



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION  
OFFICE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Mr. Chair,**

We gather today to reflect on the advancement of women in society, and notably since the fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995.

In those 24 years since the conference, considerable progress has been achieved on gender parity at school and on women's access to the labour market, but there is still much more to be done. Girls are still more likely than boys not to complete their basic education, and women – especially young women- are still struggling to finds decent jobs, even when they have achieved higher levels of education.

There are more women at work, but they are disproportionately found in lower skill occupations and still too rarely at the top of the corporate ladder. Globally, women's unemployment stands at 5.4% VS 4.7% for men but the real concern is that when they finally find access to jobs, women face discrimination and often endure violence and harassment.

This is not what the Beijing Platform for Action had envisioned. In Beijing, leaders had committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. They had committed to their empowerment and to the realization of their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.

The commitments of Beijing cannot be achieved with the persistence of violence and harassment at work. At its centenary conference in June 2019, the ILO adopted a new landmark Convention and accompanying resolution on eliminating Violence and Harassment in the world of work, C.190 and Recommendation 206.

Violence and harassment include a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices that “*aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm*”. This potentially covers physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and stalking, as well as domestic violence.

At last, these unacceptable behaviours will be officially recognized as human rights violation because for the first time in history, an international treaty recognizes the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. The Recommendation also sets out practical measures, including leave for victims, flexible work arrangements, and awareness raising.

The ILO constituents –Governments, Workers and Employers- have said in very clear terms that violence and harassment in the world of work must end because it is incompatible with decent work.

ILO Convention 190 means that violence and harassment at work will be prohibited and prevented thanks to relevant policies, strategies and monitoring mechanisms. It means that Member States will be able to apply sanctions, and support victims. And it means that more awareness will be raised on the issue of violence and harassment at work, helping shape modern societies where women and men can work better together, enhancing social development and accelerating productivity.

Several countries are preparing to ratify Convention 190, which will help shape a future whereby people can work in dignity and respect, free from violence and harassment. We encourage all governments in this Committee to join the call and take the necessary steps for ratification and implementation of C.190.

The ILO looks forward to working with this Committee to strengthen policies aimed at the advancement of women.

I thank you.