

Plenary Speech to the 108<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference  
Worker Advisor, Barbados

\*Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman

It is indeed an honour for me to address you at my first International Labour Conference, especially with it being the Centenary year. This has been a life changing experience for me, to see the moving parts in action and to watch what to me is an amazing power towards change. I have had the privilege of following the Committee on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work and look forward to seeing not only this Convention adopted but thereafter ratified.

As a young person, I only hope that more young people and people in the early stages of their union careers can have a similar experience. These two weeks of fast pace and intensive work not only show what true work ethic and determination are, but have also provided more teaching than any singular experience that I have been privy to. I therefore ask this Conference to openly commit its focus even more forcefully in the next 100 years, to addressing the issues and concerns of the youth.

The Barbados Workers delegation wishes to compliment the Director General for the report on the Future of Work. Workers in Barbados, and the Caribbean generally, are quite committed to the view that the future of work will properly be addressed only when the concerns regarding gender equality are met. We believe that gender equality must be expanded beyond equal pay to ensure that everyone is given the support to contribute equally in the balance between work and home responsibilities. In this regard the region will need additional ILO technical assistance for the implementation of Convention 156 on “Workers with family responsibility” and related instruments which are critical to ensuring that people can have access to equal work opportunities.

Barbados like many of its Caribbean neighbours, is committed to moving toward the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our nation has this year placed a ban on single-use plastics while at the same time we are moving fervently towards the reduction in the use of fossil fuel and the introduction of renewable energy. With this in mind it will be very important for Barbados and in fact all other

countries which are seeking to transform their economies by making these and other necessary changes, to ensure that job creation in the new areas are proportionate to and simultaneous with the job loss which will inevitably follow.

Our delegation wishes to take this occasion to remind the ILO office of the invaluable assistance which it continues to render the region in technical assistance and to remind the office that further assistance will be required in meeting the challenges of just transition.

The need for this assistance is further highlighted by the new threat in the Caribbean and elsewhere brought about by the Sargassum Seaweed. This is destroying coastal fishing and polluting most beaches in our islands. The question of how to adequately deal with this new threat to our environment and to the livelihoods of many of our working population is one that requires international consultation and assistance.

While I am here and have your ear, I will take this opportunity to remind my government and all other governments which have not yet ratified Convention 189 of the necessity to ensure that the rights of domestic workers are properly protected. We hope that with all the effort that has been put into ensuring that everyone will experience a place of work free from violence and harassment, governments will not hold the position that this will be enough to safeguard domestic workers. They need provisions which explicitly provide for measures that respect, promote and realise the fundamental principles and rights at work for them. Among other things they are entitled to and should automatically receive social security, paid annual leave, daily and weekly rest periods, maternity and hopefully soon paternity leave, normal hours of work, and the protection that is received by all other workers who are terminated without reasonable cause. Once again, I ask all those countries which have not ratified Convention 189 to do so today.

May this Centenary Conference inspire all of us to recommit to a brighter and better future, not only for domestic workers but for all workers.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you