

- ILO Conference (held week of June 14th) (4 minutes)

ILO Conference

I want to thank the ILO for inviting me to address your conference.

I want to thank the staff for making the conference happen despite difficult circumstances.

And I want to thank the Director-General for his report, “Work in the time of COVID.”

The statistics in the report are sobering.

3 million people have died as a result of COVID-19.

The number of global hours worked fell by almost 9 percent.

And labor income fell by 8.3 percent in 2020, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

In the United States, we are using all the tools available to help workers recover from the pandemic.

Since President Biden took office in January, we have made great strides.

More than half of American adults are fully vaccinated, schools and businesses are reopening safely, and more people are going back to work.

But recovery is just a start.

We want to build back better, greener, more equitably, and more inclusively – with good jobs and access to job training for everyone.

That’s what the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan are all about.

These same goals guide us internationally.

So we welcome the ILO’s leadership in addressing the pandemic’s devastating impacts on the world of work.

You’re helping constituents achieve the inclusive, sustainable, and humane recovery that we all want.

That recovery must include promoting and protecting worker rights everywhere, and we are committed to doing that.

That includes the right to freely organize and bargain collectively.

In too many countries, workers are denied this right.

All too often workers are detained, beaten, imprisoned, and even murdered.

These are human rights violations that cannot be allowed to go on.

We must also continue the fight to end child labor and forced labor.

I am proud of the long-term collaboration between the ILO and the U.S. Department of Labor on this issue.

Our partnership has freed child workers around the world and enabled them to go to school. And the work is as urgent as ever.

Recent global estimates show that progress to eliminate child labor has stalled for the first time in 20 years.

And child labor is likely to increase in the years to come, unless we take action.

It is also unconscionable that forced labor and slavery still exist in our world.

Even worse, certain countries currently engage in systemic, state-sponsored forced labor, singling out ethnic minorities who are detained in camps under terrible conditions.

This behavior must be condemned and eradicated.

The ILO is the international organization that has the longest history and the deepest commitment to social justice for working people.

Director-General Ryder: we look to you, our colleagues in governments, in the labor movement, and in the employer community to redouble our efforts in the years to come.

Let's work together to make work everywhere equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and just.