cooperative nature in which the Workers' group constructively engaged with us during this process, and hope to continue to model together the critical importance and positive outcomes of our collaboration. We are thankful for the insights and support provided by Governments during this process, and hope to continue this model of social collaboration for addressing complex issues of global unemployment and underemployment. We are thankful to the leadership and commitment of employer and business membership organizations in engaging in the development of this Recommendation and in building frameworks for meaningful quality apprenticeship systems. We are thankful to the Chairperson and the secretariat for their professionalism and unabated commitment to ensuring and maintaining fair and efficient processes throughout the work of this Committee. We are thankful to our own group and to the drafters for their insights and support, and also to the interpreters.

As has already been stated many times, our joint commitment must now be put into action. We have an obligation to implement this Recommendation and to do our best to cultivate quality apprenticeship systems across the world. We have built a significant foundation upon which we can construct our future.

Thank you for the honour and privilege of addressing this body and participating in this process. We look forward to the impact that this Recommendation will have on our current and future economies.

Ms Brown

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

The text of this Recommendation which we are presenting for adoption by the Conference reflects our tripartite recognition that high-quality apprenticeships have an important contribution to make to our mission of decent work and social justice for all. Over the course of our two discussions, the members of the Committee on Apprenticeships listened and debated in order to shape this text to our joint aspirations. As the Chairperson of our Committee emphasized, our work has demonstrated social dialogue at its best. I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for their active engagement and participation in our discussions, as it gives confidence both that the outcome of our work is robust and that it will be taken forward at the national level.

The Workers' group believes that the outcome, a new ILO Recommendation on quality apprenticeships, constitutes strong and effective guidance to governments. We are proud of what the Committee has achieved. We believe it will help to enhance existing systems and to develop and promote new ones, in a way which meets the needs of all participants and can be responsive to changes in the world of work. It also reflects the importance of urgent action to face the challenges of climate change, as it includes an encouragement that apprenticeships should be promoted in fields related to the green economy and a just transition.

Before our work here began, the Workers' group researched the experiences of those who had undertaken an apprenticeship. We became aware of good practice, the less good, and also examples of exploitation. It was critical to the group that this knowledge could be used to good effect, to build a structure which could be used to remove such poor and exploitative practices. We are very pleased that Governments and Employers readily agreed that a key aim of the Recommendation must be to raise standards for apprentices, including eliminating exploitation. The text of our Recommendation recalls the rights that apprentices already have under international labour standards and rights and protections at work that are key to

ensuring that apprenticeships are of high quality. The Committee created a distinct provision of the Recommendation that sets out explicitly the right to join a union; to bargain collectively; to have access to social protection and occupational safety and health protections; to receive adequate remuneration and maternity, paternity and parental leave; limits to working time; and all the other terms and provisions that should be in place. We have included an expectation of a written agreement, setting out with clarity the key terms that must be drawn up and signed in a transparent process at the start of each apprenticeship. We have provided for a complaints system to facilitate speedy resolution if there are problems, and set out that there must be remedies for discrimination and violence and harassment that are both appropriate and effective.

The Workers' group believes that the implementation of these clauses will prompt a virtuous circle, making apprenticeships more attractive, encouraging take-up, raising standards, improving completion rates and facilitating flexible pathways to further work or learning.

We also welcome the joint commitment to effect measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination and violence and harassment against apprentices. The Recommendation builds on our recognition of the need to tackle occupational gender segregation, and provides for equality and diversity in access to apprenticeships, as well as during the apprenticeship placement. Apprenticeships have long been known as a route to skills development in particular occupations, but the Committee wanted to ensure that they would also be a valuable route in other sectors, for those who have faced exclusion or barriers to access, so the recognition that particular attention should be paid to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will be an aspect to be developed further in national implementation. The addition of a reference to mentors as a simple but very effective additional support for those entering the workforce for the first time is also very welcome.

We believe that this focus on promoting broad access, equality, social inclusion and fair protections will help to reassure potential apprentices, particularly young people, that this is the right path for them. And we look forward to working with governments and employers to develop awareness of this.

In our Recommendation, the Committee has maintained the definition of an apprenticeship as consisting of both on-the-job and off-the-job learning. We have reflected the importance of high quality in both aspects and have recommended that governments seek to build capacity throughout the system, so that apprentices have access to learning that is high quality and matches their particular needs and circumstances.

The Recommendation would not, however, be complete without the recognition that there is a large number of informal apprenticeships in place around the world, in which the learning is focused on gaining the skills to master a craft, but without offering access to education away from the workplace. The Workers' group is very pleased that the Recommendation has something to offer here as well. It sets out measures that can be taken in the transition from the informal to the formal economy, through promoting recognition of such prior learning, encouraging access to off-the-job learning and strengthening the capacity of micro, small and medium-sized economic units to improve quality and enhance training.

At the heart of this framework that the Recommendation creates is a public authority with the responsibility of designing, developing and evaluating the national apprenticeship system. It will set the conditions under which the host employer, the educational and training institution and any intermediary involved can operate, maintaining that regulatory oversight to ensure continued high quality. It will consider what works well in practice and what needs

improvement. It will evaluate financing models and incentive schemes, so that funding can be put to the best use, with part of the consideration including the outcomes for those apprentices involved. And as you would expect, the involvement of the social partners is explicitly built into every part of this authority's work, so that the expertise of the workplace can inform all activities and the interests of all can be recognized. That will be particularly important for promotion and take-up campaigns, as it is the support and endorsement of workers' and employers' organizations which can give life to apprenticeship programmes.

The Workers' group does have a remaining concern that trainees, including interns, are not within the scope of this Recommendation, this having been agreed by our Committee in our previous discussion. We believe that it remains important to address this regulatory gap and, as was discussed last year, that the appropriate steps must be taken towards a specific instrument, to provide adequate protection to this group.

Finally, I would like to record again my thanks to the Chairperson, Mr Claudino de Oliveira, who, we all know, made an enormous contribution to our work, while never expressing a single opinion on the text! Also, to my counterpart, Mr Matthey, and the Employers' group, who entered the discussion in a spirit of goodwill and good faith. I am grateful to the members of the Government group, who showed such active participation and flexibility towards shared goals. We were very fortunate to benefit from the expertise of the Legal Adviser, whose advice on the best language with which to frame a Recommendation was invaluable. The work of the secretariat, the interpreters and all who supported us was outstanding, as ever. And finally, I remain in great debt to my colleagues and team on the Workers' benches, who have allowed me the privilege to be speaking here now.

And with this, I add the Workers' group's voice in proposing the text of this Recommendation to the Conference.

Mr Claudino de Oliveira

Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

Words matter. The text we are proposing to you today for adoption matters. It sets ambitious benchmarks for the promotion and regulation of apprenticeships around the world. Although it does not create binding obligations, this Recommendation offers authoritative policy guidance. It also echoes our collective ambition to increase the number of apprenticeships, to improve their quality and effectiveness, and to protect apprentices.

There was wide consensus across the Government, Worker and Employer members of our Committee that apprenticeships truly work. And what better way to start a negotiation when all parties are already in agreement on its purpose and objectives? In addition, many, if not most, of the Committee members have first-hand experience in managing apprenticeship programmes, and some have been apprentices themselves. As a result, the text of the Recommendation is rooted in hands-on experience of tried and trusted approaches.

I would like to share some of the major breakthroughs achieved by this text. Firstly, we have a clear definition of quality apprenticeships, which differentiates apprenticeships from other forms of work-based learning. Secondly, they should be embedded in a national framework that sets out both the characteristics of quality apprenticeships and the responsibilities of the various parties involved. Thirdly, apprentices have clear rights and entitlements and should be protected, just like their workplace colleagues. And finally, Governments have a responsibility to promote apprenticeships, including through incentives.

Our discussion considered both current national practices and our ambitions for the future. I am particularly grateful for the positive attitude of the Committee members, who shared their experience, listened to that of the other members, and consciously advocated for a model that exceeds existing national practices. The resultant text is like a Global Positioning System (GPS) to guide the development and improvement of national apprenticeship systems. It takes courage and commitment to take such a visionary approach and adopt such a GPS. And for this, I want to express my deep personal appreciation.

This is a great example of teamwork, in which the principles of tripartism and social dialogue were honoured throughout. We owe the successful outcome to the determination and skill of many individuals – not least the Vice-Chairpersons, Mr Blaise Matthey for the Employers' group, and Ms Amanda Brown for the Workers' group. They clearly articulated the merits of their respective proposals, and were able to find satisfactory compromises if those proposals did not receive the support of the rest of the Committee. I am grateful to them both for their commitment to social dialogue and their efforts to find win-win solutions for the greater good. As mentioned in the Committee's closing sitting – and I would like to share it with the Conference – it was a masterclass in social dialogue, with the full engagement of all Government representatives in the room. Therefore, I am proud to say that the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships is a shining example of tripartism at its best.

I have no doubt that we can continue to count on all three groups as we move forward to make the ambitious goals set out in this Recommendation a reality. We now have specific benchmarks and clear expectations of governments, employers and workers for national apprenticeship systems. We also have a strong commitment by all Members to make them work, with the support of the Office.

If the Recommendation is adopted, the Office will develop an implementation plan for the consideration of the Governing Body. The plan will include the establishment of a group of champion organizations to support Members in the implementation of the Recommendation, work on statistics related to apprenticeships, revised tools, various capacity-building activities and targeted support at the regional and national levels.

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Drafting Committee for their painstaking work, often late in the evening. I also thank the Reporter, Mr Ali from Indonesia. I would like to thank the secretariat for its hard work and long hours in supporting the Committee with skill, grace and professionalism. I would like to express my particular appreciation to Ms Seppo, Mr Lee and Mr Reddy, and also the coordinators, Ms Hoffman, Mr Iriarte Quezada and Ms Pinoargote. The continuous support and advice they provided is something that I will never forget. My thanks also go to all those working behind the scenes, including the interpreters, translators and technicians. All of those individual and collective contributions were crucial in making the Committee's work a success.

A final, but very special, *obrigado* [thank you] to the Governments of the Western European group and the Government group for their confidence in my appointment to lead the work of the Committee, as well as to the Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal, Ana Mendes Godinho. To the Portuguese Employers' delegate and the Portuguese Workers' delegate, *muito obrigado* for your words in this same room yesterday. My special thanks also go to Ambassador Rui Macieira, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, to Filipe Nunes, member of the Portuguese Mission in Geneva, and to Neusa Van-Dunem, a good friend who has been working with me for several years and has never let me down. You were always there for

me and I will never, ever, ever forget it. To all members of the Portuguese delegation to this session of the Conference, *obrigado* for being here; you gave us a lot of comfort.

And with this, I am honoured to present to you the outcome of the Committee's deliberations, this new Recommendation, which I urge the Conference to adopt. I also urge all Members to implement in earnest the steps outlined in the text.

The President

The discussion on the outcome of the work of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships is now open.

Mr Ogenga

Government (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Africa group

Kenya highly appreciates this singular privilege to take the floor and to share a few remarks regarding the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation.

We want to sincerely thank the President for his excellence, and for leading his team of top ILO officials, experts, multilingual drafters, extraordinary interpreters, dedicated service-providers and efficient security team to have provided us delegates with this decent conference environment.

We are motivated that this final Recommendation resulted from the great leadership of the Apprenticeships Committee Chairperson, Mr Claudino de Oliveira, the Vice-Chairpersons and the entire team. We had deliberate tripartite dialogue from expert Government, Employer and Worker members, who utilized the spirit of consensus more flexibly to accommodate great expectations.

A strong African delegation of over 60 Members coordinated to fully participate in and support our Apprenticeships Committee to meet its target before the scheduled date: an achievement that the Chairperson described as "a Committee record".

Noting that the informal sector remains a major source of jobs, accounting for about 70 per cent of employment in Africa, this Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation is therefore a collective indicator of our desire to unlock entry and retention opportunities for decent work in what we call in Kiswahili the *Jua Kali* economic units.

The Recommendation should encourage Member States to consider, firstly, developing sectoral policies and national interventions for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. This will improve the employability of pre-skilled young people and informal-sector workers, through gaining credits for both vertical and horizontal mobility, and effectively mitigate world of work challenges. Secondly, we expect that Member States will draft regulations to standardize the operation of intermediaries, improve on apprentice protection schemes and offer recognized qualifications anchored on upskilling, reskilling and cross-skilling pathways. Thirdly, we also expect Member States to provide incentives to promote equality, support exchange programmes and enhance social security coverage, as may be contained in standard apprenticeship agreements.

We recognize that this Recommendation has derived significant improvements, of which I will name only two. Firstly, the description and positioning of intermediaries as key players in the apprenticeship value chain, and secondly, the introduction of the new Part, "Protection of Apprentices", to comply with the requirements of occupational safety and health.

Allow me to mention that because the component of traineeships was removed from the instrument, we would request that the Office reactivates a discussion on traineeships so that we can facilitate a universal understanding to offer inclusive support to technical and vocational education and training.

The Africa group believes that this Recommendation will catalyse the promotion of apprenticeships to meet the skills needs of the digital communities and impact on the future of work.

In conclusion, we are optimistic that these networks, knowledge-sharing and technology transfer opportunities will have an impact beyond this 111th Session of the International Labour Conference.

Ms Byk

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

The group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) would like to thank and recognize the representatives of Governments, Employers and Workers for the fruitful debate that took place within the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships, which culminated in the Recommendation that is being presented here today. We thank the secretariat for its advice and clarifications of key areas to facilitate our discussion. We greatly appreciate the work of the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Claudino de Oliveira, and thank him for his warmth and goodwill in helping us to achieve the necessary consensus to establish this Recommendation, which will guide national regulations on quality apprenticeships.

We would like to emphasize the importance of this Recommendation for the members of our group. It will help to establish and expand quality apprenticeships in our countries and ensure that the social partners are actively involved, as is mentioned repeatedly in the Recommendation. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are a large number of people in the informal economy, who will also benefit from this instrument to make the transition to the formal economy. Hence, we are pleased to have an instrument that will be promoted and implemented by all ILO Member States. In short, for the members of GRULAC, this Recommendation will be an instrument for designing public policies for the inclusion and protection of our peoples and a pathway to formality in the world of work for the most disadvantaged groups.

Furthermore, we would like to express our great satisfaction with the fact that the promotion of green jobs has been included as an aspect, which will prompt us to reflect on the protection of workers and thus on driving a genuinely just transition to the work of the future. We also appreciate the fact that recognition of prior learning has been established. For our group, increased efforts are needed to ensure that skills acquired in the domestic sphere in relation to the care economy are included in national regulations. We also believe that it is important to relaunch the discussion on traineeships, which were removed, for good reason, from the draft Recommendation in the first discussion last year. Traineeships enable workers to improve their skills to gain access to decent jobs. In our view, promoting and regulating them appropriately is crucial.

Lastly, we consider that it is crucial to strengthen the engagement and capacities of the social partners to participate actively in the design, implementation and evaluation of the

apprenticeship system and thereby contribute to the objective of social justice for all, which forms the framework for this instrument.

Ms Barbou des Places

Government (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Türkiye, Georgia, Iceland, Norway and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

We want to express our warm thanks to Mr Luís Claudino de Oliveira, the Chairperson of the Committee, for leading the discussions in an effective and efficient manner over these two years. We also want to express our gratitude and appreciation to the social partners, in particular the Vice-Chairpersons, as well as to all Government group colleagues for their constructive spirit of consensus and valuable and engaged contributions throughout our discussions. The unique tripartite structure of this Organization gives an equal voice to workers, employers and governments. It is based on this practice of social dialogue that we have consensually agreed on the new Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships.

We also want to thank the secretariat for supporting and guiding us throughout this process, and the members of the Drafting Committee for reviewing the language of the instrument at late hours.

We believe that the Recommendation we will adopt will become a pivotal global standard to increase job opportunities, in particular for young people, address labour market needs and contribute to the formalization of the economy and to full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all. Apprentices, host enterprises and society as a whole will benefit from it.

This year's discussions were based on the Conclusions adopted at the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. We appreciate that the Committee could further improve and update the text, building upon the main outcomes of last year's Conclusions.

We appreciate that the Recommendation includes a clear scope, and we welcome the fact that it now reflects, in a better manner, the nature of a Recommendation that will provide concrete guidance to the ILO constituents.

It is evident that the protection of apprentices is vital. The EU and its Member States therefore welcome that this important aspect could be clarified in the text, with the possibility of Member States providing even stronger protection.

The instrument also contains clear provisions for a regulatory framework and underlines the most important elements that should be part of the apprenticeship agreement. It highlights the importance of equality and diversity in quality apprenticeships. Finally, the instrument strongly emphasizes and guides constituents on how to promote quality apprenticeships and how to improve cooperation at all levels.

The EU and its Member States are convinced that the promotion of quality apprenticeships will be crucial for increasing their acceptance and success. We welcome the fact that we could agree to further underline the importance of recognition of prior learning in order to increase access to apprenticeships and promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

We hope that the adoption of this Recommendation will advance efforts to enhance and strengthen quality apprenticeships, which will ultimately progress towards the goal of full, productive and freely chosen employment for all.

Mr McClashie
Government (Trinidad and Tobago)

I wish to commend the Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships for his patient and impartial stewardship of the Committee's sittings. Likewise, I would like to thank the Worker and Employer Vice-Chairpersons of this Committee for their passion and willingness to work together towards the common goal of a Recommendation on apprenticeships which would serve as a guideline for Members in the promotion and regulation of quality apprenticeships.

The Standard-Setting Committee worked diligently over 13 sittings to negotiate the text of a Recommendation which the Conference will shortly adopt. The quality of the discussions on and amendments to the text are evidence of the importance that each constituent places on the matter of apprenticeships. It is my humble view that all the Committee members may take great satisfaction in seeing the work of this Standard-Setting Committee come to fruition.

Through engagement with the national tripartite stakeholders, Trinidad and Tobago has actively participated at every step of the development process of this new international labour standard.

Permit me to inform this distinguished assembly that at the national level, Trinidad and Tobago is currently in the process of finalizing a national policy on apprenticeships that will be administered by the National Training Agency, which is represented in our delegation to this Conference.

In closing, I wish to thank the secretariat for the excellent work it has done in adequately preparing its constituents throughout the process of developing this Recommendation. I also extend appreciation to the members of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries for their committed work and significant contributions to these discussions.

Ms Lee
Government (United States of America)

The negotiation of a Recommendation on quality apprenticeships is wonderful news for this year's Conference and for the future of apprenticeship programmes around the world.

The United States believes that this Recommendation, which has been developed by the Standard-Setting Committee over the last two years, represents a positive expression of the fundamental principles and common attributes of quality apprenticeships that should apply in every part of the globe. We are confident that this Recommendation will serve as an effective and durable blueprint that can guide Member States – including our own – in the expansion, diversification and modernization of apprenticeships through their respective national laws and practices.

The United States is especially pleased that an international consensus has been achieved in this Recommendation on a number of principles which we consider essential to ensuring that apprenticeships are effective in developing workers who are skilled, motivated, productive and empowered. Some of these principles include: adequate remuneration or other financial compensation for apprentices; undertaking effective measures to ensure that apprenticeships are free from discrimination, violence and harassment; and ensuring that apprentices are

afforded freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, to name just a few. The United States hopes that the unambiguous expression of these principles in the Recommendation will advance the goal of decent work, social justice and inclusion for apprenticeships everywhere in the world.

We also know that quality apprenticeships can be effective in supporting persons in vulnerable situations and in transforming the lives of persons who have faced persistent obstacles in gaining access to, and advancement within, the broader labour market, particularly among women and disadvantaged groups.

This Recommendation is characterized by a remarkable spirit of tripartism and collaboration and we are very much looking forward to its adoption.

Mr Macieira
Government (Portugal)
(Original Portuguese)

Portugal aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

The world of work is facing significant challenges, some long-standing and others more recent. To address them successfully, justice and inclusiveness are key. We need just transitions that leave no one behind, at a time when we are adapting our economies to climate change, demographic change and technological change.

Quality apprenticeships and vocational training have a key part to play in this process of a just transition. Training and learning are the only tools that will enable young people to adjust, with confidence, to the transformations in the labour market throughout their lives.

In Portugal, we have adopted a series of policy measures seeking to respond to this, including the UPskill programme, which was coordinated by the Government in consultation with the social partners.

The adoption of an international labour standard on quality apprenticeships is the result of a timely and necessary tripartite discussion. The adoption of this Recommendation by the International Labour Conference shows that ILO Members' capacity for dialogue and willingness to compromise remain alive, thereby contributing to consolidating the relevance of the Organization and reaffirming the values of decent work and social justice.

Quality apprenticeships are an essential means of addressing the challenges of the future of work. By providing people with skills and qualifications, these apprenticeships promote enhanced employability and productivity, and increased sustainability of development. We therefore congratulate the Standard-Setting Committee on the tangible, impactful and lasting results that it will have on people's lives.

In closing, I would like to say that it is not every year that Portugal has an opportunity to chair a committee of the International Labour Conference. We note with great satisfaction from the comments of representatives of other Member States and the social partners that it was our colleague, Luís Claudino de Oliveira, who chaired the discussions leading to such pertinent results for the updating of the normative framework of the International Labour Organization.

Mr Kabir
Government (Bangladesh)

We appreciate the hard work of the Committee in coming up with the Recommendation, which will bridge the regulatory gap that existed in the area of apprenticeships. While the operation is being challenged by strong economic factors, the introduction of advanced technologies, drastic climate change and demographic shifts, young people globally have hope in apprenticeships to increase their employability.

Whatever the diverse needs of apprenticeships and the various ways and means of meeting them, while implementing the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, national contexts should primarily guide the ILO. The Office should complement national efforts and not replace them.

In Bangladesh, over 2 million people enter the labour market every year with limited or no skills. Apprenticeships can play a catalytic role in integrating them into the labour market.

Recently, Bangladesh adopted the Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework, integrating technical and professional education and recognizing prior learning and apprenticeships. Bangladesh requests the Office to mobilize resources and global support for effective implementation of the national frameworks in Member States in order to ensure quality apprenticeships. Partnerships of business entities and the effective engagement of the tripartite partners need to be promoted to achieve the desired outcome from apprenticeships.

Before I conclude, Bangladesh requests the Office to consider projects on quality apprenticeships to add to our efforts in implementing the Recommendation.

Ms Heazlewood
Employer (Australia)

On this remarkable occasion, I sit before you as a representative of the Employers and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to endorse this Recommendation on quality apprenticeships. Firstly, I express my deepest gratitude to our Chairperson, Mr Claudino de Oliveira, for leading us with wisdom and grace. I also commend the work of Ms Brown, the Worker Vice-Chairperson, and Government delegates.

Throughout this two-year journey, the Employers were fortunate to be guided by two outstanding individuals: last year, Scott Barklamb passionately advocated on our behalf, and this year we were fortunate to have the remarkable leadership of Blaise Matthey. I extend my gratitude to the expert support staff at the International Organisation of Employers, including the tremendous Tina, Sam, Amadou and others, who have been instrumental in this process. We also thank the secretariat, the interpreters and the Drafting Committee for their indispensable contributions. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my esteemed Employer colleagues from across the globe.

Employers are an essential component to any apprenticeship. You cannot have one without the other. This Recommendation establishes that quality apprenticeships and systems are vital, providing the foundation for a skilled, motivated, productive and empowered workforce to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Some of the key provisions that have been developed through collegiate and tripartite dialogue include: addressing the stigma associated with apprenticeships and advocating for their recognition and importance (something of particular importance in my home country of Australia, where there has never been a higher need for apprentices, but the preference seems

to be higher education instead); the need for quality education, training and access to lifelong learning; recognizing that diversity plays a crucial role in fostering excellence; recognition of prior learning; support services and fostering public-private partnerships; the involvement of employers, workers, education professionals and intermediaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeship programmes; and the significance of integrating apprenticeships into education, vocational training and employment policies. Furthermore, it highlights the essential role incentives play in promoting apprenticeships and assisting employers to embark on this transformative journey.

With great anticipation we look forward to the Conference adopting this Recommendation.

Ms Rutto
Worker (Kenya)

Thank you very much for allowing me to address the Conference on this important issue discussed by this Committee. As a Workers' delegate in the Standard-Setting Committee on Quality Apprenticeships, I feel proud of the work we have undertaken as a Committee since last year. Even though last year's discussion was difficult, this year it felt as if all of us in the room were eager to reach consensus on important issues that this new Recommendation aims to address.

At this point, I must mention that in my country, Kenya, too many young people depend on opportunities that only the informal economy provides: opportunities for acquiring new skills, opportunities for earning an income or for combining work with family responsibilities. For women, in particular, the informal economy is still the only option, as it provides a certain flexibility, allowing them to juggle paid work with unpaid care work.

In fact, during the last two years, we came to the conclusion that for a new international labour standard on quality apprenticeships to be both as aspirational as it should be, as well as practical, it would have to take into account the realities and needs of a great number of countries around the world where informal learning or informal apprenticeships are the only option, and that it should also take into account the needs of those of us who are affected by discrimination and exclusion and are facing multiple barriers in accessing opportunities for quality learning and decent work.

Today I am pleased to share with all of you that we are about to adopt a new international labour standard that provides clear guidance to governments on how to develop and promote quality apprenticeships, including through the adoption of targeted measures to support the transition from the informal to the formal economy, for example through the adoption of processes to recognize prior learning acquired in the informal economy or by offering opportunities to apprentices to supplement their on-the-job learning with education offered off the job.

We also agreed on the need to have effective measures such as those aiming at preventing and eliminating exploitation, discrimination and violence and harassment in order to encourage gender balance in apprenticeships as well as equitable participation of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, I wish to thank our Kenyan Government representatives, who, on behalf of the Africa group, played a constructive role in our Committee's discussion during the last two weeks. We are ready to work with you and the Employer representatives back home to effectively implement the commitments we set out in this new Recommendation.

Mr Larsen Employer (United States of America)

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and spokespersons for their respectful and considerate engagement in the social dialogue that led us to achieve the best human-centred outcome for apprenticeships, which is presented to the Conference as a new international labour standard, a Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships.

Over the past four years, I have had the privilege of participating in the International Labour Conference and for the second time in the Standard-Setting Committee. It has been an absolute honour to collaborate with such distinguished colleagues.

In this unique tripartite system, we have developed a strategy, programme and approach to continually enhance apprenticeships, ensuring that they provide workers with the necessary skills to attain full, productive and freely chosen employment. Additionally, we have emphasized the importance of lifelong learning opportunities, promoting continuous skilling, reskilling and upskilling, which in turn contributes to the promotion of decent work and full employment.

The promotion and development of quality apprenticeships not only lead to decent work but also provide effective responses to the challenges of the ever-changing world of work. These apprenticeships offer lifelong learning opportunities, enhancing productivity, resilience, transitions and employability.

Taking a holistic approach that empowers individuals and drives economic progress, quality apprenticeships support entrepreneurship, self-employment and the transition to the formal economy, as well as playing a vital role in creating decent jobs, fostering growth and enhancing the sustainability of enterprises.

I am immensely pleased with the outcome achieved by this Committee. We have developed a Recommendation that will not only uplift the most vulnerable but also guide them towards their desired destinations. This inclusive approach ensures that apprenticeships reach those who rightfully deserve equal opportunities in the formal workplace and will serve as a vehicle to take them to where they rightfully deserve to be. We eagerly await the plenary's adoption of this Recommendation.

Mr Eriksson Worker (Sweden)

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk about the new ILO Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships. As a member of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, I am proud of what our Committee has achieved, as well as how our Committee worked together in the true spirit of tripartism. When we had a difficult question to solve, we took the time to talk and work together, in the spirit of consensus, with a view to achieving a strong Recommendation on quality apprenticeships.

As a young electrician who has benefited from a quality apprenticeship, I know first-hand what a quality apprenticeship can do for young workers, and I know that this Recommendation will make a difference for young workers around the world.

I want to highlight some aspects of the text that will have a big impact on workers and apprentices around the world. I would like to start by saying that I am very proud that we were able to find consensus within the Committee on the provisions in the text focusing on the

protection of apprentices. We have agreed that Member States should take measures to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work in relation to apprenticeships. It means that Member States should take measures to ensure that apprentices are entitled to adequate remuneration or other financial compensation, and have access to social security, maternity protection, as well as paid maternity or paternity leave and parental leave, to mention just a few. A provision that is very important for us as the Workers' group is that we agreed in the Committee that apprentices are afforded freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. This is one of the cornerstones of the ILO.

With this new ILO Recommendation on quality apprenticeships, we can now work together to give all workers and apprentices around the world a better tomorrow. And I want to thank everyone in the Committee on the work that we have conducted during the last two weeks, and a special thanks to Amanda Brown, who has been a brilliant spokesperson for the Workers' group.

Ms Høj Larsen
Employer (Denmark)

With the ILO Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, the tripartite constituents of the ILO have come together at a critical moment to develop a practical instrument aiming at promoting and improving apprenticeships to ensure skilled labour and good craftsmanship. Skilled labour and mutual learning within and across borders are crucial to embrace a successful twin transition. The ILO instrument before us can play an important role to inspire exactly this.

Vocational education and training must be an attractive path for schoolchildren and young people to choose, and here quality apprenticeships play an important role. However, there also lies an important task before us all to change the mindset of pupils, parents and society at large, and introduce them to the many possibilities an apprenticeship can result in.

In my country, Denmark, we believe that it is essential to show schoolchildren what an apprenticeship and a vocational education mean in practice. In my own organization, the Confederation of Danish Employers, we have developed an initiative called Open Enterprise, where specialized training materials have been developed. It includes a company visit to give the pupils a first-hand experience that may inspire them to follow a vocational education pathway, including an apprenticeship, of course. The schoolchildren say that the company visit, in combination with the teaching materials, enhances the meaningfulness of the overall teaching experience at school. Likewise, the teachers have also expressed their positive feedback on the programme.

I therefore hope we will adopt this Recommendation so that we can start the real work of continuously improving the attractiveness and the quality of apprenticeships everywhere.

Mr Gándara
Worker (Argentina)
(Original Spanish)

In the context of the new production paradigm, we know that new requirements are being placed on enterprises and workers alike. We therefore highlight the systemic nature of this Recommendation. This is reflected in the holistic vision in linking the perspectives of both work and education, fostering inclusion without leaving anyone behind, and looking to the future,

which means that the existing gaps in educational qualifications and technologies within our populations must be reduced.

This Recommendation sets out basic principles and, in turn, provides every country with an opportunity to build on the guidelines it contains, in accordance with their own interests and cultural framework. These proposed guidelines allow quality apprenticeships to be contemplated in an integrated approach and linked to the social and productive context of each sector and region, with spaces for knowledge management that integrate the science and technology complex with training, where apprentices benefit from learning new technologies and the social partners participate in order to ensure that people can grow by means of a training system for progressive lifelong learning.

The effective social dialogue that is built here must be applied by countries, thereby enabling the social partners to play their key role in the design, implementation, governance and evaluation of training activities to achieve social justice, decent work and good labour relations.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all countries and their representatives for the consensus achieved, their hard work and the utmost effort they made to produce this outcome, which is highly relevant for all our nations.

Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships: Adoption

The President

We shall now proceed with the adoption of the text of the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, which is contained in Record of Proceedings No. 5A. We will go through it Part by Part, beginning with the Preamble.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the text of the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, is adopted, Part by Part?

(The Preamble and paragraphs 1–28 are adopted seriatim.)

If there are no objections, may I take it that the text of the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, as a whole, is adopted?

(The text of the Recommendation, as a whole, is adopted.)

(The Conference adjourned at 7.25 p.m.)

Friday, 16 June 2023, 10.55 a.m.

President: Mr bin Samikh Al Marri

Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships: Final record vote

The President

As per the ILO's Constitution, the formal adoption of this Recommendation calls for a record vote.

I have the honour to announce the results of the final record vote on the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships, the text of which is contained in Record of Proceedings No. 5A.

The result of the vote is as follows: 468 votes in favour, 1 vote against, with 6 abstentions. As the quorum was 306, and the required two-thirds majority, including abstentions, of 313 has been reached, the Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships is adopted.

(The Recommendation is adopted.)

(The detailed results of the vote may be found on the [Conference website](#).)

The President

I shall now invite delegates who may wish to take the floor to do so.

Mr Matthey

Employer Vice-Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

I am very proud to see the successful vote on the adoption of this Recommendation.

The Employers are inspired by the outcomes this Committee has achieved in two ways. First, the smooth adoption and the excellent collaboration between the social partners during the discussion must set the standard for future ILO negotiations. Second, this instrument will benefit many generations, now and into the future. It reflects a joint vision to offer apprentices the best opportunities for their future. It demonstrates the importance of working together to promote a culture of lifelong learning. It will increase awareness and the attractiveness of apprenticeships to employers, future apprentices and parents. We are talking about a very valuable and beneficial form of skill and competency development.

With this, let us celebrate and work together from now onwards to ensure the successful implementation of this Recommendation in our home countries.

Ms Brown

Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships

The Workers' group is delighted at the overwhelming support shown for this Recommendation. We are very happy that our work together has gained the approval of the Conference, so that we have succeeded in our task of addressing the regulatory gap that had been identified as leaving apprentices without full and proper protection.

As we know, the story does not end here. Instead, the adoption of this Recommendation provides a new impetus to work to develop and strengthen national systems. From today, the implementation and promotion of the text of the Recommendation will be in the hands of all of us, as Governments, Workers and Employers, aided of course by the valuable technical support of the Office. The Workers' group is keen to promote apprenticeships as a pathway to decent work, to social justice and a better life, and we look forward to working together to build this. We know there is already widespread enthusiasm for this next part of the process, and we are confident that work to put this into practice will soon gain momentum. As set out in the Recommendation, the country-level initiatives will be supported by international collaboration and sharing of good practice.

We have created a firm foundation on which national systems can be built. We will be able to see, through Government reports to the Office, the structures that are built on that foundation, the changes that will be the real outcome of our work, and the difference that they make. We look forward to working in partnership to achieve the aspirations that our Committee has set, and that the Conference has now adopted.

Mr Claudino de Oliveira**Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships**

Let me congratulate all of you on this new instrument. This Recommendation is a significant contribution to the body of international labour standards and to social justice. It promotes effective and quality apprenticeships for all, and recalls that the fundamental principles and rights at work apply to all apprentices. Most importantly, it provides ILO Members with specific guidance on what they should do to improve their national apprenticeship systems. The Recommendation also shows how apprenticeships are oriented towards the future of work, and that they can contribute to innovation within enterprises, address the challenges in fields related to the green economy and a just transition, and make enterprises and workers more resilient.

How did we achieve this? Through tripartism and social dialogue, which, in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, can work wonders. We had clear consensus on what we wanted to achieve, an appreciation for each other's views, and the collective commitment to produce a strong text that we can all use once we have returned home to our countries. I am honoured to have been involved in this work, and I thank all Committee members once again for their trust and collaboration.

Mr Ogenga**Government (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Africa group**

We, as the Africa group, highly appreciate the privilege to have been part and parcel of the process that has led to the approval of this Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships. We believe that this is really going to impact on our economies because the transition of the informal sector to the formal sector could add a lot of value for us, as about 70 per cent of employment in Africa is informal and therefore a major contributor to our gross domestic products.

Our view, as Governments, is that this is really going to encourage Member States to achieve or consider the following. It is going to give us a platform to develop sectoral policies and national interventions that will be critical for supporting our micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. We believe that this will improve employability, especially of our critical mass of youth who are pre-skilled and, more importantly, the informal-sector workers, who will be able to gain credits, not only for vertical and horizontal mobility, but also to provide a space in which we can effectively mitigate our world of work challenges.

We also expect that we will be able to draft regulations now that we can customize to standardize the operations of intermediaries who are currently supporting the partnerships that occur within this space.

We will be able to improve on apprenticeship protection schemes and offer recognized qualifications anchored on upskilling, reskilling and cross-skilling pathways. We recognize, most of all, that our nations have what we call National Qualifications Frameworks that will be able to add value to what we have indicated here.

Finally, we are talking about provision of incentives to promote equality and support exchange programmes, and, more importantly, enhanced social security coverage as may have been contained in the standard apprenticeship contract agreement that we have included in the text.

As we conclude, we want to thank the President's team and the Committee for providing the environment in which we are going to implement this Recommendation.

Ms Barbou des Places

Government (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

ILO standard-setting is always a historic moment and it is an honour for us to be here today. With the adoption of this Recommendation, ILO constituents have made a crucial contribution to the ILO's body of standards, which has been at the heart of this Organization for more than 100 years. This Recommendation will become a pivotal global standard to increase job opportunities, in particular for young people, address labour market needs and contribute to the formalization of the economy and to full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.

Let me express, once more, my gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this important work, in particular the social partners, colleagues in the Government group and our Chairperson. We hope that the adoption of this Recommendation will advance efforts to enhance and strengthen quality apprenticeships.

Mr Henry

Representative, Education International

I would like to start by thanking Amanda Brown for her leadership and perspicacity. She's a spokesperson of whom the Workers are fiercely proud. I'd like to thank Blaise Matthey, who worked with equanimity for a better text. I'd also like to thank the Chairperson, whose good humour and deftness of touch moved us forward with skill and clarity. *Obrigado*. My thanks also go to the secretariat. Likewise, to the people involved in the Drafting Committee, for accepting the word of the English teachers and agreeing to use the adjective "educational". The process was, indeed, educational and apprenticeships will continue to be educational.

The importance of making apprenticeships inclusive for all was not lost on any of us, especially the worker from Niger, who spoke with passion within the Workers' group about access for those from the informal economy. This Recommendation will provide for regulation, protection for workers and a strong educational background for apprenticeships to spring workers into a life of learning in an ever-changing world. Trainees and interns await.

The President

I would like to extend my warmest thanks and congratulations to the members and Officers of the Committee for their work. I would also like to thank the secretariat for its support. The result we have achieved today is the fruit of several months of particularly intense work. Congratulations to you all.

(The Conference continued its work in plenary.)