

Mr. President,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates

I congratulate you, Mr President, on your election to preside over the 110th Session of the International Labour Conference. I also commend Director General Guy Ryder, for your comprehensive report and for the credible work during your tenure.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Gilbert Houngbo as you embark upon your new responsibilities as the next Director-General of ILO.

Mr President

This conference is taking place in-person for the first time since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last two years, the pandemic has created uncertainties coupled with emerging challenges affecting the livelihoods of citizens across the globe, which demands solidarity. It is indispensable that we carry on with this lesson while engaging on the various agenda of the Conference, as the pandemic is not over yet. Most importantly, as our Director-General noted in his Report, many countries are still struggling to recover and transcend the multi-dimensional damages of the pandemic and overcome other emerging challenges.

Mr President

My country, Ethiopia, has been hugely affected by the pandemic. The impacts on the labour sector have particularly has been immense. We have lost considerable jobs as businesses were either closed or reduced working hours. We were also challenged with cases of termination of overseas employment and deportation of migrant workers.

This, coupled with climate change challenges (as invasive desert locust) has adversely affected the labour market and the livelihoods of our citizens.

My Government has been taking emergency and stabilization measures as well as strategic interventions.

A wide range of political, economic, social and institutional reforms are being implemented. A Ten Year Perspective Development and Prosperity Plan envisioning structural transformation of Ethiopia's political and socio-economic make-up, anchored by the engines of the private sector and public-private partnership is adopted. Key sectors of the economy have been opened up for private investments.

We also have revitalized the institutional arrangement and governance of the labour sector. The recent Proclamation by the Ethiopian Parliament has set a new ministerial arrangement for Labour and Skills. This arrangement positions us in a better way not just to manoeuvre through the impacts of the pandemic, but also proved useful in implementing the various ILO and other international agreements that my country has adhered to.

My Ministry is also working in collaboration with employers and workers associations to find ways to set minimum wage, to ensure safety and industrial peace through social dialogue that will entail behavioural change.

As part of the institutional re-arrangement, we have recalibrated our skill development and utilization strategies with emphasis on innovation, skill flexibility and youth employability. The new approach envisions a region-wide skill development and utilization agenda. Recently, we launched the East African Skills Transformation and Regional Integration Project Centre of Excellence in seven priority areas. We believe such approaches are important to attain the vision of our Continent as enshrined in Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Our strategic intervention promotes collaboration and partnership. In this regard, my Ministry has signed eight inter-ministerial memorandum of understanding to foster policy coherence and coordination of engagements. We also concluded four bilateral labour agreements with major receiving countries in order to regulate clandestine migration, prevent human trafficking, protect the rights, dignity and safety of citizens working overseas.

Mr President

Reform and changes are not easy rather full of challenges and lengthy processes. But, I assure you that we are working relentlessly to address the challenges and change them to opportunities.

We are optimistic that the outcomes of this Conference will enhance our solidarity and strengthen global partnership to respond to the daunting political, socio-economic and environmental challenges of our time.

As Ethiopia is preparing to celebrate the one hundred years anniversary of its membership to the International Labour Organization, let me conclude by once again recommitting ourselves to multilateralism and to the works of this historic organisation.

I thank you!