

**PROFESSOR MTHUNZI  
PERRY-MASON MDWABA (54)**  
South African



**Building an ILO that CARES and DELIVERS.**

“It is my expressed desire to contribute to building an ILO that systematically demonstrates it cares for all its staff and constituents, and works to effectively deliver on commitments to ensure the dignity of everyone engaged in the world of work.” Professor Mthunzi Perry-Mason Mdwaba

He impressed the international community during his recent tenure as the global leader of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE). He proved to be an articulate, firm and resolute negotiator as well as an effective and highly valued spokesperson for the Employers’ Group at the International Labour Organization (ILO). His profound knowledge of labour issues, his diverse skills and extensive competencies have persuaded several key people from different governments, worker and employer organisations that he is the right person to lead the ILO in today’s volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment where a new way of thinking and doing is needed to address the multiple challenges – a third way.

Mthunzi is a successful businessman, an accomplished business advocate, academic and thought leader.

“ Over my years of service at the ILO, I have become fiercely committed to addressing issues of social injustice at a global level. I firmly believe that the ILO, and multilateralism in general, have a profound role to play in ending injustices and ensuring the dignity of all people. My campaign for the ILO Director General (DG) position will focus on my commitment to renew the organisation to serve all constituencies *in a balanced way*, based on three pillars: CHANGE, SOCIAL JUSTICE and IMPACT. ”

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The election of the new DG comes after the ILO celebrated its Centenary in 2019. Recognising the drastically different context in which we live today, global social partners from the ILO's 187 Member States in July 2019 adopted the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. This historic Declaration promotes a human-centred approach to the Future of Work.

Mthunzi is fully aligned with the ambitions and objectives of the Centenary Declaration (with all Member States subsequently confirming its relevance as part of a comprehensive Covid-19 response in the most recent International Labour Conference, June 2021). He firmly believes he is the right person to lead the ILO at a time where the future is becoming more uncertain, especially as it relates to; decreasing women inclusivity, youth unemployment, inequalities, rising informality, a more complex health & safety environment at work, decent work deficits and weakened multilateralism. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these worrisome trends, with increasing mental health issues also now a major concern. As a candidate who is passionate about social dialogue and tripartism, and with the requisite set of skills, experience, knowledge and competence, he has the understanding and tripartite multi-constituency sensitivity to lead the ILO to become a global reference on future of work issues and provide international thought leadership to re-shape the world of work.

Mthunzi is applying for the soon-to-be vacant position of the ILO DG and aims to become the first person of African descent as well as from the Employers' Group to assume this crucial leadership role. His candidacy has been unanimously endorsed by the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. He also has the full support and recommendation from the South African Government Ministry of Employment and Labour. By fully endorsing Mthunzi's candidacy, the entire African continent declares unequivocally that he is a leader with the requisite credentials, integrity and aptitude to lead the ILO over the next five years.

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Vision



I am committed to the ILO's ideals of Decent Work and strengthening tripartism.

The 1964 Philadelphia Declaration, widely endorsed by ILO governing constituents, calls on Member States to continuously strive for the achievement of full employment and rights at work. Social dialogue and tripartism are central to achieving these ambitious goals as well as ensuring social justice and ultimately, equality for all. Working closely with social partners, the organisation advocates for social justice and effective implementation of internationally recognised human and labour rights to bring about universal and lasting peace.

*"I have been privileged in my various capacities within the ILO to fully appreciate the work required to achieve fairness and social justice in the world of work. I played an active role in the Global Commission on the Future of Work, which undertook an in-depth examination of the future of work to provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st century",* says Mthunzi.

The Global Commission report served as a basis for the ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work with Mthunzi co-leading the process as one of the social partner global leaders.



I am committed to social justice and tripartism.

*"I am a global public servant and an African leader who will do whatever is necessary to bring about constructive and sustainable global change, global social justice and global impact. I strongly believe that the ILO has a special place and role to play in a fair societal restructuring and recalibration, to build towards a better world. I will work tirelessly to place tripartism at the heart of this effort".* Mthunzi repeatedly refers to his favourite symbol for tripartism - **a three-legged pot**. Many societies use this pot to cook traditional and ancestral feasts over big fires. The heavy pot is **balanced on three firm and equal legs**, allowing the **important food** to cook slowly. Cooking in this manner requires the utmost patience, just like **social dialogue**. The candidate will use his unique principles of servant leadership to ensure the three legs are equally heard and counted.



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Under his leadership, he believes that the ILO will benefit both employers and workers across the globe through increased trust, as he works transparently and demonstrates that his decisions are based on the clear mandate received from the governors in the Governing Body. He has done so repeatedly in his previous group leadership positions that required a strong mandate.

*Mthunzi's opinion is: "I interpret governance to mean transparency, predictability and certainty. Furthermore, I believe that in its next journey through uncharted waters, the ILO will benefit from having a leader who encompasses the capacity to be sensitive to differences and diversity, as well as one who understands that crossover appeal is important to heal some and allay fears for those who are not ready to go at the same speed as others."*

Mthunzi has actively participated in various collaborative tripartite initiatives within the ILO and beyond. As confirmation of how deeply entrenched he is in social dialogue and tripartism, he has regularly contributed as a guest author to The Shopsteward magazine. This magazine is the official quarterly publication of the Congress of South African Trade Unions' (Cosatu), and is distributed to all of its 1.2 million members, stakeholders and other partners. He addressed various domestic trade union forums on the future of work initiative; participated in several other worker consultative forums including the Belgian Centenary Celebration conversations co-organised in Brussels by the worker leader and former chair of the Governing Body, Luc Cortebeek.

On behalf of the IOE, he led a collaboration with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), in calling for the UN, IMF, World Bank and other regional institutions to provide financial support on preferential softer terms than normal for countries affected by the pandemic, particularly the developing world. He also made interventions in his work with the IOE to stakeholder governments to assist workers and employers financially in those countries most affected by the cancellation of retail orders at the beginning of the Covid crisis in April 2020.

Furthermore, through his active expertise, dedicated work ethic and principled interventions on the organisation's development, Mthunzi has, amongst others, led the employers' deliberations at the 2019 Centenary celebrations that adopted the Centenary Declaration providing the ILO with the roadmap for the Future of Work. He contributed to discussions and the adoption of the historic ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the world of work and its Recommendation 206; actively participated on the ground in changes in various parts of the world following complaints to the ILO and its supervisory system, notably, the most successful change and potential impact being Qatar.

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Under Mthunzi's leadership, the tripartite collaboration resulted in the establishment of a process that contributed to the review of the ILO supervisory system to ensure an updated and relevant body of standards, the introduction of diversity into the ILO HR system to, *inter alia*, include and ensure fair and equitable regional representation. He also initiated, argued for and contributed to discussions on the governance and transparency in the process for the equitable selection of judges for the Committee of Experts. His efforts also covered the recruitment of judges for the Administrative Tribunal to ensure the same fairness, especially as it relates to diversity and regional representation. He delivered on these issues despite considerable opposition, proving his extraordinary capacity to unflinchingly represent his constituency through extremely difficult organisational negotiations.



I am committed to building the International Labour Organization.

The ILO has an extraordinary opportunity in this current climate to pursue and promote social dialogue as a way to address longstanding social and economic challenges; leveraging its unique mandate, robust engagement and exceptional leadership.

If elected, the ILO will be an administration in which all the constituents, including the governments of developing countries, feel they can identify with, an organisation that leads social change throughout the world, with ambitious and innovative approaches in the fight against informality, the defence of the Principles of Fundamental Labour Rights, and effective implementation of International Labour Standards. It will reflect the ongoing change in what constitutes the world of work and meaning of work as the pandemic continues to fundamentally alter how we work.", explains Mthunzi.

He will work towards repositioning the ILO as an organisation that demonstrably cares for its staff and constituents; an ILO that is committed to being efficient, fully engaged, fit-for-purpose and ready to go the extra mile to deliver on its primary mandate of social justice.

Under his leadership, he intends to build an inclusive organisation that equally recognises all voices, including the voice of the developing world. He will strengthen the institution's capacity to redefine the world of work to ensure sustainable global impact. Mthunzi's experience as the leader for all global employers within the UN human rights and responsible conduct international debates over the past six years, adds to his depth of expertise and experience going beyond the ILO.



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To ensure a truly humane, inclusive, consultative, fair and equitable globalisation that provides equal access to opportunities, Mthunzi says:

“ I promise to:

a) strive to strengthen the governance of the ILO, as an updated, robust and realistic body of international labour standards, which promotes the sustainability of enterprises and are aligned to the current situation as well as anticipating emerging or new employment realities previously unknown. I will work towards ensuring that these forms of work are inclusive and respect the principles of social justice, most importantly the dignity of all. Some are referring to this as a **“third way”**.

I will therefore align with this in looking for a new way of restructuring the world of work via social dialogue.

b) acknowledge the fact that the ILOs’ focus is the world of work and it must nevertheless be seen to be in touch and influence, issues of trade, gender, race, development, business human rights conduct, etc.

c) contribute towards building an ILO that cares and delivers for all.

