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Friday, 16 June 2023, 4.45 p.m.
President: Mr bin Samikh Al Marri

Signing of instruments adopted by the Conference at its 111th Session

The President

The Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Convention, 2023 (No. 191), the Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Recommendation, 2023 (No. 207), and the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), have been adopted by the Conference at its 111th Session. I invite the Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr Hougbo, to accompany me to the desk so that we may sign the instruments together.

(The President and the Director-General of the ILO sign the three instruments.)

Closing statements

The President

The Conference has now concluded its work and has achieved its objectives. The time has come for the closing ceremony. Before closing, I invite you to enjoy a video highlighting some of the most memorable moments of this session of our Conference.

(A video is shown.)

I shall now call on each of my fellow Officers to make their concluding remarks to this assembly. I will begin by inviting the Employer Vice-President of the Conference to take the floor.

Mr Munthe

Employer Vice-President of the Conference

It has been a true honour to serve as the Employer Vice-President of the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference. Over the past two weeks, we have engaged in meaningful dialogue, shared perspectives and collaborated towards shaping the future of work and advancing social justice. I am grateful to have this moment to reflect on some of our shared achievements.

Let me first begin by acknowledging that throughout this Conference, we have witnessed the transformative power of tripartism. The tripartite engagement has brought about some impressive results. The Employers' group is particularly pleased with the outcomes. Let me share with you our assessment.

The Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), adopted almost unanimously, as we heard this morning, by this Conference, is a major achievement in standard-setting in the ILO. The outcomes achieved in the Standard-Setting Committee should inspire all social partners. First, the smooth adoption and excellent collaboration between the social partners and during the discussion must set a standard for future ILO negotiations. Second, this instrument will benefit today's young people and future generations, as it reflects the vision of social partners to ensure that apprentices have opportunities to thrive in their professional path. The Recommendation reflects the importance of working together constructively to promote a culture of lifelong learning, to increase awareness and the

attractiveness of apprenticeships to employers and apprentices and to address the perception of apprenticeships as less valuable and beneficial forms of skills and competency development. Constituents, through this Recommendation, recognized that apprenticeships are an investment in young people. Constituents also agreed in the Recommendation that quality apprenticeship systems should become an integral part of thriving labour markets. Finally, constituents endorsed the view that quality apprenticeship systems require effective participation at different levels of society, from governments and educators to workers' and employers' organizations and intermediaries, in the provision of quality apprenticeships. It will now be the joint responsibility of the ILO to ensure that this Recommendation serves as a cornerstone to adapt and develop standards of quality at the national and regional levels.

In relation to the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS), deliberations once again took place in a constructive spirit. The CAS successfully completed its discussion on the General Report, the General Survey on 6 instruments on gender equality and non-discrimination, cases of serious failure to report and its examination of 24 individual cases. The Employers' group repeated our view of the need for sustainable enterprises to be more visible in the promotion and supervision of ILO standards, and that ratification should only take place once there is clarity that correct implementation can be ensured, ideally in a way that reconciles the need of all tripartite constituents, including employers. The Employers' group also called on the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations to fully respect the wording of the Convention and not create obligations beyond what was intended and agreed upon by the tripartite constituents, particularly about the right to collective bargaining under the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the issue of the right to strike in the context of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). The Employers urged the Committee of Experts, as well as the Office, as a key part of the ILO standards supervisory body, to be bridge-builders in finding consensus-based solutions, rather than continuing as they have done up to now.

I would like to especially highlight the CAS discussion on the two double-footnoted cases of Nicaragua, concerning Convention No. 87 and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). In respect of Convention No. 87, the Committee discussed the persistent climate of intimidation and harassment, the arrest and detention of employer leaders, as well as the cancellation of the legal status of the most representative employers' organization, the Higher Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP), and its 18 affiliates. This was also referred to by Ms Tanya Samuelsen this morning, when she presented the report of the Credentials Committee; it was also discussed at length by Mr Paul Mackay when he presented his report on the CAS earlier today. The Employers' group is deeply concerned at the absence of any progress and cooperation by the Government since last year. The Employers' group stresses that it is imperative for workers and employers' representatives to be freely elected and represented on an equal footing, as established under the Convention. We also call on the Government to immediately undo the revocation of the legal status of COSEP and its 18 other employers' organizations and return any confiscated assets to them. The conclusion adopted by the CAS urges the Government in the strongest terms to immediately cease all acts of violence, threats and any form of aggression against individuals or organizations exercising trade union or employers' organization activities.

In relation to Convention No. 111, the CAS discussed for the first time the serious situation of political discrimination in the country. The Employers' group deplored the intensification of repression and persecution of political opponents. The CAS adopted conclusions urging the Government to take immediate measures to end the climate of violence, insecurity and

intimidation in the country and provide adequate protection in the event of discrimination on the basis of political opinion. The situation in Nicaragua is serious. We call on the Government to follow up on the conclusions adopted by the CAS immediately. We have all just heard that an Employers' delegate from Colombia, on behalf of 11 employers, for this reason, is presenting to this Conference a complaint of non-observance under article 26 of the ILO Constitution in connection with the obligations of Nicaragua under Conventions Nos 87, 98 and 111 and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). Noting this information, we highlight the serious and urgent nature of this matter and draw it to the attention of the Members of the ILO at the Governing Body.

Turning to the General Discussion Committee on a Just Transition, the deliberations of this Committee were crucial for many reasons but, most importantly, to bring further clarity to the concept, used widely, but the scope of which was not fully understood. It was at times a difficult and complex discussion, illustrating the importance placed by all constituents on this issue. But the spirit of consensus and the expertise of all involved in finding compromises prevailed. Employers are pleased that the outcome of this discussion does not limit just transition and sustainable development to solely ecological aspects. Instead, it addresses the complexity of the issue with a balanced and coherent text that covers multiple elements and priorities. Employers commend the Committee for including the particular and unique role of the private sector in enabling a just transition. There can be no transition without the private sector and its principal role in job creation, sustainable growth and innovation, especially in the field of sustainability and transformation of economic sectors.

This Committee also highlighted the importance of balanced, coherent and proportionate policies aimed at addressing climate change that avoid the unintended and unnecessary destruction of decent work and, instead, efficiently guide towards the objective of just transition itself. The conclusions adopted are action-oriented and recognize the importance of developing the skills framework and providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the central role of Governments in enabling labour markets to adapt and respond and the importance of deeper partnership on policies with the private sector. The conclusions adopted also empower the ILO to take the lead, build constituents' capacity and provide relevant research and knowledge to support social partners, and ensure the leadership of the Organization as the only tripartite voice in multilateral and international discussions.

Lastly, the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. Labour protection is at the heart of the ILO's mandate. The recurrent discussion on labour protection at this Conference highlighted the significant progress achieved since the previous discussion on this topic in 2015, the conclusions and knowledge, the important efforts achieved by the ILO and constituents' action to build on the successes and lessons learned. The conclusions rightly reaffirm the key role played by sustainable enterprises, without which no labour protection can be achieved. This was underscored by my distinguished colleague on the Employers' benches, Mr Flemming Dreesen, this morning. The conclusions also reaffirmed the continued centrality of the employment relationship as the main gateway to labour and social protection. Lastly, the conclusions stress the importance of addressing the root causes of exclusion from labour protection, particularly informality and poor governance. These remain major obstacles to achieving inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection.

Please also allow me a few words on what happened in this room, where I have spent most of the past two weeks. In the plenary, we first heard a discussion of the report from the Director-General, followed by the World of Work Summit over the past two days, involving addresses by high-level distinguished guests and panel discussions. I will limit myself to saying

that the discussion was rich and broad and brought in many topics, all concentrating on social justice.

I would like to conclude with some remarks on the events related to the Finance Committee. As Employers, we are observers in the Finance Committee, where only Governments are members. We were saddened to witness the sharp division among Governments and the divisive votes on the programme and budget, putting at risk the very future of the ILO, the very future of this Conference and the very future of this house of tripartite social dialogue. Finally, the Governments moved towards a win-win-win approach, leading to agreement in the Finance Committee. We are of course relieved that the Conference ultimately adopted the Programme and Budget for 2024–25. Moving forward, Employers stand ready to engage in discussions that could be convened by the Office after this Conference to bring together social partners and draw lessons from this acute crisis to prevent further difficulties. Moving forward, we reaffirm that tripartite social dialogue is the cornerstone of the ILO; with dialogue comes the responsibility to listen and understand each other, and respect that different views can be expressed. Moving forward, we expect that a search for common ground and the spirit of consensus will prevail, to allow the Global Coalition for Social Justice to deliver on its promise as the flagship initiative of the ILO Director-General.

In closing, the Employers would like to express their gratitude to the President of the Conference for his leadership, to my colleagues, Vice-Presidents, Ms Corina Ajder and Mr Muhammad Zahoor Awan, for their flexibility and unwavering spirit of collaboration, and to the Chairpersons of the different Committees for their calm and steady management. We would also like to thank the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups. Credit for the success of this Conference also goes to the management and staff of the ILO, the Conference services, the interpreters and all involved in the run-up to and during the intense two-week sitting. The success of this Conference now lies in the collective dedication of all participants, each one of us, and in the responsibility of the ILO to carry the result forward. Together we need to take the groundwork we have laid here and build a future characterized by respect for social justice and a future of decent work for all.

Mr Awan

Worker Vice-President of the Conference

After about 40 years of trade union activism, it was a privilege for me to be elected Vice-President of the International Labour Conference.

We have had difficult discussions on the very bloodline of this Organization, namely its programme and budget. We are relieved that, ultimately, the budget was endorsed by a large majority, which will allow the Organization to further its mission for social justice across the world. We reiterate, nonetheless, our objection to holding political discussions in the Finance Committee. This is not the mandate of the Committee and political decisions should not be taken without the participation of the social partners.

Let me quickly turn to the positive outcomes that we have achieved together in other committees. The General Affairs Committee has taken a few important decisions. The resolution concerning the final provisions of international labour Conventions now formalizes the recognition of the Spanish language as one of the official languages of the Conference. This is fantastic news and it was long overdue.

In support of strong and constructive social dialogue in the sector, we all agreed with the abrogation and withdrawal of the maritime health and safety instruments under consideration. Indeed, seafarers today are better protected by the Maritime Labour

Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006). We call on all Member States to ratify and implement the MLC, 2006, as a matter of priority, so as not to leave seafarers unprotected. In that sense, we welcome and congratulate the Government of Madagascar for its ratification of the MLC, 2006, during the present session of the Conference.

Similarly, the elevation of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), to the status of core labour standards demands intensified effort to promote speedy and more widespread ratification. We reiterate our call for the speedy ratification of the fundamental occupational safety and health Conventions, together with the Safe and Healthy Working Environment (Consequential Amendments) Convention, 2023 (No. 191), that has been adopted at this session of the Conference as a global priority, with increased technical assistance to ILO Member States to support their efforts not only for ratification, but also for effective implementation.

We are heartened by the widespread global support and solidarity shown with our union colleagues in Belarus. The newly adopted measures within the framework of article 33 of the ILO Constitution now call for intensified efforts by all Member States to review their relations with Belarus, to pressurize the Government to stop its attack on independent trade unionists, including the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions and its leadership. After 18 years of failure to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry to examine the observance by the Government of the Republic of Belarus of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), we welcome the adoption of a comprehensive set of measures to secure compliance and encourage all Member States to give effect to the resolution by reviewing any relations that they may have with the Government of Belarus, whether they are economic, industrial, financial, political, scientific or academic, in the area of business, migration, asylum support, travel, tourism, or in any other area.

The general discussion on a just transition has allowed us to reposition the ILO centrally at the regional and national levels in the debate on climate change. Much more needs to be done to bring about long-term structural changes in different sectors of the global economy to reduce emissions while contributing to decent work, workers' rights and social justice. The conclusions give a boost to the ILO *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* (2015) with a focus on core labour rights and values at work, and on the necessity for industrial policy and planning, with due regard for planetary boundaries and climate change as a risk for mental and physical health. I completely agree with what was said by my Worker colleague, Ms Toni Moore from Barbados, on the situation. Indeed, poor and developing countries contribute the least to global warming, but disproportionately bear the brunt of the adverse and devastating impact of climate change. We need a social contract here too. This is why it is so important to engage in dialogue with affected tribal and indigenous peoples on just transition plans.

The Workers' group congratulates the colleagues in the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships who finalized the negotiation of a comprehensive Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships. The Recommendation promotes quality apprenticeship programmes that respond to the needs of apprentices, employers and governments alike, satisfying the complementary roles, responsibilities and obligations of all the actors involved. We agreed on the need for a designated, competent public authority and to ensure the effective participation of the social partners in all the phases of the apprenticeship system, from its design and development to its delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Rights at work in

relation to apprenticeships include the rights to adequate remuneration, leave and working time limits, access to adequate social protection, equal treatment and, importantly, the right to join a union and bargain collectively. We are pleased to see that there is a major commitment to ensure effective measures to prevent and eliminate the exploitation of apprentices and discrimination and violence and harassment against them, with appropriate and effective remedies.

We also welcome the conclusions of the Recurrent Discussion Committee on Labour Protection. It is good to reconfirm our commitment to standards ratification and effective implementation as the main and most effective means to ensure the improvement of inclusive, adequate and effective levels of protection for all workers. For labour protection to be effective, it is critical for employment relationships to be correctly classified and for labour inspectorates to be strengthened, including in work situations involving algorithmic management. The ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work calls for the effective protection of labour protection floors, including living wages and maximum working hours. We are specifically keen to engage in the tripartite meeting of experts on the organization and scheduling of working time in today's digital economy, as flexible work schedules, teleworking and platform working times are increasing, with burnouts and stress as consequences.

In relation to wages, we have the firm hope that, after the conclusions from last year's session of the Conference, another confirmation of this clear mandate of the ILO to take a leadership role on this issue will translate into the required action by the ILO and constituents across the world to set adequate minimum wages and develop and adopt adjustment mechanisms to keep wages in tune with gains in productivity and inflation. In the current economic context, this work is more urgent than ever.

As the Chairperson of the Committee on the Application of Standards, Mr Hashmi, mentioned, this Committee is the engine of the ILO. This unique space for frank but constructive discussion, challenging governments with specific recommendations to fully implement international labour standards at the national level, drives our common mission forward. Indeed, poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere. We welcome the conclusions of the Committee and urge the countries addressed to engage with the different missions and technical cooperation initiatives by the Office as a matter of priority, so as to be able to report on progress soon.

In response to the discussions in the plenary, we reiterate our strong support for the Global Coalition for Social Justice on the basis of the Report of the Director-General, for the mobilization of tripartism to promote social justice on the basis of international labour standards throughout global governance, for the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, to extend the reach of the Organization and the Office, for the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession and for the Equal Pay International Coalition, for revisiting trade policies and agreements on granting labour protection floors, for economic competition in global trade and supply chains, for ensuring policy coherence with international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization, with better and clearer operational tools to implement multilateral initiatives and coherence with international labour standards, for labour diplomacy and tripartism to contribute to peace settlements, disarmament and reconstruction and the negotiation of a global common security infrastructure, and, indeed, for a new social contract.

I would like to say a few words about the exploitation of workers in the occupied Arab territories. With the further expansion of settlements and with the evictions and demolitions that are major obstacles to peace and social justice, how much more can the resilience of the

Palestinian people and workers be tested? I ask this question of all of you. Many Heads of State during the World of Work Summit underscored the issue of social justice. Why? Because, since the dawn of history, thinking people have realized that no human society can endure if it allows for the exploitation of human beings by other human beings or permits the application of different sets of laws to different classes of people. If these things are allowed, then society develops in conflict, and history tells us that internal strife, rather than external aggression, is the greatest danger for any of society. A house that is divided cannot but fall.

When we look at the “haves” and “have-nots” of this world, we see that many of the ILO Member States still take more care of the haves than of the have-nots. Special economic zones and industrial zones are set up and this means higher profits for a few, with lower standards for most. Where is the conscience of those multinationals who are negating all those human values? Because those who pay their workers badly not only deprive these poor workers of their right to enjoy life, but also strike at the very basis of prosperity, because all production and distribution of wealth is made for consumption; poor pay shrinks the market and consequently production and distribution itself. It is therefore necessary to rethink this situation nationally and internationally to determine the extent to which workers in developing nations have to sacrifice basic human rights, and the rights of unionism and of collective bargaining, in order to generate economic gains that focus on attracting any foreign investment without setting as a priority the quality of life of workers.

Despite the spectacular rise in global incomes, we have to realize that one fifth of the population of this world still goes to bed hungry every night. One fourth is still subject to abject living and working conditions, even worse than those prevailing before 1 May 1886, which prompted the workers in the city of Chicago to come out to claim their workplace rights, resulting in the greatest life sacrifice.

Ms Ajder

Government Vice-President of the Conference

Most of us remember our first job, the first pay cheque, the first mistakes and the feeling of being appreciated for our efforts. My first job was in a law firm in my country, the Republic of Moldova, under the mentorship of a wonderful lawyer. I had the privilege to learn about human rights, to grow professionally and to pay my bills.

As my human rights work has shown me over time, too many people around the world have a radically different experience. Interviewing hundreds of garment and mining workers in Eastern Europe, the stories I heard were strikingly similar. Workers are trapped in informality, low wages and unsafe working conditions. They struggle to pay their bills, or sometimes to afford food for their families, despite working long hours.

As the Director-General said in his Report, 2 billion workers globally work informally, most of them in emerging and developing countries. This is one in every four workers on this planet, invisible to the State, lacking any protection and deprived of a chance of a decent future. Almost 3 million people die annually from occupational accidents and work-related diseases, often entirely preventable – the same number as COVID-related deaths globally at the peak of the pandemic. Every day people are forced out of their jobs by war, and increasingly by climate change or natural disasters. We must end this injustice, and it is in our power to do so.

Increasingly, countries face the same challenges. Some may seem internal – unemployment, informality, extreme poverty; others may seem driven by global developments – social disparities intensified by overlapping crises, climate change and the increased cost of living. Many of these issues were reflected in almost every single speech on this podium.

We also shared solutions to these problems – solutions that are both innovative and tested in time. They lie in our constant efforts to develop skills, strengthen institutions, create jobs and opportunities for young people, work for gender inclusion, promote decent work through trade agreements, and strengthen multilateral engagement.

But solutions also lie in human values that transcend mere social or economic indicators. As movingly put by the Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, “social justice ... should rest on the threefold cornerstones of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity”, in the understanding that we are all interconnected and stronger when we work together with a shared goal. Nowhere is the value of solidarity more clear than in the ILO.

Earlier this morning, in this very room, I saw for the first time a new standard being adopted; the new Recommendation concerning quality apprenticeships. I was deeply moved by what I saw. The result of years of hard work and constructive debate among social partners. It reconfirmed to me the power of the ILO, which is in dialogue, in working together, patiently, persistently, to advance social justice.

In exactly this spirit of dialogue, we managed to reach consensus and approved the programme and budget proposed by the ILO. This ensures that the ILO can continue to do its essential work to promote social justice around the world.

Genuine dialogue, rooted in sincere friendship, has the power to overcome differences in ethnicity, to transcend borders and interests, to bring down the walls of division. Genuine dialogue is by definition non-violent. If we apply this formula on a global scale, we would surely see less tragedy tearing our world apart.

I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Governing Body for calling in her report for the ILO to enhance the “resource mobilization efforts for Ukraine, including in forthcoming international donor conferences on recovery and reconstruction, and for other affected countries across the subregion of Eastern Europe and Central Asia”. This is very important.

Let me also thank the Committee on the Application of Standards for their enormous work when examining 24 individual cases related to the application of ILO Conventions. Let me actually thank all the Committees for their tremendous efforts.

We marked World Day Against Child Labour this week, as for the first time in 20 years child labour is on the rise. As the Director-General powerfully explained, child labour does not happen because parents are bad or do not care. It springs from a lack of social justice. The antidote to poverty-driven child labour is decent work for adults, so they can support their families and send their children to school, not to work.

I stand before you today as Vice-President of the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference, and yet I cannot hide my pride and gratitude for the opportunity to represent my country, the Republic of Moldova, before all of you, and to show our face and our heart to the whole world.

In fact, one key insight I got from this Conference is that of the power of small nations. Instead of feeling daunted by the global forces at work in our lives today, small countries are often drivers of innovation and change. One could also say that no country is small in the ILO. We all have an equal seat, we all have an equal vote, and we have done our best as co-chairpersons to make sure that we all have equal time on this podium.

Let me extend my deepest appreciation to all of you. Presidents, Heads of Government, Ministers of Labour, State Secretaries from the Member States, Workers’ and Employers’ representatives, Mr President, my dear co-chairpersons, Mr Director-General. Thank you for

setting aside the pressing demands of your responsibilities to join the collective pursuit of a more just and equitable future for workers around the world.

As we leave this forum encouraged with determination, we should spare no time to put it all into practice and transform our societies. Social justice will not make itself happen. In order to achieve something this great, each of us should take full responsibility.

Mr Hougbo

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

We have come to the end of an extremely productive, albeit intense, two weeks. In the face of unprecedented challenges, this 111th Session of the International Labour Conference has shown the critical importance of social dialogue and diplomacy. At times we were concerned. At times we wondered if we could get through. But with determination we searched for common ground and we found solutions, proving the strength of our unique form of tripartite governance.

I think you should be proud of what you have accomplished. Your commitment to the mandate of the ILO, your skilled negotiations, your careful diplomacy, resulted in the adoption of several documents at this session.

Obviously, all of us are thinking of the adoption of the programme and budget. The eight days of intense discussions in the Finance Committee were a little bit difficult – difficult moments in the life of our Organization. However, we have to see the glass half full. Despite those difficulties we found a solution. You, the constituents of this institution, you have overcome divisions and differences and achieved a consensus. It showed that we have the capacity to engage constructively with mutual trust, and the capacity to listen to the others.

Let me once again underline that we are committed. The ILO's commitment to work within our mandate to fight all discrimination against any person anywhere – this is our DNA, this is our *raison d'être*. I also want to emphasize that the ILO does not, and will not, impose development cooperation programmes on any country, but always discusses those programmes with the countries, and together we move to implementation. It is a collaborative process that reflects the foundation of consensus on which this Organization is built.

Moving forward, we need to hold discussions in order to find solutions regarding financial and budgetary matters so that we do not again face the same situation two years from now. This is a must and I intend to engage the Governing Body Officers and the Governing Body on this matter in its coming sessions.

In that vein of collaboration and consensus, we have also adopted a new international labour standard that Corina just powerfully referred to on quality apprenticeships. I cannot overstate the importance of this new Recommendation. Corina, I felt the same because it was my first one as Director-General, so I feel again the power of this Organization. It will give hope to the millions of young people around the world who are not in education, nor in training or employment. It will provide them with stepping stones into the labour market – from school to work. It will ensure that they have access to apprenticeships with fair working conditions and it will help enterprises to provide young people with skills development opportunities.

Member States and social partners will be able to use the provisions of this Recommendation to design policies that will tackle youth unemployment, facilitate school to work transitions and address future demands for skills through decent work, through decent apprenticeships. The adoption of this Recommendation is proof that we remain a dynamic

Organization, that we are up to the task – the task of developing new standards that address critical world of work challenges. Adoption, we all know it, is step one. Moving to implementation is our ultimate goal, and we shall, as the Office, be available and work with all of you to ensure that this Recommendation moves as quickly as possible to the stage of implementation.

Another key issue at this session has been the climate crisis, which threatens people's well-being, economic security and future opportunities. The debates that took place in the General Discussion Committee on a Just Transition were quite lengthy and I know they were a bit complicated – reflecting the magnitude and the complexity of the action that needs to be taken to build the resilience of workers and businesses to achieve just transition. But the spirit of social dialogue and consensus-building prevailed again, which has led to strong conclusions that have now been adopted by the Conference.

We know, we have to recognize it, that the world faces rising inequality, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, and growing informality. Those are facts, and we say in French “les faits sont têtus”. It also faces technological transformations – all of these are changing when and how we work. The resolution you adopted in that regard charts the way forward towards more inclusive, adequate and effective labour protection for all workers. In the spirit of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, this resolution responds to the needs and priorities of our constituents and the people they serve. It provides a solid basis from which to develop a plan of action, which will be discussed at the Governing Body, hopefully in November.

The Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) completed its work successfully by adopting conclusions on all country cases. I know that debates in the Committee are not always easy, particularly for Governments, yet these tripartite discussions remain essential for our supervisory machinery, essential for fostering effective implementation of ratified Conventions. Here yet again, permit me to underscore and insist on the importance for the Office to work with Governments to improve the situation, to work with Governments to get them to where we want them to be.

The control mechanism is our powerful tool to ensure that we respect the Conventions that we have adopted and ratified. I would like to thank the Governments that deposited instruments of ratification during this session of the Conference. If I am not mistaken, we have 13 ratifications that were deposited – 6 ratifications of fundamental Conventions, 4 ratifications of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), 1 ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), 1 of the Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), and 1 of the Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148).

This points to the commitment of ILO Member States to abide by international labour standards, and to the central role of our Organization's normative function in the multilateral system. I am also pleased that the CAS discussion of the General Survey entitled *Achieving gender equality at work* reaffirmed that eliminating discrimination and advancing gender equality at work is at the heart of the ILO's mandate to promote and realize social justice and decent work.

In this regard, I have noted that of the 3,717 titular delegates, substitutes and advisers accredited to this session of the Conference, only 36.5 per cent were women, which is more or less the same level as last year. So clearly, we have to continue to pursue our efforts to do better.

In the plenary, you spoke in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, reminding us that social justice, and peace and security, are two sides of the same coin. You reiterated your commitment to workers in the occupied Arab territories, and you called for action and intensified efforts to support them. You adopted a resolution under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on Belarus in respect of the implementation of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). This is only the second time in our over 100 years of existence that the Organization has invoked article 33, aimed at securing compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

As we continue the ILO's long journey to fulfil its mandate, we heard resounding and unequivocal support for a Global Coalition for Social Justice, both in the plenary debate of my Report and also at the World of Work Summit. Heads of State, Ministers of Labour and leaders of employers' and workers' organizations recognized the Global Coalition as an initiative that is timely and essential.

The UN Secretary-General said, if I may quote him: "I see such a Coalition as a crucial force to help advance the Sustainable Development Goals and meet the challenges of today and tomorrow".

We must now build on this momentum. The question is not whether to move ahead with a Global Coalition for Social Justice. In fact, the question is how. The details will be discussed and decided, of course, by the Governing Body in November. Your insights over these last two weeks have provided clear signposts that will guide our course of action, which will be presented to the Governing Body in November.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank the President, Mr bin Samikh Al Marri, for having led us during these past two weeks at this successful session of the Conference. Also, we thank with great appreciation Ms Corina Ajder, the Government Vice-President, and also thank you for hosting us during our mission to the Republic of Moldova. I would also like to thank the Employer Vice-President, Mr Henrik Munthe, and Mr Zahoor Awan, the Worker Vice-President.

I am sure you will join me in also thanking my colleagues in the Office who have supported our work over the past two weeks, if not more than two weeks. The ILO secretariat, the interpreters who helped us to understand each other, the technicians who connected us, those who welcomed us, those who helped us find our way, those involved in troubleshooting processes and those who helped make sure that the whole voting system went smoothly. I just want to make sure that I don't forget anyone – if I forget anyone please forgive me.

Mr bin Samikh Al Marri President of the 111th Session of the Conference

For the past two weeks I have given all delegates the floor, but nobody has given me the floor. If you will allow me, I will give myself the floor to deliver the closing remarks. I promise that it will not be a long speech.

(The speaker continues in Arabic.)

At the outset, I would like to thank those who entrusted me to guide the work of this 111th Session of the International Labour Conference. My election to preside over the works of the Conference underlines the role of Qatar and its desire to support our joint action and multilateral cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The International Labour Conference provides a unique opportunity and platform for Governments and the

social partners to conduct social dialogue and take joint action to address issues in the contemporary world of work.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of all and despite some challenges, we have been able to achieve the objectives of our ambitious agenda for this session. The work of the Conference and its various committees has produced significant outputs, the implementation of which we hope will support the efforts of the Organization and of Member States to create a better world of work.

With regard to the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships, we welcome the proposed text of the Recommendation that came out of the Committee's second discussion, which embodied the principles of social dialogue and achieved palpable results through vibrant, cooperative negotiations and the exchange of experiences. The promotion of quality apprenticeships is increasingly important, as they address the challenges of the evolving world of work by skilling, reskilling and upgrading the skills of people of all ages. This new proposed Recommendation will serve as a valuable guideline for Member States when formulating effective policies and legislation to promote quality apprenticeships and encourage them to establish a regulatory framework, protect apprentices and promote equality and diversity.

We also appreciate the work of the General Discussion Committee on a Just Transition and the outcomes of its work. Taking strategic steps to drive forward a just transition is necessary in order to achieve social justice and decent living conditions and eradicate poverty. The *ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* will serve as a point of reference for policymakers and provide a firm basis for enforceable steps. Through endorsing these Guidelines, the Conference is empowering the International Labour Organization to assume international leadership in the multilateral system and drive forward the just transition programme, which will facilitate cooperation between nations and synergies and so promote global movement towards a more equitable and sustainable future. The recurrent discussion afforded the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of worker protection and signal that it remains fundamental to the mandate of the ILO and the Decent Work Programme; it also highlighted the fundamental role of worker protection in achieving gender equality and social justice and in the elimination of inequalities, and its contribution to sustainable enterprise, productivity gains and economic development.

The Committee on the Application of Standards addressed 24 individual cases, all of which led to the subsequent adoption of consensual conclusions. The Committee also held a General Survey discussion on achieving gender equality at work. The outcome of this discussion shows that gender equality is an important objective for all ILO Members. Combating discrimination, the provision of protection for maternity and consideration for workers with family responsibilities are fundamental to the achievement of this objective.

The 111th Session adopted the Organization's Programme and Budget for 2024–25. At this juncture, I salute the spirit of cooperation and flexibility that characterized the discussions among the members of the Finance Committee and which made it possible to reach a consensus solution that reaffirms the ILO approach based on constructive dialogue.

The Conference convened the highly successful World of Work Summit on social justice for all. Participants included 16 Heads of State and Government, 22 representatives of international organizations and ministers and social partners from various regions. The Summit discussed various issues relevant to social justice, including the Director-General's proposal to create an International Coalition for Social Justice. It also addressed the question of how to improve policy cooperation and coordination to increase the scope and impact of

measures for social justice through the multilateral system. The Summit afforded a valuable opportunity to participants to share their views and priorities with regard to social justice.

We are confident that the outcomes of the Conference will contribute to the promotion of decent work and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We emphasize our commitment to supporting international multilateral cooperation in order to achieve these Goals and to continuing joint efforts to build a better future of work.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Vice-Presidents Ms Corina Ajder (Government Vice-President), Mr Henrik Munthe (Employer Vice-President) and Mr Muhammad Zahoor Awan (Worker Vice-President). I also offer deep thanks to Mr Gilbert F. Hounbo, Director-General of the ILO, for his wise management and his efforts to provide the required support to the tripartite constituents.

I would like to congratulate the heads and members of the tripartite delegations for their positive involvement and constructive spirit during the discussions, which demonstrated once again the importance of social dialogue and cooperation between the social partners in shaping the future of work on the basis of the established goals and principles of the International Labour Organization.

I also offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to the members of the Conference secretariat for their hard work and for their part in making the work of the Conference successful. In particular, I would like to thank Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova and the members of her team, Ms Dennice Peniche Ramirez, Ms Angelika Muller and Ms Irene Mbinkar-Gondo, Ms May Ontal, Mr Anthony Bioteau, Mr Houtan Homayounpour, Ms Yousra Hamed, Ms Soulayma Zayed, Ms Corinne Frassier, Mr Robert Antonietti, Mr Sylvain Delaprisson and Mr Robertino Petito, as well as Mr Frank Hagemann and Ms Mónica Varela García. I hope that I have not left anyone out.

I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Protocol team, supervised by Ms Antoinette Juvet-Mir, for their highly professional approach and the well-planned organization of visits and reception of high-level dignitaries attending the Conference.

I also wish to offer deep thanks to all of the translators and interpreters and the printing, distribution and logistical support teams and all who have contributed to the success of the Conference.

Lastly, I wish in particular to thank Mr Mahmood Al Siddiqi, Director of the Bureau of Labour Affairs at the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar in Geneva, for the continuous coordination and outstanding efforts provided during this session.

Mr Hounbo

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

I have not asked for the floor at all during these two weeks, but I have asked for it now, before the close of the session. I believe – and I think all participants will agree – that we have had a very successful session over the past two weeks and that we have fully bounced back after COVID-19.

On behalf of everyone here, I would like to present the President with this legendary gavel, by which to remember us and as a token of our appreciation.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Ms Juvet-Mir, the ILO's Chief of Protocol, who will be leaving us for new pastures.

The President

Let us be proud of the results of this session of the Conference. Once again, we have proven our ability to reach consensus on complex issues of great importance for the world of work. I now declare the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference closed.

(The 111th Session of the Conference adjourned sine die at 6 p.m.)