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International Labour Conference – 109th Session, 2021

Date: 9 July 2021

Plenary sitting: Adjournment of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference

Saturday, 19 June 2021, 3.30 p.m.

President: Mr Zniber

The President

We have reached the end of our plenary proceedings for this first part of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to announce that the two working parties that will convene in November this year have now appointed all of their Officers, as set out in document [ILC.109/D.3\(Rev.1\)](#), which can be found on the Conference website. I thank the groups for this information, of which the Conference takes due note.

Before adjourning our session, I would like now to give the floor to our Secretary-General, Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO, to make some comments.

Mr Ryder

Director-General of the International Labour Office and Secretary-General of the Conference

Thank you very much for giving me the chance to say a few words before we adjourn this 109th Session of the Conference; we are adjourning the session, and not closing it, because, as has just been recalled, our work is incomplete. The session will resume in November 2021, when we will deal with the important issues of inequalities and the world of work, and skills and lifelong learning.

That necessarily means that it is too early to draw up a definitive balance sheet of the achievements of this session of the Conference. But, even at this stage – and it is quite an advanced stage after all – I think we are all entitled to take some satisfaction from what has been achieved in the last three weeks or so of work. Because, if we look at the results obtained, I think they are quite remarkable. They vary, of course, from the conclusions that have just been adopted on social protection and on the application of standards, to the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. We have adopted a programme and budget for the next two years. We have elected a new Governing Body and much more.

Now, taken individually, I think that each one of these achievements has significance and value in itself. But if we look at these achievements collectively, I think that there are a couple of things that are worthy of note and warrant a degree of congratulation.

Firstly, the very fact that this Conference has operated to date so successfully has been a guarantee – and I said this at the opening – of the institutional and business continuity and integrity of our Organization. We did not have a session last year, and we are in the process of running a very successful session this year.

And secondly, because we should not be too introverted about these matters, what you have done over the last weeks and will do towards the end of the year I think places our Organization where it needs to be. It equips our Organization to rise to the challenges of this most difficult moment for the world of work, and to meet the expectations of the very many governments, workers and employers who look to us for leadership and for action.

And, for that, I think recognition and thanks are due from me. Firstly, to everybody who has taken positions of leadership and office in this Conference: the President, of course, and his fellow Officers of the Conference, to whom our particular gratitude is addressed; those who have led or those who have spoken for the different tripartite groups; and those who have presided – as we have heard repeatedly – so effectively over the business of the different committees. So to all of our office holders: thank you and congratulations.

I hope you will allow me as well to add my words of appreciation to the Secretariat that has serviced this Conference. It is a source of great pride to me to lead a Secretariat that stands out for its professionalism, its dedication and its absolute impartiality in the way that it conducts its duties, even sometimes under some pressure. It has done a wonderful job as it always does.

This year, particularly I think, we have to add to the list of people that we want to thank those who have provided the technological services to our Conference that have enabled this virtual modality to operate. I think that we talk a great deal in the ILO of putting technology at the service of people rather than the reverse, and sometimes we wonder what we really mean by it; well, this Conference has given us an example of what we mean by it. The technology has worked for us, of course; it works for us because we also have the interpreters who enable us not just to hear each other but to understand each other and the magic of the technology has been combined with the habitual magic that takes place in the interpreters' booths to service this Conference so brilliantly.

All of that said, the group I am going to mention now has been absolutely essential to the achievements of this Conference, and it is the – I think – 4,000 plus participants from Member States: representatives of governments, employers and workers who, in extraordinarily difficult circumstances at different times of the day – both early in the morning and late at night – and in circumstances in which they are having to cope with their national responsibilities and respond to the calls of home and family, have remained connected to this Conference and have been the architects of all of the results that have been achieved. I take this truly remarkable engagement to the Conference as a reflection of the importance that they attach to our Organization and to the business of this Conference. So, before we do adjourn this session, I want to thank every one of them and say that we look forward to completing the job when we gather again in November.

The President (Original Arabic)

This first part of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference is drawing to a close, and I would like to reiterate my thanks to all those who have participated in it, in what have been exceptional circumstances. I would like to thank them for having taken on this responsibility and also for the constructive contributions that they have made during our discussions in the different groups and committees. I think we can give ourselves a pat on the back for what we have achieved.

I think that we are all satisfied with the way in which this first part of the session has gone. The organization has been excellent and the participants have been engaged and have held some very fruitful discussions. This clearly demonstrates that we all want to work together to find solutions, so that we can tackle the current challenges and build a better future.

May I please first extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Vice-Presidents for their dedication and cooperation. I would also like to thank, on behalf of the Officers, the members of the Secretariat, who have mobilized all their human and material capacities so as to ensure the success of this session of the Conference, despite the restrictions under which it is being held because of the COVID crisis.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the ILO, who has shown consummate professionalism during this virtual session, the first time that we have met virtually in the history of the Organization. I would also like to thank the representatives of governments, workers and employers for their contributions to our discussions, which have allowed us to achieve such positive outcomes. I would also like to welcome the new members of the Governing Body.

Allow me also to commend the professionalism of the technical and administrative team that has been working tirelessly to ensure that this session is a success. I would also like to thank the interpreters for their work to facilitate communication between all participants.

We are all now looking forward to the second part of this session, to be held later this year, starting on 25 November 2021 when the working parties for the two remaining items on our agenda shall convene. I wish you all the best and particularly a very good weekend.

(The first part of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference adjourned at 3.40 p.m.)