



# Governing Body

343rd Session, Geneva, November 2021

Policy Development Section

POL

## Minutes of the Policy Development Section

### Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Employment and Social Protection Segment.....	3
1. Update on ILO occupational safety and health programmes, activities and resources (GB.343/POL/1(Rev.1)) .....	3
Decision.....	8
Social Dialogue Segment.....	8
2. Sectoral meetings held in 2021 and proposals for sectoral work in 2022–23 (GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2)).....	8
Decision.....	8
Summary of the written comments received during the consideration of the item by correspondence .....	9
Development Cooperation Segment.....	10
3. Enhanced programme of development cooperation for the occupied Arab territories (GB.343/POL/3) .....	10
Decision.....	14



## Employment and Social Protection Segment

### 1. Update on ILO occupational safety and health programmes, activities and resources (GB.343/POL/1(Rev.1))

1. **The Worker spokesperson** said that an emphasis should be placed on the urgency of ILO action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the world of work, as well as on the Organization's unique role in the system of global governance addressing occupational safety and health. It was clear that the funds available for occupational safety and health were insufficient, despite the significant provision of extrabudgetary resources. The percentage of the budget allocated for occupational safety and health had also been reduced in recent years. The Director-General should therefore ensure the appropriate allocation of funds for occupational safety and health programmes and activities, and the right balance between regular and extrabudgetary resources, including for the preparation of future work programmes on budget proposals, particularly given the emergence of new forms of, and increasingly precarious, work, and the impact of climate change. The ILO also required additional resources to support over 40 international labour standards and to participate in discussions with other international forums, so as to contribute to the response to new challenges. Greater expertise in occupational safety and health for the ILO and its stakeholders was necessary. He supported the draft decision.
2. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the promotion of a preventive approach and safety culture should be an overarching and systematically highlighted element in occupational safety and health. Further action was needed, since the culture of prevention was still not sufficiently mainstreamed, as had been underscored by the COVID-19 crisis. The ILO should focus more on capacity-building for constituents, in order to strengthen occupational safety and health knowledge and services. The ILO should also continue to respond to constituents' needs in terms of up-to-date technical guidance. Specific capacity-building should be made available for micro and small enterprises, for which occupational safety and health remained a challenge. The work should be undertaken at key stages when such enterprises were most receptive to occupational safety and health issues, and with the intermediaries involved in their activities. It was more necessary than ever to bolster efforts in terms of awareness-raising activities, support for the transition from informal to formal work, and capacity-building for organizations working with stakeholders in the formal economy. The ILO should allocate more resources for well-being and mental health issues, with a view to creating leverage and to delivering practical guidance, particularly to employers. Regarding knowledge management, the validation of information studies and research on occupational safety and health remained critical to ensure credibility. The Office's participation in such research should take into account the manner in which some of the trends could provide opportunities to reduce risks, increase the efficiency of the work of inspectorates, and lighten the administrative burden on enterprises. It was important to ensure that the transition was well-framed and well-managed, and that stakeholders were adequately supported throughout the process.
3. Regarding global supply chain engagement as a driver for improved occupational safety and health performance, it was important to recall that supply and contractor chains were an entry point to strengthen national situations and to create positive spill-over effects on occupational safety and health systems. A market-driven approach with mechanisms, tools and projects "by industry for industry" should be adopted in order to have a real impact. Concerning occupational safety and health instruments, he reiterated

that the Standards Review Mechanism Technical Working Group and the Governing Body were two separate and independent bodies. On ILO cooperation with other international organizations, the Office should deepen its relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO), but maintain its decision to end its close connection with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The regular evaluation of the results and impact of ILO occupational safety and health activities and programmes was important. Further action should build on lessons learned from such activities, and a genuine reflection on what worked and what did not should be the starting point for future programmes and activities. The document should have provided more information on the insights from recent evaluation of occupational safety and health activities. Exemplary behaviour of all stakeholders involved was essential to maximize efforts and ensure the credibility of the ILO's occupational safety and health approach. The many examples of mismanagement during the COVID-19 crisis had shown that more work was needed to uphold the "walk the talk" principle.

- 4. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Uganda observed that there was no indication in the document of reprogramming to respond to the heightened burden of occupational safety and health resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The current number of occupational safety and health specialists was insufficient to effectively carry out the mandate of the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADMIN/OSH). It was necessary to rationalize the deployment of such specialists to ensure that the majority were based in the field, where the real work was, and not at headquarters. There were only three specialists in Africa, which meant that many constituents were severely underserved. His group proposed that the draft decision be amended by adding the following:

The Director-General updates the 346th Session of the Governing Body on measures taken to:

- i. review the budget of LABADMIN/OSH in order to address the challenges of OSH in the COVID-19 pandemic;
- ii. hire more OSH specialists, especially for the field offices; and
- iii. rationalize the deployment of OSH specialists so the constituents in the field are better served.

- 5. Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC)**, a Government representative of Chile requested the Office to provide further information on the memorandum of understanding signed with the WHO to develop a new methodology and regularly update joint estimates of the work-related burden of disease and injury, so that Member States could have accurate estimates of risks in the world of work. The Office should also increase its efforts by focusing on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal economy, which were particularly important sectors for his region. He welcomed the increased number of technical specialists for occupational safety and health in all regions. It was hoped that the work of the new technical specialist for the Americas would contribute to local needs from a comprehensive perspective and with an approach sensitive to the realities and requirements of the region.
- 6. Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG)**, a Government representative of Australia commended the Office's commitment to occupational safety and health and noted the importance of progress in that area if the ILO was to address the burden of work-related disease and injury. Her group encouraged the Office to continue its work to improve occupational safety and health at the regional level, reduce

work-related fatalities and illness, and strengthen constituents' capacities to prevent and manage workplace hazards and traditional and emerging risks. Knowledge dissemination and international cooperation would be effective means of achieving those objectives.

7. Her group hoped that the positive results under the ILO Programme Implementation 2018–19 would continue, along with the ongoing occupational safety and health efforts under output 7.2 of the Programme and Budget for 2020–21. The ILO's occupational safety and health resources must be used sustainably while taking into account the implications of the Governing Body's decision on proposals for including safe and healthy working conditions in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. Her group welcomed the Office's technical assistance and occupational safety and health development cooperation projects, and it supported the draft decision.
8. **Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)**, a Government representative of the United States of America asked the Office how the increase in the allocation of resources for the development of guidance and technical materials on COVID-19 and the provision of direct assistance to countries in 2020 and 2021 had affected other existing occupational safety and health priorities and activities. Her group also wished to know whether there were other areas in which catch-up would be needed, how service delivery had changed as the result of the pandemic, and whether new methodologies had been developed or if there had been lessons learned that could be applied moving forward. Regarding the memorandum of understanding signed with the WHO, it would be useful to know the status of the methodology and whether "the work-related burden of disease and injury" meant something other than injury or disease sustained on the job. Could the Office indicate how much of the regular budget resources reported in the document focused specifically on occupational safety and health? It would also be pertinent to know what the trend in extrabudgetary funding for occupational safety and health had been in past years and whether the Office was undertaking any specific resource mobilization efforts in the area. She expressed support for the Safety + Health for All flagship programme as well as for ILO programmes key to promoting occupational safety and health, including in global supply chains, in particular the Vision Zero Fund, the Better Work programme, and the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) programme. IMEC supported the draft decision.
9. **Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States**, a Government representative of Slovenia said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Iceland and Norway aligned themselves with her statement. She called for occupational safety and health to be elevated to a fundamental principle and right at work by including all stakeholders in occupational safety and health interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance of occupational safety and health regulations: some workers, particularly those in vulnerable situations, had been put at increased risk of exposure to diseases, hazardous substances and dangerous working conditions and thus required special protection. She thanked the Office for its efforts to respond to the pandemic and requested specific details of the consequent reallocation of resources.
10. She welcomed the ILO's focus on occupational safety and health deficits specific to micro and small businesses and the informal economy, and its efforts to foster improvements in safety and health in global supply chains. Given the centrality of global value chains to global trade, it was increasingly important to conduct due diligence to uphold occupational safety and health standards, including by identifying and procuring from

reputable companies with a proven record of responsible purchasing and production practices. The Vision Zero Fund strategy entitled Collective Action for Safe and Healthy Supply Chains provided a good basis for improving engagement with the private sector.

11. She supported the document's ambitious schedule for occupational safety and health standard-setting, highlighting the timeliness of the code of practice on safety and health in textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, and welcoming the proposals on setting standards concerning biological hazards in the near future. The Office's efforts to enhance the availability and quality of data, including in collaboration with the WHO, were commendable and would generate evidence to support the development and improvement of measures concerning occupational safety and health. She supported the original wording of the draft decision.
12. **Speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, a Government representative of Indonesia commended the Office's continued efforts to implement the ILO Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health and strengthen hazard and risk prevention capacities among constituents. He welcomed the promotion of occupational safety and health as a pillar of national development strategies and frameworks, including through the Safety + Health for All flagship programme and the Vision Zero Fund. The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the importance of raising awareness and engaging in advocacy on occupational safety and health; it was therefore more crucial than ever for the Office to foster a preventive approach and strengthen partnerships with global and regional stakeholders. To that end, ASEAN governments had developed a work plan to strengthen and promote occupational safety and health standards and capacities in the region.
13. He noted with appreciation that occupational safety and health continued to be included in the ILO programme and budget. He encouraged the Office to step up its provision of relevant assistance to all constituents, and expressed the hope that the new technical positions created in that area at ILO headquarters and regional offices would enhance the delivery of ILO services to its stakeholders. He supported the draft decision.
14. **A Government representative of Bangladesh** commended the Office for its efforts to support Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic. He expressed appreciation for the Office's achievement in exceeding the occupational safety and health targets set for the 2018–19 biennium, but was deeply concerned at the steady decrease in budgetary allocations to occupational safety and health activities over the previous five years, which could jeopardize continued success. He described steps taken by his Government to promote occupational safety and health, noting in particular its collaboration with the Office on the development of standard operating procedures for occupational diseases. He urged the Office to extend coverage of the Safety + Health For All flagship programme and implementation of codes of practice on occupational safety and health, taking into account national circumstances.
15. **A Government representative of the United States** commended the Office for its quick, effective action to respond to constituent needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and asked how that experience would affect the ILO's work on occupational safety and health. He welcomed the Office's efforts to collaborate with development partners to advance occupational safety and health objectives. The ILO should take the lead in responding to occupational safety and health challenges arising from changes in the world of work, the environment and society; the Office should therefore continue to strengthen its expertise and interventions in that area to enable it to continue supporting constituents in strengthening occupational safety and health capacities at the national level.

16. **The Worker spokesperson** called for new regular budget resources to be allocated to four areas: the ratification and implementation of Conventions, especially those concerning the most hazardous sectors; the protection of workers and the environment against chemical hazards; biological agents and risks and ergonomics; and psychological hazards, including work-related mental health issues.
17. **The Employer spokesperson** supported the draft decision. Since many of the concerns raised by constituents' issues were connected, further discussions would be needed to develop a comprehensive and consolidated approach to occupational safety and health. The call for human, technical and financial resources also required further discussion by the Governing Body.
18. **A representative of the Director-General** (Deputy Director-General for Policy) took note of constituents' comments on the need to increase the allocation of human and financial resources to occupational safety and health.
19. The COVID-19 pandemic had put a strain on occupational safety and health in all Member States and the Office had responded by quickly shifting focus to address acute constituent needs. While work on topics such as non-communicable diseases and sector-specific risks had continued, it had been necessary to divert financial resources from some existing occupational safety and health work plans to respond to requests for immediate COVID-19 support. Existing occupational safety and health system approaches and guidance had been applied to the management of the pandemic; tools such as manuals and protocols had been developed, adapted and disseminated; and participatory training approaches had been adapted to address the emerging risk of mental health in light of the pandemic. The situation had demonstrated the importance of maintaining flexibility to respond to urgent needs and the need for investment in prevention to foster preparedness in management and occupational safety and health systems. Despite the challenges, the crisis had also provided a unique opportunity to strengthen national institutions and policies concerning occupational safety and health; new modes of service delivery had been developed thanks to the increased use of digital technologies for training and data collection purposes; and some projects had even attracted additional funding thanks to COVID-19 relief efforts.
20. The ILO had emerged from the pandemic as the leading global organization specializing in occupational safety and health. The crisis had highlighted gaps between countries and regions and confirmed that many countries needed to strengthen national occupational safety and health systems to respond to COVID-19 and other challenges. It would be crucial to enhance expertise at headquarters and in the field to respond to constituents' calls for the development of standards and guidelines on chemical, biological, ergonomic and mechanical hazards. Sector-specific occupational safety and health knowledge would be needed, as would a multidisciplinary approach to ensure that the ILO could respond to the multifaceted nature of the topic. The expansion of the development cooperation portfolio on occupational safety and health would also require qualified human resources to work on those projects. The ILO would need to increase its visibility by engaging in inter-agency and multi-stakeholder platforms and task forces. Such efforts would require the ILO to take a leadership role and actively engage with partners, bolstered by dedicated, qualified and competent staff.
21. The Office valued the importance of deepening its collaboration with the WHO. The joint estimates of the work-related burden of disease and injury had been scientifically validated as a way to assess evidence of a link between exposure to an occupational risk factor and a health outcome, such as occupational exposure to benzene and the onset of leukaemia. The calculation also allowed the disaggregation of estimates by country,

gender and age. The first joint estimates had been published in September 2021 and examined 41 pairs of occupational risk factors and health outcomes, and the Office was working with the WHO and a global network of scientists to identify other risk factors to add to the initial set to provide a global picture of all work-related deaths. Almost 1.9 million people had died in 2016 because of exposure to 19 occupational risk factors studied, leading to a loss of nearly 90 million healthy life years.

- 22.** During the 2020–21 biennium, around 68 per cent of non-staff regular budget resources allocated to LABADMIN/OSH had been assigned to occupational safety and health activities, whereas 24 per cent had been allocated to labour inspection and compliance activities and 8 per cent to support functions. However, a significant portion of labour inspection activities involved supporting labour inspectorates to strengthen occupational safety and health capacities. The Office acknowledged the need to increase the allocation of resources to occupational safety and health, including in the field, and to be more agile and efficient in the use of its resources.
- 23. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of Morocco said that his group had experienced technical difficulties in submitting its amendment to the draft decision. He therefore withdrew the amendment and expressed support for the original wording of the draft decision.

## Decision

- 24. The Governing Body noted the report provided by the Office and requested the Director-General to take its guidance into account in the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2022–23 and when preparing future programme and budget proposals.**

(GB.343/POL/1(Rev.1), paragraph 24)

## Social Dialogue Segment

### 2. Sectoral meetings held in 2021 and proposals for sectoral work in 2022–23 (GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2))

- 25.** In preparation for the adoption of a decision by correspondence, the Office held a briefing session for Governing Body members on this item on 19 October 2021.
- 26.** The Screening Group agreed to put the item for a decision by correspondence and the decision was approved by consensus and announced to all Governing Body members on 1 November 2021.

## Decision

- 27. The Governing Body:**
- (a) **approved the reports of the meetings referred to in section I of document GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2) and authorized the Director-General to publish the final reports of those meetings;**
  - (b) **requested the Director-General to bear in mind, when drawing up proposals for future work, the recommendations for future action by the ILO made by the meetings referred to in section I of document GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2);**
  - (c) **authorized the Director-General to notify, in accordance with Guideline B2.2.4 of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006), the revised**



**amount of the minimum monthly basic pay or wage figure for able seafarers to the Members of the ILO;**

- (d) approved the convening of the Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission in the first half of 2022; and**
- (e) endorsed the proposals contained in Appendices I and II of document GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2) relating to the dates, official title and composition of the global sectoral meetings in 2022.**

(GB.343/POL/2(Rev.2), paragraph 23)

### Summary of the written comments received during the consideration of the item by correspondence <sup>1</sup>

- 28. The Workers' group** noted the need for industrial policies that took the environmental emergency into account. The Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy must be considered in all sectoral recommendations and policy briefs, and the Office should therefore increase its efforts to promote and implement it in relation to sectoral policies. The Office had an important role to play in bringing about the major transformations required in the automotive industry; such change would be possible only through a broad, just transition. The workshops and platforms for dialogue agreed upon at the Technical meeting on the future of work in the automotive industry must therefore take place as soon as possible.
- 29.** The Office should pay particular attention to ensuring adequate working conditions for educators which were hindered by factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and armed conflict. The agreement reached by the Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission was welcome, as was the invitation to convene subsequent meetings of the Subcommittee. The upcoming Technical meeting on COVID-19 and sustainable recovery in the tourism sector should focus on decent work and occupational safety and health in that sector, which had provided vital infrastructure during the pandemic and seen millions of its workers laid off.
- 30. IMEC** supported the draft decision and endorsed the proposed meetings. The invitation to convene a meeting of the Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission was welcome, as were the updated sectoral briefs, which would contribute to a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. IMEC supported the ILO's approach to sectoral work, which promoted decent work and addressed gender equality, non-discrimination and the implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. It welcomed the conclusions of the Technical meeting on the future of work in the automotive industry and the Technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda, supported the Office's commitment to strengthening strategic partnerships and commended the balanced attention afforded to the various sectors and topics in the programme of sectoral meetings for 2022–23.
- 31. The EU and its Member States** supported the statement by IMEC. The review of the sectoral meetings was particularly pertinent given the changes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its focus on a just transition, supply chains and the Sustainable Development Goals was particularly welcome. The importance of social dialogue had

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<sup>1</sup> The complete text of each comment in the original language is available on the [Governing Body's web page](#), together with the decision.

been clear in the response to the pandemic. The focus on occupational safety and health at the upcoming Technical meeting on COVID-19 and sustainable recovery in the tourism sector was welcome, and that meeting should also address reskilling and upskilling as a path to recovery in the sector and to increase its resilience.

32. The EU and its Member States welcomed the outcomes of the meeting of the Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission, the Technical meeting on the future of work in the automotive industry and the Technical meeting on the future of work in the education sector in the context of lifelong learning for all, skills and the Decent Work Agenda. They welcomed the forthcoming meeting on the protection of whistle-blowers in the public service sector and supported the timetable for sectoral meetings in 2022 and called on the Office to focus the ILO's sectoral work on the transition to formality and for a tripartite meeting of experts on ensuring decent work in the platform economy. The EU and its Member States supported the Office's continuing commitment to strengthening strategic partnerships to promote policy coherence and leverage support for decent work for all, and they supported the draft decision and endorsed the proposed meetings.

## Development Cooperation Segment

### 3. Enhanced programme of development cooperation for the occupied Arab territories (GB.343/POL/3)

33. **The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the well-structured report and noted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on an economy and a labour market that were already struggling. The situation had particularly affected small and medium-sized enterprises, women and young people, as confirmed by the results of the Gaza 2021 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment. Despite the ongoing conflict, she noted that there were signs of progress, as mentioned in Part III of the report.
34. It was regrettable that the issue of support for small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly as part of the COVID-19 recovery, was again missing from the report. She asked again how the ILO could help to ensure business continuity, beyond the fund for income support, and provide guidance on developing an enabling environment for business to grow. She strongly recommended that the ILO should extend to employers the support it had provided to the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions. Social dialogue and well-functioning industrial relations should be supported by the actions of the social partners and through the ILO's allocation of resources to them. She urged the ILO to provide more training to employers, including through the International Training Centre of the ILO, on upskilling, digitization and harnessing entrepreneurial and core skills. Her group commended the provision of support to enterprises impacted by recent hostilities, and said that interventions should focus on employment, including skills development, employability, active labour market programmes and social protection, rather than on consultative processes. She requested information on progress and setbacks in the next report. Her group supported the draft decision.
35. **Speaking on behalf of the Arab Employers' group**, an Employer member from the United Arab Emirates noted the progress made under the programme of development cooperation but regretted that, as a result of the major challenges facing Palestinian workers, overall unemployment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had increased to 31 per cent and unemployment among young people, university graduates and women had passed the 55 per cent mark. He urged Israel to assume responsibility for the rights

of Palestinians and called on international organizations, especially the ILO and human rights bodies concerned with the situation of workers, to intervene in order to recover the Palestinian social security arrears held by the occupying authority since 1970. The Appendix to the Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories should be added to the agenda of the next session of the International Labour Conference as an item for discussion and it should include recommendations on programmes and interventions to improve the situation of Palestinians. He called on the Office to support an international donors' meeting, with the aim of providing financial support to ensure social security and employment, and to continue to work with international actors and donors to mobilize the financial support required to meet Palestinian development needs and to tackle the COVID-19 recovery, in coordination with the Arab Labour Organization. In his report to the Governing Body, the Director-General should include information on the Office's activities in that regard. He commended the Palestinian Authority for the steps taken to initiate labour reform, to launch the Palestinian National Employment Strategy for 2021–25 and to increase the minimum wage.

- 36. The Worker spokesperson** expressed her group's solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle to end the occupation. The ILO's ongoing support was essential in the region, given the multiple political and social challenges facing workers. The Palestinian economy and labour market had been seriously damaged by the long period of occupation, particularly in Gaza, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing levels of violence. Her group encouraged the social partners to undertake significant efforts to protect social dialogue, and noted that the Palestinian Minister of Labour and the social partners were continuing to work together to respond effectively to immediate and longer-term challenges. She commended the consensus agreement of the tripartite constituents to increase the minimum wage and resume social dialogue on new labour law and social security reforms.
- 37.** She noted that the current programme of development cooperation had mobilized additional resources, alongside Regular Budget Supplementary Account allocations for COVID-19 response. However, a key element of social justice was a universal social security system, and that should be a priority for the Palestinian Authority. Her group supported the ILO's collaboration with the Minister of Labour and the social partners, which had led to the launch of the Palestinian National Employment Strategy for 2021–25, and with the Arab Labour Organization, which would facilitate the preparation of the donors' meeting in March 2022. Her group welcomed the increase in the minimum wage, which it hoped would be implemented as planned, and the work undertaken on cooperatives. It also welcomed the fact that the support for the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions had led to the launch of a coalition with members of civil society and sectoral unions, which sought to give voice to women in particular in the labour law reform process.
- 38.** She reiterated the importance of the ILO's action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to alleviate the social and economic situation of Palestinian workers, particularly women and young people. The Workers firmly supported the assistance provided by the Office to the Palestinian Authority and to the social partners in the framework of mobilizing the funds needed to address the exponential rise in unemployment and to achieve a human-centred recovery. Her group called on the Government of Israel to guarantee the fundamental rights of Palestinian workers.
- 39. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of Namibia took note of the progress made under the programme of development cooperation, and the

additional resources allocated to it, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her group hoped that the Palestinian National Employment Strategy for 2021–25 would address the worsening unemployment situation. She emphasized the importance of social dialogue and tripartism in achieving the Decent Work Agenda in the region, and noted the increase in the minimum wage that had been agreed by the tripartite partners. Her group urged the Office to redouble its efforts towards enhancing employment opportunities for Palestinians who had suffered the loss of jobs and income or the disruption of education and training. It further urged the Office to continue to strengthen labour governance and the realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work through freedom of association, strengthened collective bargaining and improved social dialogue mechanisms. She called on the Governing Body to endorse the resource mobilization required to fully implement the National Employment Strategy and to extend social protection to all. Her group supported the draft decision.

40. **A Government representative of Indonesia** commended the ILO's efforts to implement the second Palestinian Decent Work Programme 2018–22, mobilize resources and develop relevant partnerships. The ILO should continue to support the Palestinian Authority in advancing decent work principles through tripartite social dialogue. She supported the ongoing effort to strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Labour to address employment and labour market challenges and promote policy coherence. In addition to promoting improvements in labour governance and social dialogue, the ILO should work with relevant stakeholders to protect the rights of Palestinian workers in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Furthermore, it should expand its development cooperation assistance to Palestinian workers to include tailor-made initiatives on skills development, employability and social protection, targeted to those in most need. She supported the draft decision.
41. **A Government representative of Pakistan** said that she shared the concerns of the Office about the worsening socio-economic situation in the occupied Arab territories. The achievements and efforts made on employment and social protection were welcome. She supported the Office's call to mobilize resources to enable the Palestinian Authority and the social partners to address unemployment and achieve human-centred recovery, particularly for women and young people. She expressed solidarity with the people and workers of the occupied Arab territories, and reiterated her support for calls to end the occupation. She supported the draft decision.
42. **A Government representative of Bangladesh** expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Office and international partners to assist the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that the situation in Gaza was untenable. Efforts for an increased minimum wage and the resumption of social dialogue on labour law and social security reforms were welcome. The root cause of the suffering of the Palestinians – foreign occupation – needed to be addressed in order for efforts on fundamental principles and rights at work to bear fruit. He urged the Office and the international community to garner support for a sustainable solution to the Palestinian crisis and provide the necessary resources to bring meaningful change to Palestinians' lives. He reaffirmed his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their just and legitimate struggle for self-determination. He supported the draft decision.
43. **A Government representative of Israel**, authorized to speak in accordance with paragraph 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, said that, despite the common theme of building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office's report placed responsibility for the situation of Palestinian workers on Israel and absolved the Palestinian Authority of any

responsibility, while also failing to mention other relevant elements, such as the inter-Palestinian divide, the control exerted by Hamas on the world of work, discrimination against women and gender pay gaps. A discussion that did not accurately present the reality on the ground would benefit no one.

44. His Government continued to support the ILO's technical assistance and development programmes, including in the Palestinian territory. It had always cooperated with the ILO and facilitated its activities in the territory, including the annual mission. Palestinian workers were important to the Israeli and the Palestinian economies and it was in his Government's interest for Palestinian workers to enjoy better employment opportunities, working conditions and livelihoods. The discussion should be pragmatic, practical and constructive. He urged Member States to maintain the Organization's credibility and professional standards while working to accomplish its mandate.
45. **The Chairperson** recalled that, while the Standing Orders of the Governing Body did not provide for speaking rights of representatives of liberation movements, it was the prerogative of the Chairperson under paragraph 2.2.2 to accord the right to address the Governing Body. The Officers of the Governing Body had considered the matter and, in keeping with past practice, had decided to allow the representative of the Palestinian Authority to speak, on the understanding that the intervention would be limited to the matter under discussion, which was of direct concern to the Palestinian Authority.
46. **A representative of the Palestinian Authority** expressed his thanks for the support provided by the Office to Palestinian workers, who were experiencing very difficult social and economic conditions. The labour market had been weakened as a result of the restrictions on the movement of people and goods imposed by the Israeli authorities, the appropriation of private property and natural resources, and other repressive and discriminatory practices which had led Palestinian workers to turn to the Israeli labour market for their livelihoods. In that market, the conditions of work for Palestinians were difficult, including in relation to labour contracts, and they faced challenges such as wage discrimination, non-compliance with occupational safety and health standards, and the need to pass checkpoints when travelling to work. Furthermore, Israel had deprived Palestinian workers of their social security rights and had still not paid them the arrears that were owed. The situation had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
47. Among the Palestinian Authority's efforts to promote economic development and alleviate unemployment, he drew particular attention to the adoption of the first National Employment Strategy for 2021–25. That Strategy had been prepared in a tripartite process and in cooperation with the ILO. It reaffirmed the importance of social dialogue and promoted close cooperation with donors, while also proposing long-term structural solutions to challenges and responding to urgent issues.
48. He urged the Office to follow up on its resource mobilization efforts to secure the needed funds for the full implementation of the National Employment Strategy and other pressing needs in the labour area, in particular for women and young people. Furthermore, he called for continued support for the efforts being made by the Minister of Labour together with the ILO and the Arab Labour Organization to organize a donors' meeting in early 2022. He looked forward to tackling a number of priority topics at that meeting. The Appendix to the Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories should be discussed in plenary by the International Labour Conference. Palestinian workers should be helped to recover the arrears owed to them by the occupiers, and he expressed the hope that, in the future, Palestine would be able to become a Member of the ILO.

- 49. The representative of the Director-General** (Regional Director for the Arab States), responding to questions raised, noted that the Office had been working with the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and the different governing chambers to assess the most pressing needs of enterprises operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The findings would be used to develop a strategic plan for the Federation and governing chambers and provide capacity-building for staff. The business environment in the context of a regional project on productivity had been studied in order to identify the main challenges and propose solutions, and to develop an evidence-based business agenda for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Office is considering support for the development of an investors' guide to help strengthen the links between Palestinian entrepreneurs in Jerusalem and West Bank employers. Documentation was being finalized for a project with approximately US\$1 million of funding from the Regular Budget Supplementary Account to provide technical and financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises in Gaza.
- 50.** The Office planned to support the convening of the donors' meeting in 2022 to raise funds for the implementation of the National Employment Strategy for 2021–25. It would also support the implementation of the Strategy. Bilateral meetings were being held with interested donors and development actors to identify areas for potential partnership. She agreed that an effective and universal social security system should be established. A tripartite committee, with technical support from the Office, had proposed a revision of the social security law. An actuarial evaluation and feasibility study on unemployment insurance had been completed and a review was under way of the scope and application of employer liability under labour law. An awareness-raising campaign would accompany the dialogue on social security registration. Regarding the need for tailor-made assistance, she confirmed that the National Employment Strategy targeted employment for young people and women in particular.
- 51. The Employer spokesperson** expressed her appreciation for the needs assessment process described by the Office. Work on productivity and structural transformation, and to develop an investors' guide was welcome; she urged the speedy completion of those activities and the anticipation of challenges on the ground in order to boost their implementation. The project to support small and medium-sized enterprises was also welcome. A progress update on all of those activities should be provided in future reports.
- 52. The Worker spokesperson** said that she had taken note of the willingness of the ILO to provide technical assistance to re-establish the social security system required for the enjoyment of workers' economic and social rights. Recognition of the urgent need to mobilize resources so that the authorities and social partners could implement the National Employment Strategy for 2021–25 was welcome. The Workers called for the rights of Palestinian workers, and of all women, men and children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to be protected, and called on the Government of Israel to assume its responsibilities in that regard.

## Decision

- 53. The Governing Body took note of the information provided in document GB.343/POL/3.**  
(GB.343/POL/3, paragraph 33)