

Mr. President, Vice Presidents, Secretary General of the Conference, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen...

The colour orange symbolises a number of things - friendship, enthusiasm, energy and optimism, joyful... In this moment, I am experiencing many of these positive vibes as I stand here to deliver the report of the workers following our participation in the Committee on Decent Work in the SSE.

We started our work twelve days ago expressing our satisfaction that, after a Centenary of existence, the International Labour Organisation, through this Conference discussion, was reconnecting to its roots.

The mandate under Article 12 of the ILO Constitution to work with cooperators, translates today in the conclusions before us which, although just coming out of the oven, have more than a 100 years of history.

The mandate handed down by the Declaration of Philadelphia is alive in these conclusions which recognise that “all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity”.

After several days of discussions, we have been able to construct the first ILO tripartite definition of the Social and Solidarity Economy. A definition that recognises more than a hundred years of resistance to exploitation and resilience; a definition that recognises an alternative model to the dominant economic one; a definition that puts **people** and the **planet** above mere **profits**.

We have witnessed millions of workers being pushed out of the economic system, hidden in numbers, left behind, invisible, deprived of rights, dispossessed, disenfranchised. But the power of hope is stronger than that of fear. And as workers, our experience of struggle causes us to know that the only way in which hope can translate into meaningful change is when we come together - when we march together, when we stand together, and when we fight together for our rights.

In these conclusions...

We recognise the resistance of the indigenous and tribal cultures to colonialism.

We recognise the millions of workers who have united to create worker-led cooperatives during the past century.

We recognise those who, left abandoned by factory owners, took the courage to recover the factories under worker-led control.

We recognise rural workers producing with agro-ecologic techniques and using short circuit methods for their products.

We recognise the consumer cooperative, the housing cooperatives.

We recognise the applause from the hands of home-based seamstresses women who sewed for multinational enterprises

We recognise waste pickers finding a way to survive.

We recognise overall a tremendous fight for dignity...

Mr. President, we recognise that the struggle continues...

These conclusions are for us, a kind of a bridge, between the past and the future. A bridge built on the foundations of social justice and decent work. We started building that bridge 103 years ago, and that bridge has allowed us

to cross over a river of suffering and indifference and is today. ushering us toward a future of work.

This bridge is built on a foundation of solidarity and is guiding us towards equality. When will we get to the other side of this bridge?... difficult to say, Mr. President...it is difficult to say; but what is clear for us, is that we must keep marching across that bridge to overcome the river of inaction.

These conclusions give hope to the millions who work in the SSE. The conclusions also serve to give us hope by creating a picture of what the future of work could look like. Achieving social justice for all means putting people' and workers' rights, needs, aspirations above everything else - keeping people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies.

Distinguished delegates, the SSE can clearly contribute to this aim.

We made the point that many workers find in the Social and Solidarity economy a way to survive. Here I hasten to underscore the important difference between the words "survive" and "live". These conclusions provide the ILO with a mandate to support the opportunity which we have as Its Members to transform mere survival to real living with dignity and to transform the informal economy into the formal economy.

The conclusions recognise the relevance of the SSE to the present and the future - its relevance to digital transformation, how it can contribute to a worker-led transformation, and its role in providing solutions to achieve environmental justice.

Distinguished delegates, in these conclusions we see the relevance of C177, the Home Work Convention and its potential for protecting so many workers in the SSE and other enterprises who now work from home and who need to be protected.

Our Committee heard from my Minister of Labour, Social Partnership and the Third Sector on several occasions explaining what climate change means for an island like Barbados. For us putting people and the planet first is not only a phrase;; it is **an urgent** call to action to achieve environmental justice. The recognition in the conclusions that different patterns of production and consumption aiming at reducing inequalities are needed, are not just words for us. And here, when I say us, I don't mean only us in Barbados, I mean all of us on this planet.

We have learnt a lot from each other during this Conference. I have learnt a lot - I have learnt from SSE workers and other workers of the different realities confronting them. From those engaged in well established cooperatives, from those that are worried about how tax-payer public development cooperation might be used to support SSEs, from those who are struggling to be recognised as unions and to bargaining collectively, from those who have good social dialogue, from those who organise home based workers, and from so many others.

We have learnt a lot from listening to the employers' concerns over interactions between SSE entities and more traditional enterprises. At this point, let me please thank my counterparts on the employers' benches. We had the opportunity to have both formal and informal exchanges and I really feel that we heard each other and that we both recognise that notwithstanding the differences in our visions, we had some common ground and we can both see our concerns reflected in the conclusions.

We have learnt a lot during these days, from different parts of the world through the contributions of the different regions and countries. *We have gained perspectives regarding the differing national circumstances, regulations and practices:)*

We are satisfied that the conclusions provide good guidance. They recognise the importance of freedom of association and collective bargaining for all, and provide a solid annex with a normative framework that would allow for the design of strategies and policies to promote the social and solidarity economy.

The conclusions recognise that there are crucial interactions between the SSE and the public sector, and that public procurement plays a key role in the long term resilience of these organisations and that the SSE is a tool for social inclusion, especially for the many women, youth, unemployed workers, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and indigenous peoples.

But we recognise that for the SSE to thrive, we must commit through these conclusions to establishing a conducive environment, based on international labour standards and that is consistent with the nature and diversity of the SSE to promote decent work and sustainable development. A conducive environment that promotes universal social protection, lifelong learning and training, a safe and healthy working environment as a fundamental right and an end to violence and harassment.

Distinguished delegates, these conclusions provide a good framework to establish decent work in the social and solidarity economy.

As we said during the discussions, the time of “there is no alternative” is past. If we don’t see an alternative, we must build it. The work has started. I would

therefore like to call all on all of us, all Members of the ILO, to think outside the box because the SSE is an out of the box alternative.

Let me just conclude with a little bit of relatively recent history. At the beginning of the year 2000, trade unions and other social movements, including those in the social and solidarity economy, met in Porto Alegre to build the World Social Forum. I make mention of this because at that moment there was the explosion of the social and solidarity economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, people trying to survive neoliberalism and coming together into the social and solidarity economy.

The trade union movement and other social movements reacquainted under a common history and we came together under one slogan: “Another world is possible”. Today distinguished delegates, in the conclusions before this Conference for adoption, we recognise that, not only is another world possible, IT IS URGENTLY NECESSARY.

Special thanks to the Office Secretariat, Interpreters and all who supported us in making this set of concrete conclusions possible. On behalf of workers in the SSE and workers generally, I say thank you. Last but not least, a special thanks to this Conference in anticipation of their adoption.

Let's build it together.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, I thank you.