

111th Plenary Session of ILC

Intervention of the Hon. Soodesh S. CALLICHURN

**Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development &
Training**

Minister of Commerce & Consumer Protection

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

Geneva, 07 June 2023

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to offer my warm congratulations to Mr Gilbert Hougbo for his election as the 111th Director-General of the ILO, the first African to hold such a position. Mauritius, as an African nation takes pride in this. Director-General, I would like to assure you of the full support of my country during your tenure.

Mr President,

The Government of Mauritius is fully receptive and subscribes to the call made by the Director-General for a “*Global Coalition for Social Justice*”. We support the need to re-shape economic, social and environmental policies globally in the acknowledgement that a safe and healthy environment and

decent work should be seen as a public good but not become a barrier to trade.

The Welfare State of Mauritius, **Mr President**, has been shaped by the principles of social justice since its independence in 1968. Ours is a model of society based on inclusiveness, rule of law, upholding human rights principles and striving to provide equal opportunities and basic facilities for all .

I am proud to share some concrete actions taken by the Government of Mauritius to promote social justice in the country. I start with Education which is a cornerstone for individual progress and social mobility: Mauritius provides free pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational education coupled with free transportation for all students. Free text books and exemption on examination fees are amongst other benefits that are granted.

Through a universal healthcare system, Mauritians and foreign workers alike have access to free medical services.

We also have a well-established social security system which provides basic retirement pensions to all senior citizens and social aid to vulnerable and disabled persons.

Mr President,

Mauritius established sectoral minimum wage in 1974. In 2018, thanks to the support of the ILO, Mauritius introduced the national minimum wage. Since then, it has been observed that wages in many sectors of the economy, have evolved upwards with the adjustment of wage relativity.

The minimum wage and other social measures have contributed to removing people from the poverty trap and reducing the gap between rich and poor as reflected by the steady improvement in the Gini-Coefficient, from 0.448 in 2017 to 0.408 in 2022.

In 2019, Mauritius adopted the Workers' Rights Act, a landmark legislation to further protect the rights of workers and provide additional social protection. The introduction of the Portable Retirement Gratuity fund guarantees retirement gratuity benefits for every worker irrespective of the number of employers they have had during their life.

Mr President,

Last week, under the able leadership of the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr Pravind Jugnauth, my colleague the Honorable Minister of Finance, presented the national Budget for 2023-2024. The Budget brings in its wake, a series of measures to promote social justice and improve the lives of our people.

Allow me to quote what the Hon. Prime Minister said,

QUOTE

"We have dared to do what no other Government has done. We have dared to make equity our driving principle. We have dared to create more opportunities by ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have equal access to upward mobility. Because we

care, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Because as Jimmy Carter puts it “The measure of a society is found in how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens”.

UNQUOTE

The 2023-2024 Budget presented last Friday, provides for pension boosts, improved child care support facilities and constructing more social housing for the less fortunate amongst others.

Clearly, **Mr President**, the call for Social Justice and Inclusion has been heard in Mauritius and we espouse in practice the philosophy advocated by the Director General.

Let me also add that Mauritius is the 1st country in the Indian Ocean to have ratified Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment.

Mauritius believes that it is not sufficient to adhere to Conventions but that these need to be implemented, enforced

and applied. We are challenged in this task by our limited resources but are confident that we can count on the support of the ILO to deliver on our commitments.

In this context, we thank the ILO for its assistance in respect of our National Employment Policy, the completion of a Skills Roadmap for green transition; a Labour Migration Review and the Skills Mobility Framework under the Southern Africa Migration Management (SAMM) project.

In conclusion, let me say that we look forward to a continued constructive partnership with the ILO to continue investing in our people and upscaling labour conditions in Mauritius.

Thank you.