

Address to the 109th Session of the International Labor Conference

Mr. Adam GLIKSMAN (Member of National Commission of NSZZ “Solidarność”),

Workers’ Delegate of Poland

June 16th, 2021

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General,

Esteemed Delegates, Observers and Guests,

On behalf of Polish employees, please allow me to extend cordial greetings to you, and to wish you most eventful proceedings.

We meet online rather than face to face, after a year's break caused by the pandemic, in new, difficult circumstances. However, it behooves me to recall our last meeting, when we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the ILO. It was a great opportunity to recall the origins of the ILO's ideology, its goals, as well as the path travelled by the working world since 1919. In the “ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work”, we declared our willingness to continue to work towards human-oriented policies. We could not expect back then that only a few months later reality would brutally test our declarations, and the ability to implement them.

The outbreak of the pandemic, like all catastrophes of such magnitude, resulted in a whole range of behaviors and reactions - from examples of true solidarity and concern for the common good, to attempts to exploit the situation and utilize it to achieve one’s own goals. All those elements have been brilliantly recounted in the Director General’s report, and are being addressed further in the discussions conducted at the present conference.

Unfortunately, I must emphasize with regret that in Poland the pandemic has also become a pretext to weaken or even to liquidate social dialogue, for which trade unions blame Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Gowin, who spoke at our conference yesterday. Increasingly, social partners are becoming mere passive recipients of the government's messages, and the institutions of social dialogue at the national level are being frozen, and are unable to respond to the present problems experienced by many trades and their workers. Faced with the pandemic, the government attempted a coup against the independence of employees' organizations and trade unions, by allowing the Prime Minister to recall the representatives of the Social Dialogue Council. Legislative solutions are often being imposed by the government without any real consultation, and with no will to work out any compromise, an example of which is the issue of regulating the functioning of remote work in Poland. The negotiations on the matter with trade unions were unilaterally broken by the government.

Many problems have also appeared in workplaces, where the pandemic has weakened interpersonal relations and has had a negative impact on organizing employees into trade unions. Unfortunately, despite the existing legal solutions, unlawful dismissal of union activists is still taking place in Poland, an example of which are the multi-national companies Genpact PL and Castorama. These activities are intended to discourage employees from forming trade unions.

The year 2020 also brought the fight for freedom and democracy in Belarus. The NSZZ "Solidarność" has supported the country's independent trade union organizations, and continues to appeal to the entire world for support for our friends.

Many challenges lay ahead, and they exist at different levels, yet we know that the history of the ILO is a history of struggling with the recurring problems of the working world. I believe that by sticking to its principles and methods, and by using its achievements, the ILO can play an active role in the process of rebuilding and reconstructing the world after the still-ongoing

crisis. The approach was successful after the First and Second World Wars, and it will be successful now.

To conclude, I would like to remind us of the maxim popularized by US President Abraham Lincoln: "Actions speak louder than words." Today, we must focus on actions, on our deeds, and on putting our words and declarations into practice.

Thank you for your attention.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY