



## Plenary sitting

### Opening of the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference

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Monday, 28 May 2018, 11.10 a.m.

*Presidents: Mr Cortebeek, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Mr Murad*

## **Opening of the session**

### **Mr Cortebeek**

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

It is my honour as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office for 2017–18 to declare open this 107th Session of the International Labour Conference.

May I take this opportunity to extend to all of you a warm welcome to Geneva and to our Conference. I am confident that this year's session will live up to the expectations and trust that have been placed in it.

## **Election of the President of the Conference**

### **Mr Cortebeek**

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

Without further ado, let us move to the first item on our agenda of this morning, under which the Conference is called on to elect its President.

I give the floor to Ms Paik, the Government representative of the Republic of Korea and current Chairperson of the Government group, to put forward the nomination.

### **Ms Paik**

Government (Republic of Korea), speaking on behalf of the Government group

On behalf of the Government group and as its Chairperson, it is my honour to put forward the candidature of Mr Samir Murad, Minister of Labour of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as President of the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference. Mr Murad's candidature was unanimously endorsed by the Government group.

As Minister of Labour, Mr Murad is also Chair of the Jordanian Social Security Corporation, the Vocational Training Corporation, and the Employment, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Fund. Prior to his most recent appointment as Minister, he served as member of the Jordanian Senate between 2016 and 2018 and also as Minister of Labour from 2010 to 2011.

Mr Murad has chaired and been a board member of countless companies and organizations, including the Jordanian branch of Education for Employment, the National Company for Employment and Training, and the Jordanian Social Security Investment Fund. He is also a member of the National Committee for Human Resources Development. He has served on the boards of various profit and non-profit organizations, such as INJAZ, which helps to prepare young Jordanians to become productive members of society and to succeed

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in a global economy, and is a co-founder of the Arab Foundation for Sustainable Development. Throughout his career, Mr Murad has worked tirelessly to promote youth development, education, employability and responsible citizenship.

For these reasons, the Government group believes that Mr Murad of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has all the skills and experience necessary to successfully lead this 107th Session of the International Labour Conference and is honoured to nominate him as President.

*(The proposal is supported by the Employers' and the Workers' groups.)*

**Mr Cortebeeck**  
Chairperson of the Governing Body of the  
International Labour Office

The nomination put forward with the unanimous support of the Government group, by Ms Paik, has met with the agreement of the Employers' and Workers' groups.

Are there any other proposals?

In the absence of other proposals, I therefore have great pleasure in declaring Mr Samir Murad, Minister of Labour of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, President of the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference.

I offer him my warmest congratulations, and invite him to come up to the podium to take the Chair.

*(Mr Murad, Minister of Labour of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, is elected President of the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference and takes the President's chair.)*

## **Presidential address**

**The President**  
*(Original Arabic)*

First of all, I would like to thank the governments of the countries of the Asia and the Pacific region, which submitted Jordan's candidature for the presidency of this 107th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would also like to thank the Government group for placing its trust in me. I am also thankful to the Employers' and Workers' groups for having supported my candidature. Jordan appreciates that trust, which crowns the excellent cooperation it has enjoyed with the whole world for the past 50 years.

It is a great honour for me to preside over this Conference and a singular honour for the country that I represent, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and its monarch, His Majesty King Abdullah II.

This 107th Session is not one like the others, as the ILO soon approaches its second century of existence. This provides us with an excellent opportunity to congratulate ourselves and all the Organization's Members, as well as its leaders, on this long journey in the service of the principles that the ILO espouses. We hope that the Organization will manage to realize its objectives of peace, social justice, gender equality and social protection, and that it will also be able to put in place a decent environment for all workers, regardless of their nationality, and ensure a transition from an informal to a formal economy.

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We have before us the Report of the Director-General, *The Women at Work initiative: The push for equality*. It is a report that calls for the elimination of obstacles to equality and presents strategies for achieving that objective. It proposes new and innovative approaches for establishing real gender equality at work. In this report, my attention was drawn particularly to what the Director-General defines as a challenge, namely how to resolve the time–money–agency conundrum, the three constants that women around the world face and which have repercussions on their participation in the labour market.

We expect much from social dialogue between the tripartite constituents and from the negotiations and discussions among participants that will take place on the fringes of activities. We have no doubt that the Governments, Employers and Workers will present us with the new ideas needed to boost the ILO's efforts to promote gender equality on the eve of its centenary. When women's status improves, the world is a better place. That is why 193 States made the principle of gender equality a key component of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) entail targets for achieving male–female equality. In particular, SDG 5 clearly states: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". It is high time to take the necessary action to achieve that goal.

Cultural traditions and economic circumstances cannot justify discrimination or any other violation of basic human rights. Rich and poor countries alike must harness their social and economic potential to achieve the objective of gender equality. We need to implement ambitious policies that can remedy the disparities between men and women and bring about the necessary changes in social and professional relationships.

It is clear from the Appendix to the Report of the Director-General, *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*, that the situation has deteriorated for the workers of these territories. I would like to thank the Director-General for his visit last April to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. He went to see for himself what is happening. I agree with his remarks, in the preface of the Appendix to the Report, that "only dialogue and a joint search for solutions will effectively bring about decent work to the occupied Arab territories. The ILO and the international community as a whole have to remain fully engaged in this effort and faithful to their commitments."

Our Organization is nearly 100 years old. It was created to achieve social justice and to contribute to the establishment of peace. It is also endowed with unique features that it is vital to protect and strengthen. I am referring, of course, to the tripartism and standards activities that form the backbone of the ILO. That is the crucial challenge for our Organization and for its constitutional commitments.

I have no doubt that the tripartite constituents will continue their efforts in the coming months and years. The general discussion on effective development cooperation in support of the SDGs, which is on our agenda, will doubtless be an opportunity to exchange opinions and advice concerning the new medium-term development cooperation strategy that the ILO will apply from 2018, and to sketch out a future ILO vision for development cooperation, which is integral to the future of work.

We must fight violence and harassment. That is among the fundamental objectives of this Organization, as clearly stated in the Declaration of Philadelphia. During this session of the Conference, we shall focus on tackling the subject of violence and harassment at work against both women and men, with a view to establishing the standards needed to put an end to such abuse.

Despite the great efforts that have been made, there are still unacceptable forms of conduct and behaviour that persist, which requires us to put an end to acts that cause harm or physical, mental or sexual suffering for millions of workers and employers.

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I would like to emphasize the importance of the benefits that we, the ILO constituents, are reaping following the reforms made to the ILO's administration, procedures and working methods. Improvements have clearly been made to the work of the Governing Body. In particular, the Governing Body enjoys better governance and greater levels of participation and commitment by all its members. I would also like to mention the reforms that have taken place to the work of the Conference over the past four years, and even at this session. We now have shorter Conference sessions and costs have gone down, while the quality of debates of this international parliament for labour matters is still excellent and has not been affected. I am aware that this reduced duration places pressure on us all, but I am convinced that, thanks to the past and present cooperation of all delegates, we shall carry out our task efficiently.

Despite the increasing demands made on the ILO – which remains on a zero-growth budget – we note a qualitative and quantitative increase in the services it provides to constituents, thanks to an internal reform process which has enabled the transfer of resources from administrative and support functions to direct service provision where there is pressing need.

We are on the eve of the ILO's second century of existence and, thanks to the clear-sighted leadership of our Director-General, Guy Ryder, we aim to continue building on our achievements towards a better future. We have to be proud of what has been accomplished in governance and leadership.

In conclusion, I would like to renew my thanks to the tripartite constituents for the trust they placed in me in electing me to lead this Conference. It is an honour both for myself and for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. I will spare no effort and work unstintingly to remain worthy of your trust. We have a full agenda, and I am sure that, with the support provided by the Vice-Presidents and with your assistance, we shall be able to carry out the work of this session, both in plenary and in the committees.

Thank you very much for your attention.

## **Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference**

### **The President**

Our first task is the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference. The Clerk of the Conference, Ms Dimitrova, will read out the names of the candidates proposed by the various groups.

### **Ms Dimitrova**

The Clerk of the Conference

The nominations for the three positions of Vice-President of the Conference are as follows: for the Government group, Mr Elmiger (Switzerland); for the Employers' group, Mr Mattar (United Arab Emirates); and for the Workers' group, Ms Gono (Japan).

### **The President**

If there are no objections, may I take it that these proposals are approved?

*(The proposals are approved.)*

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## Nomination of the Officers of the groups

### The President

We now move to the nominations of the Officers of the Government, Employers' and Workers' groups. The groups are, of course, autonomous in their choices and the names of those concerned are displayed on the screen, as indicated below:

#### Government group

Chairperson Ms Paik (Republic of Korea)

Vice-Chairperson Mr Sadiqov (Azerbaijan)

#### Employers' group

Chairperson Mr Mdwaba (South Africa)

Vice-Chairpersons Ms Rigg Herzog (United States)

Mr Megateli (Algeria)

Mr Matsui (Japan)

Mr Echavarría Saldarriaga (Colombia)

Ms Hornung-Draus (Germany)

Secretary Mr Suárez Santos (International Organisation of Employers)

#### Workers' group

Chairperson Ms Passchier (Netherlands)

Vice-Chairpersons Mr Wabba (Nigeria)

Mr Shmakov (Russian Federation)

Mr Awan (Pakistan)

Ms Moore (Barbados)

Secretary Ms González (International Trade Union Confederation)

## Constitution and composition of the Conference committees

### The President

The next agenda item concerns the constitution and composition of the standing committees and committees to consider items on the agenda of the Conference. The Conference may wish to establish the following committees: the Finance Committee; the Selection Committee; the Credentials Committee; the Committee on the Application of Standards; the Standard Setting Committee: violence and harassment in the world of work; the General Discussion Committee: effective ILO development cooperation; and the Recurrent Discussion Committee: social dialogue and tripartism.

The composition of the Committees, as proposed by the groups, was communicated to participants on the Conference website as *Provisional Record* No. 2.

The Finance Committee of Government Representatives is composed, as its name suggests, of all Government delegates to the Conference. There is no need to register for this Committee.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference approves these proposals?

*(The proposals are approved.)*

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## **Suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference and other proposed decisions regarding formalities**

### **The President**

The next agenda item concerns the suspension of certain provisions of the Standing Orders of the Conference and other proposed decisions regarding formalities.

The purpose of their suspension is to implement at this session, pending amendment of the Standing Orders of the Conference, the various changes in the format of the Conference that are proposed in order to improve its functioning and, in particular, to accommodate its shortened length. Some of the suspensions relate to the work in plenary and others to the work in the committees.

Moreover, at its 332nd Session (March 2018), the Governing Body discussed proposals to approve, at the opening sitting of the Conference, all of the formalities necessary to set the Conference in motion, including some of the formalities dealt with in the past by the Selection Committee. These formalities include setting the closing date for the registration of speakers in plenary, approving the tentative plan of work for the Conference, adopting a number of suggestions to facilitate the work of the Conference and its committees, and authorizing the invitation of international non-governmental organizations to participate in committees.

These proposals are set forth in *Provisional Record* No. 1A, which has been published on the Web and is also available at the distribution desk.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference wishes to suspend the various provisions of its Standing Orders for the purposes set out in *Provisional Record* No. 1A?

If there are no objections, may I also take it that the Conference endorses the procedural formalities set out in the second part of *Provisional Record* No. 1A?

*(The proposals are approved.)*

## **Delegation of authority to the Officers of the Conference**

### **The President**

We shall now take up the question of the delegation of authority to the Officers of the Conference. As per the agenda, the Conference will not meet again in plenary until Thursday, 31 May. I therefore propose that the daily organizational tasks of the Conference during the intervening period be carried out by its Officers.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the delegation of authority is acceptable to the Conference?

*(The delegation of authority is accepted.)*



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## Presentation of the Report of the Director-General

### The President

We have now completed the necessary administrative and procedural tasks and can turn to questions of substance.

It is therefore my honour to call on the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr Ryder, to present his vision of the work to be accomplished at this session of the Conference together with his Report entitled *The Women at Work initiative: The push for equality*, and its Appendix on *The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories*. The Director-General will also present his report entitled *ILO programme implementation 2016–17*.

### Mr Ryder

#### Secretary-General of the Conference

Let me begin by welcoming you all. This is a Conference with a great deal of work ahead of it, and it is encouraging indeed that one very good decision has already been made with the election of Mr Murad to lead us. It is not the first time that Jordan has given us our Conference President and so we know that we are in the very best of hands.

We meet just months away from the ILO's Centenary, and in circumstances that remain challenging for many in the world of work. There have been encouraging improvements in growth and employment for some of our member States, but still not enough to put us on a trajectory to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including decent work for all.

Nor are we having a serious impact on the inequalities – of income, of opportunity and of life quality – that continue to scar our societies, to make them unstable as well as unfair, and to complicate as well the relationship between countries. And the fact that these inequalities have their roots above all in what takes place in labour markets should, I think, remind everybody here of our collective responsibilities.

Two tendencies, related to these circumstances of heightened tension in the world, both of them worrying, merit the attention of this Conference, not least because they bear directly on issues which are on our agenda and which have a permanent impact on the life of our Organization.

Firstly, and very simply, it is becoming harder for us to talk to each other; harder to listen to each other; and harder to weigh the merits of the views of the other against one's own and in so doing reach for compromise and agreement. Now, I think that this is true in many areas, but most particularly – and pertinently for us – in that of the world of work. Certainly we have felt this at the ILO.

I have made it a point in my interventions from this platform in recent years to urge all delegates to adopt a spirit of tripartism, compromise and consensus, and I do so with particular insistence this time because it is a precondition for the success of this Conference and of the ILO. It means of course defending diverging positions and interests, but as partners not as adversaries: partnership made possible by the shared values and objectives of a whole century.

I say this with a feeling of some foreboding that there is a new climate abroad in the world. A new brutalism. It is to be found in the appalling suffering inflicted in so many

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conflicts in the world. It is to be found in the collective failure of too many to come to the aid of those most in need – those millions who are on the move, for example. It is to be found in the flouting of human rights standards with impunity, and in the questioning of some basic tenets of democratic life. I believe that our Organization and our Conference must be a bulwark against such contagion, through our own conduct and through the results that we achieve together.

It is therefore appropriate that social dialogue is the theme of the recurrent discussion on this year's agenda. Some might think that the ILO has already said just about everything that it is possible to say about social dialogue, but I do not take that view because, for the reasons explained, we need to do more and we need to do better to identify the obstacles that we are encountering and the implications of the multiple transformations in the world of work for the future of tripartism. We need to make the links between social dialogue and all other ILO strategic objectives, and most particularly the interaction between dialogue and collective bargaining, recognizing that it can make no sense to embrace one while turning away from the other.

The second tendency that I observe is the growing challenge to international cooperation through multilateralism. Objections to multilateralism seem to have become a theme tune in the background music of our time: that multilateralism is ineffective and cannot deliver; that it is an unwarranted infringement of national sovereignty; and that it is the instrument wielded by a cosmopolitan elite, and for its benefit alone.

The necessary response to this is the demonstration of a functioning and productive international system, one which engages all, and one which leaves nobody behind. And that is precisely the course being charted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the process of the UN reform, to which the ILO is contributing with energy and with conviction. We were pleased to have the opportunity to welcome the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms Amina Mohammed, to the Governing Body session in March and to exchange ideas with her on what the ILO can bring to the reform, and what reform can bring for the ILO. We know that the General Assembly will very soon adopt a resolution on reform of the UN development system, and it is all of this that provides the backdrop to our Conference debate on effective development cooperation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While this is a subject to which the Conference returns periodically, the situation today – of a multilateral system undergoing both pressure and change, now three years into the task of delivering the 2030 Agenda – I think places the stakes of this year's discussion particularly high.

The ILO has major responsibilities in delivering on the 2030 Agenda as a whole and also for the 14 SDG indicators for which it has been designated custodian. Meeting those responsibilities necessarily includes coming together in the definition of all of those indicators.

The occasions when the Conference embarks on the process of negotiating entirely new labour standards, particularly in the form of a possible Convention and Recommendation, have become increasingly infrequent in recent years. This, and the pressing importance of the subject itself – violence and harassment at work – combine to underline the undoubted significance of the task that we now begin and will hopefully complete at next year's centenary session of the Conference. The Governing Body decided on this agenda item in 2015 and it could not then have anticipated the upsurge of public revulsion in recent months through the #MeToo campaign, and much else, at well-publicized and high-profile cases of sexual harassment and abuse, by which, lamentably, the international system has not been left untouched. And so, we are confronted today with evidence of a submerged iceberg of misconduct, which disfigures and contaminates the world of work and renders it all too frequently a particularly hostile and intimidating environment for women.

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It is tempting to conclude that this year's negotiations and those of next year are timely, but the truth is that they are long overdue. We cannot change that, but we can all join in making sure that we produce results that really make a difference and open the way to guarantees of workplaces entirely free of violence and harassment – and that means, by the way, that the scope of our work must encompass all forms of violence and harassment. Simply put, our answer to the ever more vocal call for this action has to be #UsToo.

And it goes without saying that here at the Conference we will and must conduct our own work with the highest levels of ethical standards and respect for all. The ILO itself is acting vigorously to ensure that “Zero tolerance” of harassment in our own Organization is not merely a slogan but a reality backed up by rights and effective mechanisms of protection.

With this in mind, I have also felt it right to devote my own Report to the Conference, which will be discussed here in plenary, to what I have termed the new push for gender equality. This forms a part of our Women at Work initiative and shares its basic premise. That premise is that, while the ILO has a considerable record of commitment and achievement in the cause of gender equality, the fact remains that we remain far from the goals that we have set ourselves and that progress towards those goals remains slow, uneven and uncertain.

So it seems that just carrying on doing the same things, or even doing a bit more of them is unlikely to overcome the sometimes hidden structural obstacles that need to be cleared from the path of equality. My Report suggests some avenues of innovative action which could help to do that and I encourage you as well, our tripartite constituents, to define and to join in a new push for equality on the occasion of the ILO Centenary.

Let me recall that an Appendix to my Report is – as has been the practice for nearly 40 years now – dedicated to the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. Like everybody in this hall, let me say that I look forward to the day when this Report will no longer be considered necessary. But, pending that and in line with past practice, I have fielded a mission to the territories to prepare the Report and I myself visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel last month.

Once more, there is little positive to report on the labour situation, and much cause for concern about humanitarian suffering, and the loss of life in Gaza in particular. But my visit confirmed my long-held conviction that there is much that the ILO can do – within its mandate and with the cooperation of the parties directly concerned – to bring real improvement in the harsh realities that working people continue to face in the territories. I want to urge you all to support us in those efforts.

Let me conclude my remarks on the Conference agenda with a reference to the Committee on the Application of Standards, that essential and permanent vertebral column of each and every Conference session and of the ILO's entire supervisory system. Let me say that it has been encouraging that this key Committee has been able to complete its work successfully at the last three Conference sessions, following the serious difficulties encountered in preceding years, despite still unresolved divergences of opinion on matters of fundamental significance, and because of the important efforts made by the different groups to find common ground.

It has however, been one of the frustrations, a shared frustration I believe, of the Governing Body's work over the past year that it has not been possible to advance substantively, and certainly not as we would have liked, the part of the Standards Initiative that addresses the reform of the supervisory system, even when real progress has been made in respect of the Standards Review Mechanism.

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Nevertheless, I am confident that we will be able to move forward in the Governing Body in the coming year so that we get to the centenary session of the Conference with significant results to show. This is within reach. Of course, another productive session of the Committee on the Application of Standards this year will certainly do a lot to set us on that road.

In this context, let me underline the particular importance of the General Survey concerning working-time instruments that the Experts have presented to the Committee – not least in the context of the future of work. This was the very first subject of ILO standards setting and it has lost none of its significance and relevance over the last 100 years.

Our Conference will be honoured by the participation of Nobel Laureate, President Santos of Colombia, who will address us here on Friday, 1 June, and also by the participation of President Touadéra of the Central African Republic, President Higgins of Ireland and Prime Minister al-Abadi of the Republic of Iraq, who will be with us on Thursday, 7 June for the World of Work Summit, the theme of which this year is employment and decent work for peace and resilience. On that same day, we will mark the 20th anniversary of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and I think you would agree with me that this will provide a fitting climax as our Conference session draws close to its end.

Every Conference session is important. The agenda I have outlined to you this morning means, certainly, that this year's is no exception. Without detracting in any way at all from its significance, I need, nevertheless, to close by reminding you that next year we have a collective rendezvous with history at the centenary session of the Conference, a veritable landmark, not only for the ILO, but in the history of the system of international cooperation, of which this Conference is the founding stone.

As delegates will certainly be aware, seven centenary initiatives have been launched to mark this historic moment, and central among them is the Future of Work initiative, which will culminate at next year's centenary session of the Conference.

In preparation for that, our Global Commission on the Future of Work, co-chaired now by President Ramaphosa of South Africa and Prime Minister Löfven of Sweden, will publish a report at the beginning of next year which will be transmitted to the centenary session of the Conference, where deliberation will be critically important for the future direction of this – our – Organization. Because the future of work means also the future of the ILO.

That is for the future. Returning to the present, let me wish this session, all of you here, all members of this unique world parliament of labour, success in your work over the next two weeks.

## **The President**

Thank you very much, Director-General, for giving us a clear overview of the work before us and for the presentation of your Report. The three groups will be guided over the next two weeks by the highly pertinent and timely perspective that you have put forward.

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## **Presentation of the report of the Chairperson of the Governing Body**

### **The President**

It is now my honour to call on the Chairperson of the Governing Body for 2017–18, Mr Cortebeek, to present his report on the activities of the Governing Body for the period of his tenure. Mr Cortebeek's report is presented as Report I(C).

### **Mr Cortebeek**

Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office

Let me begin by saying that it has been a great honour and privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office for this last year. It is now my pleasure to present to you my report on the work of this august body over that 12-month period. The report that I have produced can be found under the reference Conference Report I(C).

As you know, together with the Report of the Director-General, this report is one of the subjects for discussion by the plenary of this session. The report speaks for itself in so far as it contains a very detailed account of the subjects examined by the Governing Body at the three sessions concerned: the short 330th Session, held last June, and the two substantial sessions, the 331st, held in October–November 2017, and the 332nd, held in March 2018.

I will therefore not repeat the contents of the report but will limit myself to a few additional comments that will, I hope, give a flavour of the matters that were considered and how the work was conducted. And here, as I cannot do so in the report, I would like to pay tribute to the three groups of the Governing Body for the commitment they showed to the tasks before them. A number of the subjects that were examined this past year proved to be both interesting and challenging. This, in my view, was due to three factors: the nature of the subjects at hand, the new composition of the Governing Body following the elections last June, and the evolving dynamics between and within the groups.

Some of you will also recall that back in June 2017, the Governing Body was called upon to take a decision on the holding of the Tenth European Regional Meeting. This came as a result of the Workers' group's request to postpone the Regional Meeting or change its venue. More recently, in March 2018, the 332nd Session of the Governing Body was brought to an abrupt end after the ILO Staff Union Committee called for strike action on the last day of the session. This was a consequence of the decision regarding the take-home pay reduction for Geneva-based ILO staff, resulting from a decision taken by the International Civil Service Commission. The strike action meant that a number of complex discussions were left unfinished.

The issue of promoting decent work in the tobacco sector is an excellent case in point. This is a particularly sensitive subject because, while presenting well-acknowledged public health implications, it also raises concerns about the protection of workers in this sector, including the eradication of child labour, and the role of the ILO. I am confident that the Governing Body is close to reaching a consensus on this agenda item which, it is my hope, will be satisfactory to all three groups.

Some might interpret these types of challenges as a hindrance to the proper functioning of the Governing Body, but I prefer to see them as testimony to the proper functioning of social dialogue, which sometimes includes industrial action, including within the confines of our Organization.

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Despite this feeling of “unfinished business” at the end of our last session, the Governing Body has had a number of remarkable achievements this past year, of which it can and should be proud. In its governance role, the Governing Body made significant progress in setting the agenda of next year’s centenary session of the Conference, which will be a historic event for the Organization and the people it serves. At its centenary session, the Conference can look forward to receiving the report of the Global Commission on the Future of Work. The Global Commission marks the second stage in the ILO’s Future of Work initiative and its report will provide a foundation for the tripartite constituents to shape the future of work and decide on the future focus of the ILO. The Commission has been extremely productive and I would like to invite you all to attend the information session regarding its work, which will be held on Wednesday, 30 May, from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. in room XVI, here at the Palais des Nations.

The Governing Body also continued its review and ongoing improvement of the functioning of the International Labour Conference in its two-week format and made progress with its review of the Regional Meetings. The Governing Body has accordingly submitted the consolidated version of the Rules for Regional Meetings, which it adopted in March, to the Conference for confirmation. Likewise, we hope that the next session of the Governing Body will be able to come to a decision on the review and format of expert and technical meetings.

Another achievement has been the slow but steady progress in consensus-building with regard to the strengthening of the supervisory system, one of the cornerstones of this Organization. The Governing Body is very close to reaching much-needed agreement on this item, which will prove essential to the proper functioning of the Organization’s supervisory system as it enters its second century of existence.

While on the subject of the supervisory system, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the developments surrounding the complaints made under article 26 of the ILO Constitution and the representations made under article 24 that were on our agenda over the past year. The Governing Body tackled these issues with the explicit aim of securing the sustainable and long-lasting application of the ratified Conventions concerned. In doing so, it has proven that, as observed by Director-General Ryder, through a combination of principle and perseverance in the treatment of such complaints, significant results can be obtained. Here, I am referring to the case of Qatar, which the Governing Body decided to close last November. This particular case serves to highlight the strength of the process, starting with the Governing Body’s decision, in 2015, that a tripartite high-level mission to the country should take place. This was followed by lengthy negotiations with a view to securing full respect for one of the Organization’s fundamental principles, the elimination of forced labour, and the relevant Conventions. Today, we have a comprehensive ILO technical cooperation programme in place in Qatar and an ILO presence aimed at improving the employment and working conditions of migrant workers in the country with the collaboration of the Government and representatives of these vulnerable workers.

In other instances, as was the case with Guatemala and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Governing Body had to make use of all the procedures at its disposal, entirely in consonance with the mandate of our Organization, in the hope that positive change would be brought about in the near future. The Governing Body will need to continue to address these cases objectively and dispassionately at its upcoming sessions.

You can see from the use of such procedures that the Governing Body has fully played its role in the supervisory system as well. Still on the Governing Body’s role in the ILO’s supervisory system, I would like to pay tribute to the work of its Committee on Freedom of Association and, in particular, welcome the update of the Digest of its decisions and the production of its first annual report.

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Although perhaps less visible, I would also like to mention two other aspects of the work of the ILO that are a testimony to our collective effort to ensure the relevance and adaptation of our body of international standards. Here, I am thinking in particular of the outcome of the work of the Standards Review Mechanism and of the Special Tripartite Committee under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, which we have at this session of the Conference in the form of a number of proposals to derogate from and withdraw obsolete international labour instruments, and of draft amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention.

Likewise, the Governing Body has served its role in positioning the Organization in the multilateral system and working towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Last March, its voice was heard loud and clear in the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms Amina Mohammed, during the High-Level Session on the Reform of the United Nations. At that session, the ILO constituents conveyed a clear message to the Deputy Secretary-General on how the UN reform process could best take into account the specific tripartite and standard-setting nature of the ILO and its activities. Through these many steps, the ILO has clearly established itself as a relevant actor in the 2030 Agenda and in the UN system. The Organization's goal is to actively participate in driving the success of the ongoing UN reform while maintaining sufficient independence for its tripartite nature, supervisory mechanisms and standard-setting activities – which we hold so dear – to continue to speak with a loud and clear voice on issues we consider critical.

My report shows that the Governing Body has tackled complex and difficult issues and that it has done so with great zest. For this, I am grateful to my fellow Officers, Mr de la Puente Ribeyro and Mr Mdwaba. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Ms Passchier for her coordination of the Workers' group. Many thanks to all three. During my many years of service as an Officer of the Governing Body, it has become immensely apparent to me how important it is that while the Officers of the Governing Body represent their respective groups, they have a collective responsibility for the work of the ILO itself. This collective responsibility can only be met by working collegially in the best interests of the Organization and its constituents.

Last, but not least, I want to thank the Director-General, the three Deputy Directors-General, the Directors and their teams – and especially the Official Meetings, Documentation and Relations Department (RELMEETINGS) – for their support. I want to express my deepest respect and gratitude for the high value of the work of the management and staff of the International Labour Office.

The Governing Body has now dissolved into the Conference of our Organization. As my mandate as Chairperson of the Governing Body draws to a close, it is my sincere hope that the spirit of dialogue and consensus which we all hope to see in our work over the next two weeks will carry over into the Governing Body at its 333rd Session, which will begin on the Saturday following the closure of this session of our Conference.

With these words, I submit my report on the work of the Governing Body for the year 2017–18 to the Conference.

## **The President**

Thank you, Mr Cortebeeck, for your presentation. As your report shows, the Governing Body was faced with many difficult and serious issues, and I can very much appreciate the hard work that all members put into achieving tripartite consensus when seeking the way forward.

I should like to congratulate you, on behalf of the Conference, on your successful guidance of the debates in the Governing Body over the past year, and my congratulations

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are also extended to your close colleagues, the Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons, and to the Governing Body members as a whole.

You have our gratitude, Mr Cortebeeck.

## **Opening statements by the Chairpersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups of the Conference**

### **The President**

We now move on to the next item, which is the opening statements by the Chairpersons of the Employers' and Workers' groups of the Conference, in which they will put forward their groups' views on the work that the Conference has before it.

### **Mr Mdwaba**

Employer (South Africa), Chairperson of the Employers' group

Allow me to begin by congratulating His Excellency, Mr Murad, Minister of Labour of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, on his election as President of this 107th Session of the International Labour Conference. On behalf of the Employers' group, I wish him the very best for the task ahead. Let me take this opportunity to greet everybody by saying "jambo", which means "hello and greetings" in my continent.

I want to restate what should be obvious, particularly at the beginning of our work, namely that the International Labour Conference brings together the best of tripartism, gathering employers, workers and governments from all around the world. This permeates all that we do. Currently, that social dialogue is being questioned by some, or else forgotten by others through their actions or inaction.

I need to remind everyone of the important strength that Conference outcomes acquire when they enjoy the widest tripartite support, because they often have an impact on the ground. The Employers' group has been clear on the need to ensure that the Conference maintains its relevance in today's world. Some question the Conference's relevance, and we cannot afford this given the critical role that it can and must play going forward as we work together for a sustainable world. There is a huge challenge before the Centenary of the ILO to prove that we are up to the high expectations of people throughout the world, whether in developing or developed countries and regions, in the formal or informal sector, or among women and men of all persuasions, young people, the employed and, more importantly, the unemployed, as well as those whose rights are trampled on or ignored.

The two-week format is already consolidated and, despite all the difficulties, has served to reinforce our efficiency. We still have some way to go yet, but we are on the right track.

I will turn briefly to the items on this session's agenda. The Committee on the Application of Standards is the supervisory committee of the Conference and the Conference is the supreme decision-making body of the ILO. Its conclusions and recommendations carry weight, as they provide valuable guidance from the highest levels on the implementation of ILO standards. Its views can be different from those of other bodies such as the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.



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We have managed to achieve greater ownership of its results, improvements in the drafting of conclusions and more clarity on what the areas of consensus are, as well as greater freedom for constituents to express and reflect their different views and major achievements.

Agreeing to disagree is an intrinsic part of tripartism. Our expression of our strong views should not and should never be misconstrued as anything other than ensuring that governance is adhered to at all times and that, in so doing, our values and principles and relevance are never lost. Good time management in the Committee on the Application of Standards is becoming an example for other committees. It is very important to note that the Employers' and Workers' groups have also acted with a sense of commitment and responsibility by ensuring timely agreement on the list of cases.

As we mentioned last year, and wish to reiterate with great intensity and insistence this year, improvements towards the better running of this crucial committee cannot be viewed in an isolated manner. It is intrinsically linked to the functioning of the overall ILO standards supervisory system. The Employers are starting to see some important positive outputs from the ILO's Standards Initiative and we continue to expect a high degree of responsibility from all constituents in order to achieve tangible results. The General Survey submitted to the Committee on the Application of Standards this year is especially relevant, as it will deal with one of the most relevant topics vis-à-vis the new realities of work and working time. We hope that the Committee helps to anticipate this debate in a positive manner as an opportunity to improve working conditions rather than be seen as a threat; that will make this a better house for us all.

The general discussion on effective development cooperation was a proposal that the Employers put forward and supported together with other constituents. As already stated, the ILO needs to make its actions and role relevant and credible and their impact fruitful. The key challenge before us is to ensure that initiatives and actions undertaken by other actors in the UN system take into consideration the Decent Work Agenda and its ownership by social partners, especially before we travel in the direction envisaged in the UN reform proposals. An approach to development cooperation that responds to constituents' needs and actively seeks out their views and priorities before final agreement or projects is therefore a *sine qua non* of our working methods. We are looking forward to a practical discussion grounded in pragmatism and realism. To achieve this, we need to build on the systematic evaluation of development cooperation on the ground. This is not always the case. We cannot grasp lessons learned about what works and what does not if we do not use the information provided in the findings of high-level evaluations as a learning tool.

International labour standards remain at the core of the ILO's mandate. However, they should not be the only lens through which we view development cooperation. We also need to strengthen and prioritize our action on employment promotion and social dialogue to provide further tangible results. Simply put, the notion that having a standard means that the problem is solved is flawed thinking; we need a much more holistic approach. By sourcing innovative financing mechanisms and fostering partnerships mainly through wider private sector contributions, public-private partnerships will also help enormously to achieve the SDGs. Here, we are specifically concerned about the failure to recognize the role of independent employers' organizations as the proper channel to coordinate the voice of business and as an essential tool for forging partnerships with the private sector rather than with UN units and with bodies or broad networks that are neither representative nor independent.

The recurrent discussion this year on social dialogue that my colleagues have already mentioned is a particularly important one. We may not be aware of how threatened social dialogue is as we find ourselves on the eve of celebrating our Centenary. Tripartism and social dialogue are the main assets of the ILO. Without them, we lose not only our uniqueness but our identity, our values and our relevance. We need to prove that they make

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an essential contribution to the entire UN system. For this to happen, we should not lose the practical aspect of our recurrent discussions, namely to better understand the diverse realities and needs of its members with respect to each of the ILO's strategic objectives. It will be a waste of time if we do not resist theoretical and ideological debate conducted for its own sake. Ideologism is a huge threat that we must resist. At this moment, I turn to Albert Einstein, who said: "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking". And to Tuli Kupferberg, who said: "When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge". And they always do. Diversity in social dialogue should be the primary basis for fruitful debate. There is no one-size-fits-all model of social dialogue, nor is there a specific superior model of collective agreement.

It is also important to understand that social dialogue is an instrument, not a panacea for social peace. The ILO is the home of social dialogue at the global level. It was created for this very purpose. We are therefore very concerned at the growth of other parallel initiatives which could only at best duplicate and at worst undermine the ILO's universal mandate and place in the multilateral system.

We are concerned that the ILO is diverting its own time and resources to promote initiatives such as the Global Deal partnership for decent work and inclusive growth. This detracts from its own work, against the wishes of one of the ILO's tripartite constituent groups. Moreover, by selecting an ad hoc source of business representation, it is causing great concern to Governing Body members.

Let me be clear, the Employers very strongly support social dialogue and the benefits it can bring, otherwise we would not be here. So let us work together in this house to achieve outcomes, and not subcontract elsewhere. We have a challenging first standard-setting discussion this year, on violence and harassment in the workplace. The Employers are strongly and responsibly committed to achieving the shared goal of effectively preventing violence and harassment in the workplace.

The conclusions arising from this discussion must lead to the formulation of a realistic and effective instrument. To do this, we call on all constituents to work jointly to avoid vague and subjective concepts – what in the past I have referred to as intellectually and ideologically indulgent expressions of a non-universal character. We should also avoid confusion between the responsibilities of employers and those of public authorities.

It is essential to find different approaches to combating violence and harassment, as they are two different entities, even though they are connected. The discussion will be difficult, but we do not want to be misunderstood. This is a workplace issue and we are committed to finding a way forward, within the ILO, which could provide genuine workplace solutions.

I will finish briefly by referring to the report submitted by the Director-General on the Women at Work initiative. We believe that the ILO must provide a more ambitious contribution to gender inclusion. This is not just the right thing to do, it is a powerful step towards improving productivity in the hypocritical world we live in, where there are different standards for men and women. It is unfortunate that the report comes across as rather negative, when in fact there has been progress. A huge number of women are now better positioned in the labour market, thanks to efforts by employers who invest in fair recruitment, compensation and promotion policies, flexible working-time schemes and other work-related actions. Do we still need to improve? Absolutely, we have to. We need huge improvement, for example, in the areas of non-discriminatory wage policies and the manner in which women are discriminated against in ways that are sometimes difficult to quantify as they are often the result of unconscious bias. A merely legalistic approach which just eases burdens and shifts responsibility onto companies would prove to be counterproductive and irresponsible. Public authorities need to design a policy mix which supports these

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efforts. The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the Employers' group, together with our colleagues in the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), are working on this issue, firstly to track progress but also to provide tools and good practices for our corporate members who are looking for help and advice on how to move ahead in this area. This includes looking at the governance structures in our own organizations too, as they are only effective if they are a mirror of the societies we seek to serve. We will continue working to make the business case more evident and impactful.

At this stage I thank you for listening and I wish you well in all your deliberations. Thank you very much.

**Ms Passchier**

Worker (Netherlands), Chairperson  
of the Workers' group

Let me first congratulate the President and the three Vice-Presidents on their election. They have an important task before them and we will all support them. Secondly, let me say that it is a privilege for me to represent at this Conference the voice of the workers of the world. This Organization is especially dear to workers because it may be the only place in the world where they have an equal place at the table with governments and employers. For almost 100 years now, this house has functioned as a lighthouse, a beacon in sometimes-dark times, to which workers and unions in dire situations look for guidance and support, and which shows the rest of the world that social dialogue is the key to achieving social justice. We must ensure that it continues to do so in the next century.

The ILO is a reflection of the real world out there. It is therefore easy to find points of disagreement and discontent. The challenge, however, is to find jointly a way forward that helps to implement labour rights and build social justice.

The issues that we will be addressing during this session of the Conference are of profound importance to working men and women around the world, and to their economies and societies. The ILO, in the run-up to its centenary, must show its vitality and relevance by dealing with them with tripartite commitment and determination.

At the beginning of this Conference, I wish to touch on the items on our agenda and on some of the Workers' group's priorities.

The Conference Committee on the Application of Standards has an essential constitutional task which makes the ILO unique in the United Nations system. In too many countries, the realization of decent work and social justice remains jeopardized by violations of labour rights, particularly those enshrined in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). In this Committee, serious issues are discussed, including the question of what to do to ensure more and better compliance. Its debates are therefore of crucial importance. They must show that ratification has to go hand in hand with a commitment by member States to give effect to the Conventions that they have ratified.

Violence and harassment in the world of work are, in our view, very closely connected and difficult to separate and constitute a serious human and labour rights violation. Both men and women can be affected: in a new and worrying trend in public and private services, not only ambulance drivers and teachers, but also retail workers and cleaners are being targeted by the general public. However, there is a strong gender dimension with women increasingly paying the price for their enhanced roles in the world of work and in society at large by being confronted with violence and harassment, including sexual harassment.

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This impinges on the ability to exercise other fundamental labour rights and is incompatible with decent work. It poses a threat to the dignity, security, health and well-being of everyone. It has an impact not only on workers and employers, but also on their families, communities, economies and society as a whole.

It is in everybody's interest that it stop and this is increasingly recognized. This year, the members of the Committee have a unique opportunity to show the relevance of the ILO's standard-setting function by addressing an issue that has no place in the twenty-first century world of work. The Workers want to see an inclusive and effective Convention, supplemented by a Recommendation, that takes an integrated approach in addressing violence and harassment and protects all workers, regardless of sector and whether in the formal or the informal economy. We will work with all of the groups to ensure that this leads to standards that are ambitious as well as fit for purpose.

The recurrent discussion on social dialogue provides an opportunity to reaffirm the relevance of social dialogue, with freedom of association and collective bargaining as enabling rights that promote social justice and decent work. This discussion is timely; inequality is at historic levels and the share of wages as a percentage of GDP has declined significantly in recent years. These trends have developed in a context of serious attacks on trade union rights, including labour market reforms that have undermined collective bargaining and the growth of precarious and non-standard forms of employment that have weakened the capacity of trade unions to organize and bargain collectively. Conventions Nos 87 and 98 remain the least ratified of the core Conventions, even though all of the constituents of this house have undertaken to achieve their universal ratification by 2019.

But even when these Conventions have been ratified, too many countries' laws and practices include serious obstacles to workers' efforts to organize and strive collectively for better wages, working conditions and decent work.

This year's discussion must create real political momentum ahead of the centenary celebrations and result in concrete action leading to universal ratification and implementation.

Let me remind you that the ILO has a constitutional obligation to promote collective bargaining. It should therefore also step up its policy advice and advocacy on the value of extending collective bargaining coverage in order to ensure more equal wages and decent working conditions. Based on this constitutional mandate, the ILO should proactively engage in all relevant discussions inside and outside the United Nations structures to promote its core values. The Global Deal partnership for decent work and inclusive growth is just one more important promotional tool available to the ILO, of which it should make good use.

The discussion should also contribute to the debate on the future of work by identifying strategies to ensure that workers in platform businesses can exercise their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining and access decent work. Also, in this era of globalization, it is of key importance to develop innovative and effective forms of social dialogue at all relevant levels, including the international level. This year's discussion should therefore recognize the important value of various forms of cross-border social dialogue and its potential to deal with the globalization of business, giving effect to the due diligence required from multinationals in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration).

Let me now turn to the general discussion on effective development cooperation in support of the SDGs. International development cooperation is undergoing profound changes marked by the new finance for development framework and the UN reform process.

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The rights-based approach which lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda offers a unique opportunity to enshrine the ILO's normative agenda in ILO development cooperation. Key in this regard is the need for the UN system to recognize the role of social dialogue in development cooperation. Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) should be strategically used with a view to the effective involvement of social partners in implementing the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The DWCPs should also be better used to promote ratification and implementation of international labour standards, taking into account the comments of the supervisory bodies.

Partnerships with business entities should be built on a solid monitoring and assessment framework that provides transparency, accountability and development results in accordance with ILO values and standards and involves workers' organizations. Partnerships with other organizations should fully respect the ILO's normative mandate and tripartite structure.

The ILO is the oldest United Nations agency; its existence predates that of the United Nations itself. We will celebrate its centenary next year, when we will discuss the role of the ILO in the future of work. The Workers' group wants to ensure that the actions taken with a view to strengthening the United Nations system will help to further strengthen, rather than weaken, the ILO's role and mandate. The ILO has a unique place in the United Nations structure that must be maintained and can provide inspiration and guidance throughout the United Nations system.

Let me conclude with a few remarks on the Report of the Director-General, *The Women at Work initiative: The push for equality*. We think that this is a very appropriate title, and we will contribute more extensively to its discussion later this week.

For now, I want to commend the Office for putting its finger on some sore spots when it comes to the persistent lack of progress in the area of gender equality and for demanding that all of us turn indignation into action, particularly at workplaces and in labour markets, and move beyond business as usual.

Let me also thank the Director-General for the Appendix to his Report on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories. The occupation, now already 50 years on, continues to make the living and working conditions of Palestinians extremely difficult without real prospects for improvement. Unemployment has reached record levels with youth and women the hardest hit. Renewed efforts must be made in order to bring the occupation to an end with the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

I am looking forward to debates that are intense and respectful, and let us be ambitious in the results that we achieve. I wish you and all of us a fruitful Conference.

## **The President**

That brings us to the conclusion of the formal opening of the Conference and the establishment of the structure we need to accomplish our work over the next two weeks.

*(The Conference adjourned at 12.45 p.m.)*