



Governing Body

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Policy Development Section

POL

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Draft minutes of the Policy Development Section

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Employment and Social Protection Segment

1. Report of the Meeting of Experts on wage policies, including living wages (GB.350/POL/1)

1. The Governing Body had before it an amendment to the draft decision, proposed by the Workers' group and circulated by the Office, which read:
 5. The Governing Body:
 - (a) took note of the conclusions of the Meeting of Experts on wage policies, including living wages, and authorized the Director-General to publish and disseminate them;
 - (b) requested the Director-General to allocate sufficient resources and to take account of its guidance regarding future ILO activities on wage policies, including living wages;
 - (c) requested the Director-General to present an implementation report to its 353rd (March 2025) Session.
2. **The Worker spokesperson** said that the meeting of experts had been another step in the long struggle for the redistribution of the wealth produced by workers. Injustice, hardship and deprivation continued to cause unrest because millions of workers lacked access to a living wage. The issue of living wages remained one of the most urgent challenges in the world of work. The overwhelming misalignment of wages with workers' needs had driven multinationals and consultancy firms to develop their own living wage methodologies, although often without considering ILO principles for wage negotiations or realities at the national level.
3. The conclusions of the meeting of experts would enable the ILO to regain the lead in the field of wages, including living wages. The ILO was the only multilateral institution whose original mandate encompassed wages, and any wage setting should be based on its global standards and principles and involve the social partners; the conclusions of the meeting of experts demonstrated that the mandate given by the Governing Body could be fulfilled through social dialogue. The conclusions should be implemented urgently to address workers' suffering and encourage governments to promote incremental progression from minimum wages to living wages. To translate the conclusions into real wages, the experts had incorporated into them the ILO's principles of estimating the living wage, acknowledging that living wages should be arrived at through wage-setting processes, in line with ILO principles. Collective bargaining represented the main mechanism for wage setting.
4. The Workers' group would therefore require sufficient resources to cover the expected increase in workload in relation to wages. The conclusions should be broadly disseminated within the ILO and as part of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, as well as among other international organizations. His group's proposed amendments to the draft decision were intended to ensure that the constituents were able to take ownership of the matter and were apprised of all developments.
5. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the meeting of experts had been an important opportunity to reaffirm the ILO's leadership on the issue of wages, including in establishing a credible methodology for setting living wages, and had helped to promote the social partners' key role in wage-setting processes and to promote the coherence of living wage initiatives aligned with the ILO key principles of wage-setting processes. The Meeting had resulted in an agreed concept of living wages that incorporated the needs of workers and their families and an assessment of economic environments, and participants had given the ILO a clear mandate

to develop proper methodologies to define them. The Meeting's conclusions aligned fully with the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), and made clear that the concept of living wages must be considered within broader social and economic contexts, requiring wage-setting processes to be balanced between workers and businesses and harnessing data and statistics in an evidence-based approach.

6. Concern had been expressed that existing unilateral living wage initiatives, which did not provide a legitimate or coherent basis for estimating workers' needs, overlooked crucial elements such as transparency, peer review, local engagement and implications for local employers and workers not linked to global supply chains or global activity. It was therefore important to factor productivity and economic contexts into living wages. The living wage-setting process required proper governance, and the Employer's group therefore welcomed the mandate given to the ILO to further engage with such initiatives to promote alignment with ILO wage principles. The conclusions of the meeting of experts represented an important milestone since they consolidated the ILO as the international reference institution on issues related to wages, provided an authoritative document and guided the follow-up work to be undertaken by the Office. The Employers' group encouraged all international and national stakeholders involved in wage-setting processes to apply the ILO principles and methodologies jointly agreed upon by the constituents. Her group remained committed to promoting adequate wages and would support the ILO's communication strategy on living wages, its principles for wage setting and its methodology for estimating living wages.
7. The amendments to the draft decision proposed by the Workers' group might not be necessary. Sufficient resources should be provided under the programme and budget, and she would welcome clarification from the Office as to whether the proposed amendment to subparagraph (b) would have any substantive effect on their allocation. The proposed implementation report would place unnecessary pressure on the Office and constituents, who would be required to deal with an additional item on the agenda of the Governing Body's session in March 2025. The Office must be given sufficient time to review, develop and pilot methodologies before their implementation could be followed up. The mandate given to the Office at the meeting of experts covered all necessary steps, and arrangements for reporting and follow-up could be considered at a later stage, in consultation with the Office. She therefore supported the original draft decision.
8. **Speaking on behalf of the Government group**, a Government representative of Namibia recalled that decent wages lay at the heart of economic and social development. The meeting of experts and its outcome represented an important step forward in the area of wages, particularly living wages and the Government group fully supported its conclusions. Her group recognized the ILO, by virtue of its tripartite constitutional mandate, as the competent international organization in relation to living wages. The conclusions provided a clear mandate to the Office, which should implement the recommended future action to ensure timely, effective follow-up and real-world impact. The conclusions were a solid basis for further work by the ILO and its constituents on wage policies, including in relation to living wages. The Director-General should therefore promote them in the multilateral system and through partnerships with other United Nations (UN) bodies and international organizations, including through the Global Coalition for Social Justice.
9. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of Gabon expressed satisfaction at the adoption of the conclusions of the meeting of experts, particularly the aspects to be considered during wage setting, including collective bargaining and tripartite negotiations, gender equality and the underlying causes of low wages. The implementation of the methodology for setting living wages should take account of local and regional differences

and be undertaken mainly through tripartite and bipartite negotiation, particularly collective bargaining. The Office should provide technical assistance to the tripartite constituents in order to strengthen the institutions involved in wage setting, particularly those involved in establishing minimum wages, through more effective social dialogue based on collective bargaining. The Africa group supported the draft decision as amended by the Workers' group.

10. **Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC)**, a Government representative of Mexico stressed that collective and tripartite bargaining that involved transparent social dialogue, took into account national contexts and respected the autonomy of workers' and employers' organizations were indispensable for the establishment of living wages. GRULAC welcomed recent initiatives by employers to make progress towards living wages; they would benefit from the guidance set out in the conclusions and should consider the relevant ILO principles and standards. Any developments on living wages should guarantee decent, fair remuneration that ensured gender equality; women must enjoy the same working conditions as men and receive the same pay for the same work. The conclusions of the meeting of experts should be disseminated in the multilateral system and by working with other UN organizations, including through the Global Coalition for Social Justice. The Office should allocate resources to providing technical assistance to Member States when requested. GRULAC supported the draft decision as amended by the Workers' group.
11. **Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States**, a Government representative of Belgium said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Norway aligned themselves with the statement. She voiced full support for the conclusions of the meeting of experts which formed a solid base for further work on living wages by the ILO and its constituents. She welcomed the plans for future action by the ILO and its constituents to support wage-setting processes and living wages on the basis of the conclusions and highlighted that the conclusions reflected the fact that adopting a single mechanism for wage setting and estimating living wages was impossible. Wage setting varied widely in EU Member States, for example, and it was important that tripartite social dialogue and strong, well-informed collective bargaining considered local and regional differences. The conclusions' clear distinction between living wages as a human right and the means by which they should be achieved was welcome, as was their acknowledgement of the difficulties of wage setting in supply chains.
12. The ILO should engage with existing living wage initiatives to promote alignment with its living wage principles and learn from experiences in developing and implementing them. The EU and its Member States strongly supported the conclusions as a necessary next step in establishing living wages, ideally through national wage-setting systems with the involvement of social partners. They welcomed the recommended follow-up action and supported the dissemination of the conclusions among ILO constituents and organizations, in the multilateral system and through partnership with other UN bodies and international organizations. She supported the draft decision as amended by the Workers' group, although she sought confirmation from the Office as to whether the time frame for the proposed implementation report was feasible.
13. **Speaking on behalf of the Governments of Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**, a Government representative of Sweden welcomed the conclusions and expressed the hope that the ILO and its constituents would take concrete action to support wage-setting processes and the implementation of living wages. As the UN agency responsible for labour and wage issues and the only tripartite UN agency, the ILO was competent to define and operationalize the concept of living wages and guide future work in the area. All multilateral institutions, stakeholders and companies should apply the conclusions of the

meeting of experts. For more than a century, the social partners of the Nordic countries and Austria had had autonomous responsibility for wage setting through collective agreements. Consequently, there was no statutory general minimum wage in those countries, and negotiated wages were deemed inherently adequate. It was therefore important to acknowledge that wage setting was a national matter and that national systems varied widely.

14. **A Government representative of India** emphasized the need for collaborative efforts in establishing mutually agreed criteria for a methodology to calculate living wages. Clarity on the principles governing wage determination was essential for implementing living wages effectively and defining the scope of the ILO's mandate. The decent living standards component of living wages should include health, education and living standards, as measured by indicators relating to, for example, nutrition, school attendance and sanitation.
15. The ILO had the opportunity to showcase its expertise in wage policies and offer technical assistance to enhance Member States' capacities, at their request. It could also afford technical assistance to national statistics offices in developing frameworks for the systematic collection of relevant data and should provide capacity-building on wage setting to the tripartite constituents. Collaborative efforts with regional training institutions could be explored to enhance the effectiveness of such efforts. The ILO should also conduct additional research on wage setting, living wage initiatives and emerging forms of employment in order to establish an evidence base that highlighted the positive economic outcomes of living wages. She urged the ILO to fully leverage the Global Coalition for Social Justice, the UN Summit of the Future and the UN World Social Summit as platforms for advocating for living wages. She supported the draft decision.
16. **A Government representative of Namibia** described some of her Government's initiatives aimed at ensuring that workers were paid a living wage. Wage setting was imperative in the world of work, as it ensured that workers received fair and equitable compensation for their labour, acknowledged their contribution and helped address income inequality. Collective bargaining and tripartite social dialogue were cornerstones in that endeavour. Her Government recognized the ILO's continued support for strengthening wage-setting processes and institutions, promotion of the ratification and implementation of all relevant international labour standards and technical assistance for tripartite constituents, thereby regaining its global leadership on the issue of wage policies, including living wages.
17. **A Government representative of Indonesia** detailed measures taken by his Government on wage policies and minimum wage setting, which included national regulations that took local contexts into account. Efforts towards achieving a decent standard of living should be comprehensive, encompassing not only income but also social security, welfare benefits and healthcare. He agreed that fair and adequate wages could be ensured through bipartite and tripartite dialogue at both the national and regional levels. He supported the draft decision.
18. **A Government representative of the United States of America** said that paying workers a stable and predictable living wage laid the foundation for inclusive and equitable societies and prosperous economies. She welcomed the conclusions' emphasis on collective bargaining and tripartite social dialogue, which were key to wage setting. She supported the principles for living wage estimation detailed in the conclusions which could produce workable and reliable estimates for living wages and improve the outcome of wage setting for workers, employers and governments. She also agreed with the need for the Office to continue to study and highlight the root causes of poverty and low wages. The Office should actively raise awareness of the concept of living wages, provide technical support and guidance to constituents, engage with living wage initiatives to foster their alignment with the conclusions of the meeting of

experts and continue to build the knowledge base around living wages. Her Government supported in principle the amendments to the draft decision proposed by the Workers' group, although it was flexible on the timing of the Office's implementation report to the Governing Body.

19. **A Government representative of Malawi** requested the Office to assist Member States, particularly developing countries, in gathering data for evidence-based wage setting and meaningful collective bargaining in line with relevant international labour standards. The Office should also provide technical assistance to tripartite constituents to strengthen wage-setting institutions, including social dialogue and collective bargaining, by supporting governments in data collection and supporting labour inspectorates to enhance compliance. She also requested the Office to offer technical assistance to constituents in the areas of skills development, productivity improvement and the creation of enabling environments for sustainable enterprises, as well as job creation, the extension of social protection and macroeconomic policies for the creation of decent jobs, with a specific focus on young persons.
20. **A Government representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that her Government supported the recommendations for future action by the Office, noting the ILO's pivotal role in capacity-building within the UN system and beyond. As 2024 Chairperson of the Government Group of the United Nations Global Compact, her Government would be interested to learn of the Office's plans for future collaboration with the Global Compact's Forward Faster initiative, which placed living wages at the heart of its activities, and of any plans to leverage the opportunity to raise awareness of the Global Coalition for Social Justice among the thousands of corporate members of the Global Compact. Living wages could be powerful policy levers for tackling poverty, inequality and economic exploitation and promoting more inclusive economic growth and decent work. They were also good for business, bringing benefits such as improved performance and staff retention. She agreed with the recommendation for the Office to support constituents' wage-setting efforts through direct technical assistance, guidance and research. Her Government supported the draft decision and could be flexible on the amendment proposed by the Workers' group.
21. **A Government representative of Chile** outlined the measures adopted in his country in relation to the minimum wage, which had recently been subject to the biggest increase in 25 years, in cooperation with the social partners. He agreed on the need for continued technical support from the Office as set out in paragraph 16(a) of the document and supported the draft decision.
22. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster) in response to the question on the impact of the amendment to subparagraph (b) of the draft decision proposed by the Workers' group, said that for the time being the resources allocated to wage-related activities, including living wages, came under the Programme and Budget for 2024–25. It was also hoped that the Office could continue to count on extrabudgetary resources in support of those activities, and she invited governments to provide further financial support.
23. The timing of the submission of the proposed implementation report to the Governing Body depended on the kind of report expected. A relatively concise report providing information on action taken, progress made and the direction in which the Office was going might be feasible, but not by March 2025 given the Office's already heavy workload that owed in part to the anticipated increase in requests for technical assistance from Member States in relation to wage setting, as well as to the production of the next edition of the Global Wage Report. Moreover, such a report should be prepared only when there had been sufficient results of

which to inform the Governing Body. She therefore suggested that such a report could be submitted in late 2025 or March 2026. The ILO had participated in the launch of the Forward Faster initiative and would continue to engage with it.

24. **Another Employer spokesperson** said that the decision on the date for the submission of the proposed report could perhaps be taken by the Screening Group.
25. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the support expressed by most Governments for his group's proposed amendments to the draft decision and expressed the hope that they would provide the necessary extrabudgetary resources. The Workers' group could agree to subamend its proposed subparagraph (c) of the draft decision to request that the Director-General present an implementation report to the 355th (October–November 2025) Session of the Governing Body. In fact, that date would be timely since the Programme and Budget for the next biennium would be agreed and adopted by the Governing Body in early 2025, affording greater clarity on funding. The report could be relatively simple and aim to raise awareness of the matter among the constituents.
26. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, the Government representative of Belgium said that the EU and its Member States would prefer the report to be submitted in 2026.
27. **The Worker spokesperson** asked whether, given the support voiced in the room for his group's original proposal for a report in March 2025 and in the light of the importance placed on the matter by the Governing Body, the EU and its Member States could reconsider and accept submission of the report at the October–November 2025 session.
28. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, the Government representative of Belgium accepted the proposed subamendment.
29. **The Employer spokesperson** said that his group believed that it was not necessary to impose a deadline for the proposed implementation report; work on such a fundamental matter would continue over the coming months.
30. **The representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster) noting that developments on the matter would continue, said that the Office could prepare a short report on the progress made up to September 2025, provided that it did not become a significant reporting obligation and depending on the level of detail required.
31. **The Chairperson** suggested that a pragmatic solution would to subamend proposed subparagraph (c) to read "requested the Director-General to present an implementation report when possible".
32. **The Employer spokesperson** supported that proposal; it meant that the Office could report back to the Governing Body when it had substantive information on the issue, irrespective of the date.
33. **The Worker spokesperson** said that it was clear that there was consensus for October–November 2025. The Workers could not accept "when possible", which was ambiguous. The decision should be taken by the Governing Body, rather than the Screening Group.
34. **Speaking on behalf of the Governments of Colombia and Chile**, a Government representative of Colombia highlighting the importance of setting a date for the submission of the implementation report to ensure that progress continued to be made, expressed support for October–November 2025.

35. **The Government representative of the United States** said that it would be important to receive updates on the implementation of the conclusions and supported the idea of requesting the Office to submit the report at the October–November 2025 Governing Body session.
36. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, the Government representative of Belgium supported specifying the date of October–November 2025.
37. **The Employer spokesperson** said that, in the spirit of consensus and flexibility, his group could support a date of October–November 2025, provided that the report was very brief. The matter of whether it should become a recurring item on the Governing Body's agenda should be discussed at a later date.

Decision

38. **The Governing Body:**
 - (a) **took note of the conclusions of the Meeting of Experts on wage policies, including living wages, and authorized the Director-General to publish and disseminate them;**
 - (b) **requested the Director-General to allocate sufficient resources and to take account of its guidance regarding future ILO activities on wage policies, including living wages;**
 - (c) **requested the Director-General to present an implementation report to its 355th Session (October–November 2025).**

(GB.350/POL/1, paragraph 5, as amended by the Governing Body)

Social Dialogue Segment

2. Update on the Better Work programme (GB.350/POL/2)

39. **The Employer spokesperson** reiterated his group's strong support for the Better Work programme, notably its factory services. Evidence showed that supply chains were engines for decent work; they should therefore be optimized by creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, which, by definition, generated decent work. Inspection, identification and remediation of failures at the factory level represented the link between regulatory systems and the effective creation of that enabling environment. By providing robust mechanisms for addressing issues at the factory level, the Better Work programme had contributed to the development of an ecosystem in which firms could enhance both their economic vitality and their legal compliance.
40. The Office document stated that, as an ILO programme, Better Work must follow Office procedures and rules and be subject to Governing Body oversight. However, the Governing Body had not discussed the programme in ten years, and input from the programme's Advisory Committee had not been fairly reflected in the strategy document. Therefore, the Governing Body must review the key findings of the Phase V Strategy (2022–27) before it ended, with a view to informing the strategy for the subsequent phase. His group had therefore submitted an amendment to the draft decision, which read:

The Governing Body noted the update provided by the Office and requested the Director-General to take its guidance into account in the management of the Better Work programme and report back on the evaluation of the Strategy 2022–2027 during the March 2026 Governing Body to inform the Better Work Phase VI Strategy.

41. In terms of mandate and scope, the value of the programme lay in its core activity of factory-level assessment and engagement. Its research agenda should therefore focus directly on related topics, rather than moving beyond that core activity and potentially duplicating or competing with the work of other ILO teams; it was concerning that the priority themes of the Phase V Strategy included cross-cutting themes. More specifically, the Better Work programme should be aligned with the ILO's agreed policy on business and human rights, in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and not mandatory human rights due diligence.
42. Further efforts should be made to consider how engagement with companies under the programme could better support ILO constituents, notably by coordinating with the most representative employers' organizations when engaging with buyers. That would strengthen the representativeness of employers' organizations, better promote the ILO and its national constituents, and provide practical solutions for addressing communications barriers. The Office must also coordinate with the secretariat of the Employers' group to keep the group informed about those engagement efforts, while the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) should remain the entry point with the private sector when facilitating engagement between buyers and ILO technical departments.
43. He welcomed the information about the sustainability of the programme and stressed the need to develop clear strategies for phasing it out in all countries of operation. That required the identification of key metrics for success, including financial sustainability, and indicators on the conditions required for the continuation of the activities established by Better Work, including after the programme had left a country.
44. **The Worker spokesperson** underscored the importance of ensuring that the Better Work programme was aligned with the objectives of the ILO's priority action programme on decent work outcomes in supply chains. He thanked the staff and donors for the results achieved, notably in terms of programme growth, improved coordination with other ILO projects, closer relationships with constituents and increased buyer engagement. However, there were issues with the design and implementation of the programme in certain countries. Independent evaluations of programme implementation in Lesotho, Nicaragua and Haiti, for example, had uncovered failures to take sufficient account of national context in programme design, while the programme schedule was often determined by donors, rather than being based on strategic planning by the Office. The challenges resulting in the closure of the Lesotho Better Work programme were another example. It was vital to improve project design through consultation with the social partners and consideration of country-specific needs, particularly in terms of resources and buyer engagement.
45. It was essential to ensure that the budget included support to build the institutional capacity of the social partners, with a particular focus on enabling the effective participation of workers' organizations at all stages of the programme cycle. His group would like additional information on how the Better Work programme contributed to trade union organization and collective bargaining. Moreover, as the programme was increasingly run in countries that lacked adequate legislation and enforcement in that area, further efforts were needed to promote stronger industrial relations, support social dialogue and enable workers' organizations to express concerns more freely in performance improvement consultative committees.
46. Although progress had been made, more must be done to improve coordination with other ILO projects, notably to leverage specialist internal knowledge concerning the capacity development of employers' and workers' organizations. The focus should be on the normative mandate of the Organization, with particular attention given to wages, trade union rights and

social security. Additional progress was also needed on sustainability and ownership, where gaps were partly due to the focus on evaluation rather than capacity-building of constituents, resulting in a dependence on the presence of the Better Work programme and an inability to take ownership of projects. Furthermore, the programme's focus on factory services had led to difficulties in translating factory-level policies into national policies. Poor links between the programme and other ILO departments were also undermining sustainability and increases in efficiency.

47. Freedom of association and collective bargaining must continue to form the basis of the Better Work programme; without them, the long-term sustainability of projects and industrial relations alike would remain precarious. Before expressing a view on the draft decision, he wished to know how those fundamental rights would be incorporated into the programme.
48. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Namibia expressed appreciation for the Better Work programme, in particular its factory services, the associated reform of labour laws, and the coordinated delivery with other ILO projects and specialists. The programme had seen particular success in both Ethiopia and Egypt and should be rolled out more widely as the garment sector grew across the continent. However, challenges remained, and particular attention should be given to learning lessons from the closure of the Lesotho Better Work programme. One challenge was funding; given the current heavy reliance on extrabudgetary resources, it was vital to re-examine the financial structure of the programme. It was regrettable that the Governing Body had not been permitted to contribute to the development of the strategy. She asked for further information on the contribution of the programme to the indicators in the ILO's programme and budget, notably in relation to its budget allocation. Her group supported the draft decision as amended by the Employers' group.
49. **Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG)**, a Government representative of Australia highlighted the importance of the Better Work programme within his region. In the light of its rapid growth over the past decade, and the associated funding challenges, he urged the Office to explore innovative financing sources and cost-effective service delivery methods, without jeopardizing engagement and outcomes. It was essential to continue to promote economic resilience and inclusive growth by partnering with governments, employers, unions, workers and buyers to improve application of labour standards, reduce gender discrimination, boost decent work and improve competitiveness and productivity within the garment industry. Capacity-building and arrangements for reducing reliance on Better Work were also key. More specifically, working with local and national constituents to improve the alignment of regional and national frameworks would contribute to addressing the root causes of decent work deficits, and a strong gender equality focus was also critical. The group remained committed to ensuring that the Better Work programme delivered value for money and remained responsive to new challenges, and would continue to engage with all partners on its further development. It preferred the original draft decision but was open to other views.
50. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Mexico noted the progress made with implementation of the programme, and commended the four strategic goals of the Phase V Strategy. The areas of gender equality and diversity, occupational safety and health, social protection and environmental sustainability were of particular importance to her group. She encouraged the Office to ensure the programme addressed contemporary challenges in the world of work as part of a "One ILO" approach. Given its added value as a catalyst for tripartite cooperation, implementation should prioritize the development of national capacities and a gradual transition towards a successful conclusion by strengthening institutions with a view to reducing dependency. The proposal to align the Better Work

programme with other ILO priorities and strategies was therefore positive; that would also prevent duplication of efforts. She welcomed efforts to expand the human and financial resources of the project, and asked what criteria were used to select countries for participation in the programme, and whether any countries from her region were likely to be included. As to the challenges and mitigating measures identified for the future stages of the programme, the introduction of simple indicators could provide an overview of financial needs and measure impact. Her group supported the amendment proposed by the Employers' group, but remained willing to discuss the matter further in the interests of reaching an agreement.

51. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Belgium said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway and Armenia aligned themselves with the statement. As some of the largest donors, the EU and its Member States welcomed the positive results and expansion of Better Work programme. The improvements in compliance and working conditions at the factory level were particularly encouraging, as they had a demonstrated positive impact on productivity and competitiveness, and in supply chains. She also commended the achievements in addressing women's economic empowerment, skills development and representation in social dialogue, and noted that the programme's contribution to eliminating violence and harassment at work was aligned with the objectives of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No.190).
52. As social dialogue played a pivotal role in ensuring compliance and improving grievance mechanisms, she commended efforts to facilitate it through engagement at the national, sectoral and factory levels. She requested specific examples of the programme's successes and the challenges encountered during fieldwork, and further insights into its impact at the enterprise level, including how experience was transformed into long-term practices along global supply chains and at the country and sectoral levels.
53. Improved transparency was needed to address rights abuses in the garment sector; public data would help hold companies accountable and empower workers for evidence-based collective bargaining to enhance working conditions. To sustain progress in that area, it was vital to increase the participation of national trade union organizations in evaluating the Better Work programme to ensure the data was relevant to national reports and accurately reflected the situation in the programme countries. In addition, better knowledge of specific challenges would contribute to more sustainable positive outcomes. It was essential to develop a strategy for responsibly phasing out the programme in countries that had achieved significant progress.
54. She expressed appreciation for the focus on cooperation with the ILO constituents, the International Finance Corporation and the private sector at the national and global levels, as that was important for a better understanding of compliance, fundamental principles and rights at work, and labour legislation, especially among buyers. The programme should continue to be shaped alongside partners, and through further synergies with other ILO and UN priorities, including those relating to just transitions and mandatory human rights due diligence processes, and the outcome of the Meeting of Experts on wage policies, including living wages. The Office should also explore how the Better Work approach might be relevant to other economic sectors and inspire responsible business practice more generally. She expressed support for the continued involvement of employers, workers and their representatives as the programme advanced through its fifth phase. Her group supported the original draft decision, but remained flexible with regard to the proposed amendment.

- 55. Speaking on behalf of the Governments of Australia, Canada and Switzerland**, a Government representative of Canada noted the timeliness of the discussion in the context of the adoption of the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains and the launch of the associated priority action programme. She recognized the positive impact of the Better Work programme on working conditions, compliance with international labour standards and business competitiveness. The investment in independent research to document the programme's impact on enterprises and workers and inform programme activities was also commendable. The programme should further promote social dialogue and advance gender equality and inclusion, in alignment with the ILO's Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–25 and Integrated Strategy on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2017–23. She asked how internal capacities on gender mainstreaming and the effective tracking of impacts on gender equality would be reinforced through monitoring, data collection and research. She also wished to know more about the respective roles of the ILO and the International Finance Corporation in programme management, and how that collaboration could be further strengthened. She asked for details of future plans, specifically on projected growth and expansion or consolidation, and encouraged the Office to speed up plans for phasing out interventions in contexts where the programme had a long-standing presence.
- 56.** Other programmes beyond the garment sector could benefit from the experience and expertise gained in the Better Work programme, particularly with regard to collective bargaining and engagement with the private sector. She therefore requested further details on plans to engage with the priority action programme on decent work outcomes in supply chains. Finally, given the evolving nature of the garment sector, due to changes in legislation, consumer demand, trade policy or climate change, she encouraged the Office to continue adjusting the programme's model of intervention and develop a vision for the future. Her group preferred the original draft decision, but remained open to other views concerning the proposed amendment.
- 57. A Government representative of Japan** said that the Office should consider expanding the programme to other labour-intensive sectors, or provide data to justify its continued focus on the garment sector. Data on the proportion of global supply chains in international trade would also be useful to establish how the Better Work programme could address decent work deficits within them. Data-based evaluation and the use of concrete indicators were particularly important to donors, and should be expanded to other projects funded by voluntary contributions. He asked for more details about how synergies occurred between Better Work and other ILO priorities and strategies, notably the Global Coalition for Social Justice. His Government supported the original draft decision, but could be flexible regarding the proposed amendment.
- 58. A Government representative of the United States** expressed particular appreciation for the collaboration between the ILO and the International Finance Corporation, and the support provided by the global secretariat for country programmes, which ensured consistency and enabled the sharing of expertise across the programme. Strengthening the integration of policy guidance from the supervisory bodies, with practical implementation at the field level, should be a priority for the programme. Her Government also welcomed the efforts to further integrate Better Work within broader ILO operations and align it with other high-level ILO strategies, including the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains and the integrated strategy for the promotion and implementation of the right to collective bargaining.
- 59.** The programme should continue to prioritize capacity-building on freedom of association and collective bargaining; she requested more information on the impact of those efforts and plans for engaging brands on the issue. In terms of the key challenges, it was important to continue

taking into account evaluation findings and research in developing and implementing changes. Additional information on the results of the various approaches to fostering sustainability would be particularly welcome. She supported the original draft decision, but could be flexible with regard to the proposed amendment.

60. **A Government representative of Indonesia** said that his Government had been collaborating with the Better Work programme since 2011. As it worked with labour inspectors and mediators, including providing capacity-building, the programme was effective in assisting companies to navigate the complexities of labour laws and regulations. The Government stood ready to align the Better Work Indonesia programme with national regulations. The programme should encourage national ownership and bolster the capacity of constituent to adhere to international labour standards in alignment with their individual national agenda and priorities, thereby contributing to the overarching goal of sustainable development. Indonesia supported the draft decision.
61. **A Government representative of Pakistan** noted that his Government was a funding partner for the Better Work programme. It had signed memorandums of understanding for policy reforms, particularly on freedom of association and collective bargaining. The enforcement of legislation had been prioritized, the labour inspectorate had been expanded and training provided for workers and employers nationwide. Bipartite change committees had been formed, underscoring Pakistan's commitment to ethical supply chains. For maximization of benefits, eligible small and medium-sized enterprises would be enrolled in the programme, which would address resource needs and aid in rebalancing Pakistan's export base.
62. **A Government representative of the Republic of Korea** said that, under its partnership programme with the ILO, his Government had supported Better Work initiatives in Bangladesh on the promotion of women to supervisory positions and on maternity protection. He welcomed the fact that the Better Work programme was creating positive outcomes in a number of countries, and expressed the hope that such outcomes would continue and grow. His Government highly appreciated the ILO's work on promoting decent work in supply chains and supported the draft decision.
63. **A Government representative of Colombia** said that the doubling of the number of factories and trebling of the number of workers covered by the Better Work programme was important in extending social justice to the seven new countries that had joined. The fact that high-income countries were among the programme's main donors was welcome, as they consumed a large share of textiles. He welcomed progress made in maternity protection and the reduction of sexual harassment at work, both of which were essential to decent work. As the programme had synergies with high-level ILO initiatives, the Office should consider including it in the Global Coalition for Social Justice, since their objectives were intrinsically aligned. As the programme had considerable potential impact, he reiterated the request that it should be extended to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean who considered it to be in their interests, including in sectors other than textiles.
64. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General of the Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster) thanked the members of the Governing Body for their support of the Better Work programme. The programme did not operate in isolation and was intended to strengthen national labour institutions in terms of access to justice, labour inspection, labour law reforms and dispute prevention and resolution. All of those strands were gathered in a shared framework for policy coherence.
65. Since its launch in 2009, Better Work had changed its manner of operation at the country level. In countries such as Madagascar, which are part of the latest generation of programmes, there

are no factory-level interventions. Instead, the programme's role was to bring together tripartite constituents and other stakeholders to identify the critical problems and to gain a clearer understanding of the context, which ensured that Better Work would respond to national needs and fulfil its objectives.

66. Regarding links with other ILO programmes, she explained that, as of the current biennium, Better Work had been incorporated into programme and budget proposals and had become an integral part of the multi-disciplinary and multi-departmental teams that worked together to deliver a variety of outputs. That would enhance the accountability of the programme to the Governing Body. Moreover, in 2023, the Governing Body had adopted strategies concerning occupational safety and health, collective bargaining and decent work in supply chains, and Better Work was involved in consultations across the Office to determine how best to contribute to those broader efforts. Concerning the priority action programme on decent work outcomes in supply chains, the Better Work programme would support research and contribute to the promotion of the fundamental principles and rights at work in supply chains and of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration).
67. On the relationship between Better Work and the Global Coalition for Social Justice, she remarked that the Better Work programme was itself a coalition, with partners including ILO constituents, garment manufacturers, the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank Group, and it addressed several of the same thematic priorities of social justice.
68. The programme's interventions differed depending on country contexts, but all elements were included in a shared framework as part of a "One ILO" approach to ensure policy coherence.
69. Better Work contributed to the promotion of freedom of association and collective bargaining, by monitoring compliance at the factory level and gathering time-series data on unionization rates and collective bargaining. It also helped to provide capacity-building for social partners on collective bargaining and management of grievances. The Office had agreed to launch the Better Work programme in Uzbekistan on the condition that improvements were made to freedom of association, in accordance with the observations of the ILO supervisory system, and discussions were ongoing with the World Bank Group on measures to incentivize such outcomes.
70. **Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Governance and Tripartism Department) added that the Better Work programme operated in the garment sector, which was labour-intensive and mainly employed women, with many migrants and young people. Evidence had shown that decent jobs could be transformative for workers, businesses and also countries, especially those looking to industrialize.
71. The programme sought to focus on how impacts could be sustained, including by reducing the programme's presence at the appropriate time. Different models were developed at the sectoral level, taking into account country context and constituent perspectives. Sustainable disengagement had to be examined carefully. There was no intention to expand the programme; rather, the goal was to consolidate and sustain the gains made.
72. **The Worker spokesperson** requested the Office to provide, in its next evaluation of the strategy, more information on the situation of collective bargaining and freedom of association in the countries in the programme. On that condition, the Workers' group could support the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.
73. **The representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General of the Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster) confirmed that the Office would do so.

- 74. The Employer spokesperson** noted that the Governing Body unanimously agreed on the value, results and potential of the Better Work programme. The clarification that constituents in the country would be consulted from the outset was welcomed. His group's amendment aimed to ensure that the Office would report to the Governing Body before it finalized the strategy for the next phase of the programme, so that the Governing Body's input could be incorporated.
- 75. The representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General of the Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster) said that the final assessment of the 2022–27 strategy would be available in June 2027. As the assessment was data-driven and covered 13 countries and thousands of factories, it required time. The Office could report to the Governing Body in November 2026, but it would be a mid-term evaluation of the first phase of the period under review. That would ensure that the Governing Body's guidance could be incorporated in the strategy for the next phase.
- 76. The Employer spokesperson** proposed a subamendment to change the date of the evaluation of the strategy from March 2026 to November 2026.

Decision

- 77. The Governing Body noted the update provided by the Office and requested the Director-General to take its guidance into account in the management of the Better Work programme and to report on the evaluation of the Phase V Strategy (2022–27) during the November 2026 session of the Governing Body to inform the Better Work Phase VI Strategy.**

(GB.350/POL/2, paragraph 56, as amended by the Governing Body)

3. Sectoral meetings held in 2023 and proposals for sectoral work in 2024–25 (GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1))

- 78. The Worker spokesperson** said that it was clear from the conclusions of the technical meeting on digitalization in the retail sector as an engine for economic recovery and decent work that more remained to be done to enhance social dialogue in the sector. He urged the Office to prioritize collective bargaining in relation to the introduction of new technology, alongside actions to ensure safe and healthy working environments and conditions, the design and implementation of policies and strategies to limit working hours and the preservation of work–life balance. Recognizing the significant decent work deficit in the inland waterways sector, he encouraged the Office to begin implementing the conclusions of the technical meeting on decent and sustainable work in the inland waterways sector by prioritizing regional meetings, initially in Asia and Latin America, followed by Africa. Promoting regional ownership of those conclusions would improve working conditions in the sector. The Office should ensure appropriate follow-up to the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, paying particular attention to cooperation between the ILO and the UN.
- 79.** The document's lack of information relating to the world of sport was disappointing given that the Office had committed to undertaking a study of fundamental principles and rights at work in the sector. The points of consensus resulting from the 2020 Global Dialogue Forum on Decent Work in the World of Sport should drive future action and dialogue, including a meeting of experts once the study had been completed, as had been discussed previously by the Sectoral Advisory Bodies in 2023. He asked when that proposed meeting of experts would take place, emphasizing that it should be convened within the current biennium. He also asked the

Office to provide an update on the study, particularly in the light of the ongoing denial of athletes' labour rights in a year in which the Olympic Games were to be held. His group supported the draft decision, although he reserved the right to submit an amendment depending on the responses received from the Office.

80. **The Employer spokesperson** took note of the important conclusions of the technical meeting on digitalization in the retail sector with regard to harnessing the full potential of digitalization and addressing the skills mismatches resulting from it. The ILO should help to build constituents' capacity to promote skills development programmes. The conclusions of the technical meeting on the inland waterways sector would guide the transformation of an underexploited but environmentally sustainable transport sector. That would require effective policy measures and investment to address the informality in the sector, assess skill needs and design and create skills development programmes – particularly for women and young persons – through quality education and technical and vocational training. Concerning the teaching profession, she reiterated the importance of teachers for quality education and the need to develop adequate education policies, with particular regard to technology and the transformation of education, just transitions and teaching for entry into the world of work.
81. While she acknowledged that it was the Office's responsibility to inform the nomination of chairpersons in a timely manner prior to each meeting, she recalled that vice-chairpersons were typically nominated by the social partners when their groups met on the first day of those meetings. Therefore, her group supported the draft decision on the understanding that the requirement for the nomination of vice-chairpersons one month prior to each meeting, as mentioned in subparagraph (e) of the draft decision, was aspirational.
82. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Uganda recalled that the Government group of technical meeting on digitalization in the retail sector had been chaired by the Government representative of Zimbabwe, and his group had emphasized the role of digitalization in economic recovery and job creation. He welcomed the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession, highlighting the need for cooperation, adequate funding and the integration of technology for effective learning outcomes. The recommendations of the technical meeting on the inland waterways sector would improve workers' living and working conditions and promote fair competition. Technical meetings facilitated consensus among governments of diverse backgrounds, and he called on the Office to improve the efficiency of time management during those meetings and provide consistent interpreting services. His group endorsed the global sectoral meetings proposed for September 2024 to May 2025 and supported the draft decision.
83. **Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)**, a Government representative of Germany endorsed the proposed programme of sectoral meetings and the current number of meetings which would enable the effective use of resources and active participation of governments. Sectoral meetings' outcomes and recommendations should influence policies and actions in the relevant sectors, and the ILO should incorporate them into future policy development. She repeated her group's call for a methodological and coordinated approach to following up on the conclusions and recommendations of sectoral meetings. An update on the tripartite consultations on a possible review of the list of sectors would be welcome; she recognized that evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of such a review was a gradual process and recalled the need for flexibility and the effective use of resources in the grouping of sectors. Lastly, she requested an update on the convening of a meeting on social dialogue in the world of sport. IMEC supported the draft decision.

- 84. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Sectoral Policies Department) said that constituents' feedback would be used to shape the Office's work and the programme for the next biennium, and to prepare for the next meeting of the Sectoral Advisory Bodies in January 2025. He said that there were plans to intensify the follow-up of the conclusions of sectoral meetings, although such efforts would require greater and more coherent coordination across the Office. There were also plans to better document such follow-up work, including through reports to the Governing Body. The Office would prepare a proposal regarding a review of the list of sectors and conduct informal consultations with all concerned parties to inform the work of the Sectoral Advisory Bodies in January 2025.
- 85.** An in-depth study on fundamental principles and rights at work in relation to athletes would be published prior to the 112th Session (2024) of the International Labour Conference. The Office would then hold informal consultations to determine whether a sectoral meeting should follow and what format it should take; the final decision could be taken by the Governing Body at the 352nd Session in November 2024. Concerning subparagraph (e) of the draft decision, he recognized the constraints on the social partners in terms of appointing vice-chairpersons for sectoral meetings and agreed that the requirements in that subparagraph could be interpreted as aspirational. His Department was working with the Department of Statistics to develop a database of sectoral statistics that drew on national labour force surveys and provided instant access to current information on the labour market at the global, regional and national levels, broken down by all relevant indicators. That database should be operational in the near future.
- 86. The Worker spokesperson** expressed the hope that, following the publication of the study on fundamental principles and rights at work in the world of sport, the Governing Body would decide to convene a meeting of experts on the matter before the end of the current biennium.
- 87. The Employer spokesperson** said that her group was not ready to agree to convene such a meeting.
- 88. The Worker spokesperson** recalled that the Governing Body would make the decision at its 352nd Session on the basis of the forthcoming study.
- 89. The Employer spokesperson** said that the Sectoral Advisory Bodies in January 2025 should determine whether it would be feasible to convene such a meeting. She did not believe that the Governing Body would be ready to make that decision at its 352nd Session. That said, she was not proposing an amendment to the draft decision.

Decision

- 90. The Governing Body:**
- (a) **approved the records of proceedings of the two technical meetings referred to in section I (A and B) of document GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1) and authorized the Director-General to publish them;**
 - (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 (A and B) of document GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1);**
 - (c) **took note of the Recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession referred to in section I(C) of document GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1), and requested the Director-General to ensure appropriate follow-up action;**

- (d) endorsed the proposals contained in Appendix I to document GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1) relating to the dates, duration, official title, purpose and composition of the meetings listed therein; and
- (e) agreed to notify the Office of the appointment and election of the Chairpersons and three Vice-Chairpersons of the meetings referred to in section II of document GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1) one month prior to each meeting.

(GB.350/POL/3(Rev.1), paragraph 22)

Development Cooperation Segment

4. Report on crisis-related ILO work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (GB.350/POL/4(Rev.1))

91. The Governing Body had before it an amendment to the draft decision, which had been proposed by the countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and circulated by the Office, which read:

The Governing Body:

- (a) took note of the developments outlined in document GB.350/POL/4(Rev.1), including the grave repercussions in the Gaza Strip on jobs, livelihoods and enterprises and the way forward outlined in paragraphs 29–36;
- (b) reiterated its most profound concern at the dire and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, ~~also affecting the West Bank~~, and the severe impact it is having on workers, employers and the civilian population, particularly women, children and others in vulnerable situations, as well as at the extremist settler violence and economic situation in the West Bank;
- (c) ~~took note of all relevant resolutions on the Middle East and recalled Security Council Resolution No. 2720 of 22 December 2023, Security Council Resolution No. 2712 of 15 November 2023, relevant General Assembly resolutions and document GB.349/POL/4(Rev.1) decision,~~ which included a call for all parties to facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip;
- (d) stressed the need to respect ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work and relevant international labour standards and the importance of taking all necessary measures to promote social justice and advance decent work for all Palestinians;
- (e) stressed the importance of ensuring the access, safety and security of ILO staff to deliver on the ILO mandate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;
- (f) welcomed ILO's readiness to engage in the broader United Nations recovery and reconstruction efforts;
- (g) recalled the relevance of the Director-General's annual reports to the International Labour Conference on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories and urged all parties to facilitate the annual mission to Israel and the occupied Arab territories;
- (h) requested the Director-General to continue offering his good offices to support Palestinian workers' access to their workplaces in conditions of occupational safety and health, as well as to strengthen efforts ~~continue~~ to address long-term priorities as highlighted in several Director-General's annual reports to the International Labour Conference, such as the issue of social security funds and permit system reform;
- (i) requested the Office to engage with the relevant authorities to report on dismissals of the Palestinian workers due to the current crisis, as well as any restrictions on their access to the labour market, and to report back on this matter to the Governing Body;

- (ji) supported all efforts to mobilize resources for the continued implementation of the emergency response programme, calling on Member States to urgently fund the programme;
- (kj) requested the Director-General to convene a resource mobilization meeting, on the margin of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference, in June 2024, to prepare for the operational execution of the emergency response programme and to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian constituents; ~~and~~
- (l) recommended to the International Labour Conference that at its 112th Session, the Appendix to the Report of the Director-General on "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" be discussed in the framework of a special sitting in accordance with the same modalities and conditions as those applied in all similar special sittings on the same subject in the past, with a view to providing specific guidance to the Office and the Director-General on appropriate follow-up actions to the findings of the report; and
- (mk) requested the Office to monitor the situation and assess its impact on the world of work and update the Governing Body on ILO's efforts, including on the follow up to the special sitting discussion at the 112th Session of the Conference, through the standing item on the enhanced programme of development cooperation in the occupied Arab territories at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024).

- 92. A representative of the Director-General** (Director, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States), provided an update on recent developments since the Governing Body paper was issued. First, the Office had worked with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to finalize a third bulletin analysing the impact of the crisis on the labour market and livelihoods. Its most recent estimates had revealed that the situation was worsening; around 507,000 jobs had been lost across the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the end of January 2024, and taking into account income lost due to the partial payment of wages had translated into estimated daily losses in labour income of US\$25.5 million. Second, a Gazan ILO staff member had been granted a residency permit allowing him to move, together with his family, to Lebanon to work at the Regional Office on the ILO's emergency response programme for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Third, the Regional Office had developed a new initiative, funded by around US\$700,000 repurposed from the regular budget supplementary account, through which it would partner with the United Nations Development Programme to support women and men in Gaza in obtaining short-term decent employment and to provide healthcare and waste management services. Lastly, in response to an urgent request by ILO constituents, the Regional Office had allocated US\$100,000 to a project aimed at recruiting Palestinian women to provide food for Gazan workers stranded in the West Bank.
- 93. Speaking on behalf of the countries of the OIC**, a Government representative of Pakistan said that the targeted destruction of Gaza and its people currently constituted the greatest threat to the ILO's values. He expressed deep appreciation for the Office's continued efforts to support workers and mitigate the adverse effects of the crisis in Gaza and the West Bank. His group would continue to stand with the people of Palestine.
- 94.** The current crisis had exacerbated existing issues and created new hurdles for the labour force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The resulting economic downturn had generated a significant increase in unemployment, leaving many workers facing poverty, uncertainty and other unprecedented challenges that demanded urgent action. Labour market inequalities had been amplified, with vulnerable groups such as women, migrants and informal workers disproportionately affected by job losses and lack of social protection. It was imperative to address those disparities and ensure that all workers had access to fair wages, decent working conditions and social security.

95. The impact of ongoing violence on workers in the area presented a huge challenge for the months and years ahead. Continuing occupation was widely acknowledged to be the primary root cause of the dismal social and economic situation. The declining financial capacity of the Palestinian Authority was adversely affecting its ability to support employment; as such, the unilateral deductions of clearance revenues by the Israeli authorities and decreased external funding warranted attention. He welcomed the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He expressed appreciation to all countries that had contributed towards the enhanced programme of development cooperation, given its key role in the implementation of the second and third Palestinian Decent Work Programmes. He called on Member States, development partners and donors to provide financial support for the implementation of ongoing projects and the rehabilitation works required in the aftermath of recent tragedies.
96. The immense challenges faced by workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory could be overcome through collective action to build a more resilient and inclusive labour market. His group therefore supported the proposed way forward outlined in the Office document. The intention behind the group's proposed amendment to the draft decision was to enhance the Office's engagement, protect workers and employers in the conflict zone and ensure follow-up action was taken in relation to the Reports of the Director-General.
97. **The Employer spokesperson** emphasized the importance of acknowledging the human cost of the tragic conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. To pave the way towards peace and recovery, the crisis must be met with a joint response characterized by compassion, empathy, understanding and a steadfast commitment to supporting those who had been devastated by recent events.
98. The launch of the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme represented a bold step towards the creation of a resilient economy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The provision of shelter and emergency income support has been fundamental in the immediate relief phase, and efforts must be made to stimulate economic rejuvenation and social healing. The ILO's leadership in providing direct assistance – in particular, the coordination of cash assistance and concerted efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage for all Gazan workers – had been instrumental in addressing the immediate livelihood and income needs of displaced workers. The Organization's collaboration with other UN agencies to streamline efforts and prevent duplication was commendable.
99. Concrete support provided to businesses by the ILO would lay the foundations for resilience and recovery. Businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, were the pillars of community resilience, engines of job creation, sources of innovation and bastions of hope. In the review phase of the emergency response programme, data collection and impact analysis would be essential for crafting effective interventions, and evidence-based decision-making and comprehensive data analysis would be crucial to the development of effective recovery strategies.
100. The detailed assessments produced by the Office in collaboration with other organizations in the UN system and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics provided invaluable insight into the conflict's impact on employment, incomes and livelihoods and supported the design of responsive and resilient interventions. While a focus on data collection and analysis was essential, strategies must translate into tangible benefits for employers and workers, and insights must lead to actionable policies that favoured business recovery, job creation and economic stability. The qualitative assessment of economic and labour market activities in the West Bank underscored the specific challenges faced by employers, which should be

addressed through further targeted interventions that considered the unique context of businesses and the economy at large. To enhance the capacity of the ILO's emergency response programme to adapt to ongoing conflicts, refined scenario planning and more comprehensive guidelines for adjusting activities could be incorporated, enabling more proactive, effective and timely interventions in response to evolving circumstances.

101. Enhancing partnership strategies was also crucial. A more detailed framework for stakeholder engagement could outline shared goals, responsibilities and communication methods, thereby strengthening the programme's foundations and ensuring a coordinated response to complex challenges. Incorporating capacity-building for local communities and organizations would further promote the resilience and self-sufficiency needed for lasting recovery in conflict-affected regions.
102. She commended the courage and resilience of ILO staff members working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and their support for their colleague in Gaza. They faced serious movement restrictions that complicated their operations. The difficulty in securing visas and visa extensions for staff was hindering the Organization's ability to provide surge capacity for its operations in the region and must be addressed. It was concerning that the annual ILO mission would not go ahead owing to visa denials, as over the years the Director-General's annual report had crucially shed light on the declining condition of workers and businesses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the need to address those challenges.
103. It was concerning that no new funding had been made available following the funding appeal launched in November 2023. Unprecedented efforts, commensurate with the severity and urgency of the situation, should therefore be made to mobilize funds. Her group would reserve its position on the draft decision and the amendment proposed by the countries of the OIC until the Governments had presented their views.
104. **Speaking on behalf of the Arab Employers' group**, an Employer member from Bahrain said that the crisis was having a serious impact on livelihoods and constituted an attack on the fundamental principles underpinning the ILO. The ongoing situation in Gaza was deplorable, and the impact on civilians in the West Bank, especially vulnerable groups, was equally concerning. The displacement of thousands of people in Gaza, many of whom had no access to food or water, had created a dangerous situation. Furthermore, illegitimate actions had been taken that violated international law.
105. Securing unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza by road was essential to ensure that people could return to a normal way of life. She called for the release of all hostages and detainees and for an immediate ceasefire, stressing the importance of respecting the fundamental principles and rights upheld by the ILO as well as international labour standards. Every effort must be made to promote social justice and decent work for all Palestinians without discrimination throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community must take the urgent decision to end the deteriorating situation, particularly in Gaza, and to prevent the conflict that had been ongoing for almost a century from spreading within the region. Lastly, she underscored the importance of working towards a two-state solution while reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.
106. **The Worker spokesperson** expressed grave concern at the worsening situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the staggering death toll in Gaza. Vast numbers of Gazans had lost access to their jobs and many front-line workers in the health, education, transport and media sectors had been killed in recent months. Urgent, targeted and coordinated action

was needed to address the humanitarian disaster, as well as job losses, severe restrictions on movement and the devastating impact on livelihoods and businesses.

107. In January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had ordered the Government of Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza and to ensure that civilians in Gaza received humanitarian aid. Despite that, the Government had refused to stop the bombings or open new crossings and facilitate humanitarian access, thereby exposing Palestinians in Gaza to irreparable harm. Efforts must be stepped up to ensure that humanitarian aid, especially food aid, reached its destination by land, particularly as airdrops had proved not just ineffective but dangerous. In the last week, the headquarters of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) in Gaza had been destroyed by bombing. The Federation's staff and infrastructure were essential to the provision of emergency humanitarian aid and the prevention of suffering among Palestinian workers. Israel had continued to announce fresh military attacks in what remained of Gaza, and an imminent invasion of Rafah was feared. Bombings of civilians, including children, the use of starvation as a weapon, closure of land passages and forced displacements were illegal acts perpetrated by the Government of Israel, and a disgrace to humankind.
108. In solidarity with Palestinian workers and employers and their families, her group called for sustainable peace and an immediate, lasting ceasefire. Humanitarian aid must be channelled immediately to the people of Palestine in accordance with the Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War (1949). Efforts towards peace in the region were desperately needed, and urgently required renewed attention and support. The establishment of, and investment in, illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory must stop. All countries must work towards a two-state solution, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a free and independent Palestine. In the meantime, action must be taken to address the plight of Palestinian refugees to ensure peaceful and constructive relations between Israel, Palestine and neighbouring countries. The Office and Member States must intensify efforts to provide an urgent response to support workers and employers and mobilize the necessary funds. Donor countries that had withdrawn financial support from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must restore that support to help the Agency to address the threat of starvation among the people of Gaza.
109. Since the start of the war, Palestinian workers had been unable to work in the Israeli labour market and had collectively lost around 1.35 billion shekels per month in income. Many had been arbitrarily dismissed, and some had resorted to selling their furniture to feed their families. The economy of the West Bank had been paralysed as a consequence of the war. The Government of Israel must fulfil its responsibility to provide those workers with compensation in the form of social protection benefits. Furthermore, around 100,000 Palestinian workers had been replaced with migrant workers. That illegal practice was exacerbating the challenges faced by Palestinian workers and could lead to their permanent exclusion from the labour market, while also contributing towards the economic destabilization of Palestinian communities. The Government of Israel must not be allowed to deprive Palestinian workers of their right to work and fulfil their social and economic aspirations.
110. The ILO must play a leading role on matters concerning the labour market, social justice and sustainable peace in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She called on the Office to engage with the relevant authorities to collect data on dismissals of Palestinian workers resulting from the current crisis and on restrictions to their access to the labour market. The Office should then report that information to the Governing Body. She welcomed the Office's efforts to mobilize resources to continue implementing its three-phase emergency response programme. Constituents must urge the Israeli authorities to facilitate access for UN and ILO delegations,

including the ILO Director-General's annual mission, and press for the urgent mobilization of funds for the continuation and expansion of the emergency response programme.

111. A ceasefire must be the first step in the path towards social justice, democracy and lasting peace. The hostages held in Gaza since the horrific events of 7 October 2023 must be freed as a matter of urgency, and the forced displacement of Palestinians must end. The Workers' group supported the amendment proposed by the countries of the OIC.
112. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Libya expressed grave concern at the human tragedy occurring in Gaza. In the previous five months, thousands of Palestinian civilians had been displaced, injured or killed. Human-made famine was looming and children were dying of malnutrition. Industrial infrastructure, as well as health facilities, press headquarters and schools, had been destroyed, suggesting massive urgent work before the ILO. Furthermore, the recent bombing of the PGFTU headquarters had exacerbated the dire situation for all Palestinian constituents and had demonstrated non-respect for the fundamental principles of the ILO.
113. The Africa group had first-hand experience of war, colonization, apartheid and genocide, and therefore supported all genuine and meaningful negotiating efforts to bring an end to the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, which was also affecting the West Bank, and its severe impact on workers, employers and the civilian population. Without a permanent ceasefire, it would be impossible to achieve peace and to take the steps forward that had been proposed by the Office in the document. She therefore called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for all parties to facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. She also called on all international organizations to demand respect for international humanitarian law, and encouraged constituents to make full use of the Organization's supervisory mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of Conventions and the fundamental principles and rights at work.
114. ILO staff must be assured of access, safety and security in order to deliver on the ILO's mandate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She noted the readiness demonstrated by the Office to engage in broader UN efforts towards recovery and reconstruction, including in its cooperation with UNRWA, which urgently needed resources to provide life-saving assistance to Palestinian beneficiaries. Universal and lasting peace could be established only if based on social justice, and there could be no social justice under occupation. She supported the amendment proposed by the countries of the OIC.
115. **Speaking on behalf of a majority of the ASPAG countries**,¹ a Government representative of Indonesia commended the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but lamented the fact that its implementation was being hampered by challenges on the ground. For instance, ILO staff had been prevented from entering the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and mobilizing funding had proved problematic. Against that backdrop, it would be difficult to implement recovery programmes in the near future. As such, short-term efforts should focus on relief, such as the establishment of shelters and the provision of basic goods and emergency income support. To that end, he called for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire, the adequate funding of the ILO offices in Ramallah and Jerusalem and the restoration of the Gaza office. Regular reviews to identify when to adjust

¹ Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tonga, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam and Yemen.

modalities, strategies and targets to respond to the needs of people in Palestine, and more investment in social safety nets and mitigation projects were needed.

116. Genuine, lasting peace would only be possible if international law was respected. He applauded the Government of South Africa for having lodged a case against the Government of Israel before the ICJ. As a specialized agency of the UN, the ILO must encourage compliance with ICJ rulings and work towards their implementation. The Governing Body should therefore explore all avenues for legal action available within the ILO framework to counter the ongoing violations by the Government of Israel. Recalling the Advisory Opinion issued by the ICJ concerning the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – in which the Court had asserted the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination – he stated that the international community had a legal obligation to respect that right and that any endorsement or recognition of policies or practices of the Government of Israel that obstructed that right was unlawful. ILO constituents must not assist in or normalize the continued violation of international law by the Government of Israel.
117. The ILO had the power to assist the Palestinian people and the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to social justice by exploring how to uphold their fundamental rights. He supported the amendment to the draft decision proposed by the countries of the OIC.
118. **Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Belgium said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Iceland and Switzerland aligned themselves with his statement. He deplored the loss of civilian lives in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including UN staff members, and expressed support for efforts to secure a temporary ceasefire and the release of hostages. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza called for rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. The possibility of a ground operation in Rafah, where over one million Palestinians were sheltering, was a serious concern. He condemned the terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, which included sexual and gender-based violence, and its use of human shields. Israel had a right to defend itself, but must do so in accordance with international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law. Civilians must be protected at all times, and there should be accountability for violations of international law on all sides. Furthermore, the Order of 26 January 2024 of the ICJ was binding on the parties. The EU and its Member States would contribute to reviving a political process to negotiate a two-state solution. He expressed support for the implementation of the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme, in cooperation with UN and other international organizations. The EU had quadrupled its humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and continued to provide support to the Palestinian Authority towards ensuring the fulfilment of social rights. He welcomed efforts to reach consensus, and supported the draft decision.
119. **Speaking on behalf of the Arab group**, a Government representative of Iraq strongly condemned the Israeli aggression against Gaza. He denounced the attacks perpetrated by the occupying power, acts of ethnic cleansing and use of banned weapons, which were a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. In addition, many Palestinians had been displaced and vital infrastructure had been destroyed. The ICJ Order of 26 January 2024 had demanded measures to stop the killing of Palestinian civilians. He called on the tripartite constituents to urge the occupying power to implement an immediate and lasting ceasefire, stop the massacres and open humanitarian corridors to facilitate safe access for Gazans to essential supplies and services. Famine was threatening the lives of huge numbers of civilians and one in six children were already suffering from malnutrition. He strongly condemned the incident known as the "flour massacre", when Israeli forces had opened fire on crowds of Palestinians waiting to receive flour. He called on the Government of Israel to return the clearance funds to

the Palestinian Authority. He commended the ILO's emergency response programme, and thanked all States that had contributed financial support. The Office should continue to report to the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body, to raise awareness of the ongoing systematic violations of international law. He expressed support for the amendment proposed by the countries of the OIC.

- 120. Speaking on behalf of the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC),** a Government representative of Saudi Arabia commended the ILO's efforts to attempt to mitigate the suffering of the Palestinians. The current situation was an unprecedented tragedy. Thousands of civilians, including many women and children, had lost their lives; there had been violations of humanitarian principles and no respect for social justice; housing and critical infrastructure had been destroyed and shelling had been indiscriminate. As a result, the economy in Gaza had been paralysed and at least 66 per cent of jobs had been lost. She reiterated the call for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, bringing an end to the cruel military operations that were targeting schools and medical facilities. Humanitarian access was required in order to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people. International law and the measures resulting from the Order of the ICJ must be respected. The ILO was doing its best to support workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but could not take substantial action without a ceasefire. The emergency situation must end immediately; she therefore supported the amendment proposed by the countries of the OIC.
- 121. A Government representative of Cuba** said that in the previous five months, Israel had caused a humanitarian disaster in Gaza, killing more than 30,000 Palestinians, wiping out 70 per cent of housing and forcibly displacing 1.7 million individuals. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had estimated that, even with an immediate ceasefire, pre-conflict economic levels would not be reached until the year 2029. He called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the unhindered entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. A wide-reaching, fair and lasting solution, which guaranteed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, was required. He strongly condemned the killing of civilians, particularly women, children and humanitarian workers, and the indiscriminate destruction of housing, hospitals and civilian infrastructure. Depriving the Palestinian people of access to vital services of water, electricity and fuel was a grave violation of international humanitarian law. It was disappointing that few countries had responded to the Office's funding appeal. The consequences of the current situation on the livelihoods of the Palestinian people had gone beyond having a negative impact on the labour market, to become a humanitarian crisis. However, human lives were apparently worth more in some areas than others. He recalled the obligation under the ILO Constitution to support tripartite constituents who were victims of conflict. Constituents had a duty to speak out against genocide and take robust action in the Governing Body. Inaction, silence and double standards would only cost more lives.
- 122. A Government representative of Bangladesh** expressed profound concern regarding the shrinking by one third of the Palestinian economy and the loss of jobs caused by the illegal war against Palestinian civilians. Labour market governance and administration, social protection institutions and social dialogue had suffered irreparable harm. He expressed appreciation to those donors that had contributed to the programme of development cooperation. He welcomed the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme and called for that programme to be fully funded to ensure its successful implementation. There was an overwhelming need for employment-intensive infrastructure building and for employment to be arranged for the family members of murdered and wounded Palestinians. His Government would continue to recognize the State of Palestine and considered Israel to be an illegal occupying power. He expressed his Government's grave concern regarding the genocide

against unarmed Palestinians, the targeting of civilian infrastructure and the indiscriminate use of force, in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Only an immediate ceasefire and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance would facilitate the relief, review and recovery envisaged in the ILO's emergency response plan. He urged the international community to intensify pressure on the occupying power to stop the violent attacks on civilians, to allow Palestinians to rebuild their economy with international support and to allow Palestinian workers to resume employment.

- 123. A Government representative of France** expressed his Government's strong condemnation of the unjustified terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023. He recalled that Israel had a right to self-defence and called for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages. International humanitarian law must be respected by all, which included doing everything possible to spare civilian lives. An immediate and lasting ceasefire and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza were crucial. His Government hosted last autumn an international conference, which led to pledges of over €1 billion in humanitarian aid. A political process aimed at a two-state solution was more necessary than ever. In light of the serious situation of workers and their families in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the ILO's emergency response programme and the courage of those continuing to implement it were commendable. The programme had already provided much-needed assistance to people who had suddenly lost their jobs, and would enable the Office to monitor the impact of the crisis on the labour market. He supported the draft decision as amended.
- 124. A Government representative of Indonesia** condemned the atrocities committed by Israel in the appalling escalation of the humanitarian crisis. The Government of Israel must be held accountable for its blatant violations of international law and its obstruction of negotiations aiming at a two-state solution. It was currently impossible to promote social justice and advance decent work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; the aggression and the genocide must stop. In addition to its existing efforts to support workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the ILO should uphold the implementation of the ICJ Order of 26 January and its call to prevent genocidal acts through an immediate, permanent ceasefire and to expedite the mobilization of resources for humanitarian assistance, including to save Rafah. The ILO must work towards a better future for all workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and should collaborate with UNRWA to ensure that its programmes could better assist Palestinians.
- 125. A Government representative of the United Kingdom** expressed shock at the sheer scale of the loss of lives and livelihoods on both sides. Israel had suffered the worst terrorist attack in its history and Palestinians were facing a devastating humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. An immediate pause to facilitate the entry of aid and the release of hostages was the best way to achieve a sustainable, permanent ceasefire. All routes into Gaza must be opened to provide access to essential humanitarian support. His Government had trebled its aid contribution in the current year. He commended the ILO staff who were implementing the emergency response programme in immensely challenging circumstances. The Palestinian and Israeli labour markets had both been severely affected by the crisis, and there was no effective economy operating in Gaza. His Government supported a two-state solution, and would continue to reassert its commitment to a sovereign and viable Palestinian State. The Governing Body should strive to reach consensus to ensure that the implementation of the emergency response programme was unimpeded and the people of Gaza received the much-needed support.
- 126. A Government representative of Malaysia** said that the precarious situation of the Palestinian people was deeply regrettable. After 56 years, Palestinians continued to suffer the injustice and indignity of Israel's illegal occupation. Palestinian workers deserved to enjoy the

same rights as workers elsewhere, and the international community must not fail them. She welcomed the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme to alleviate the impact of the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The ILO should continue to reinforce the Decent Work Agenda and social justice for all Palestinians, despite the unprecedented challenges and constraints. She called for renewed funding to sustain the ILO's activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and commended the cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and the ILO, which would strengthen its capacities. Development cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building provided by the ILO and international partners should be strengthened in order to support the Palestinian labour sector. That could only be achieved through an immediate and permanent ceasefire. She reiterated her Government's commitment to the establishment of a sovereign State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders.

127. **A Government representative of Brazil** welcomed the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme. The relief phase was urgently needed to alleviate the most extreme and immediate suffering. The actions of the Government of Israel had caused devastation, forced displacement and restricted movement within Gaza and the West Bank, and the international community must work together to address the consequences of the appalling situation. He commended the work of the Regional Office for the Arab States and staff providing technical assistance. As soon as conditions allowed, the ILO should provide enhanced support for the recovery phase. The ILO had a unique mandate and the necessary expertise to benefit the region when the time came to recreate jobs and restore economic growth. At the current stage, help needed to be extended to all people in need. He echoed the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, to address the growing humanitarian catastrophe and its disproportionate impact on women and children. He supported the draft decision.
128. **A Government representative of Australia** noted that her Government did not share the position of the majority of ASPAG. She unequivocally condemned Hamas's terror attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023 and called for the release of hostages. The grave humanitarian crisis in Gaza was extremely concerning, and safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to Gaza was crucially needed. Israel must respect international law and protect civilians. Palestinians could not be made to pay the price of defeating Hamas. The crisis was having a severe impact on workers, employers and civilians, which would likely have significant and lasting repercussions on the labour market. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire was urgently needed, as a critical step towards a permanent and sustainable ceasefire. A negotiated political solution was ultimately needed to achieve a better future for both Israelis and Palestinians. Her Government supported the two-state solution and Palestinians' aspirations for self-determination. She commended the work of ILO staff in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to implement the ILO's emergency response plan; their access, safety and security must be ensured.
129. **A Government representative of Namibia** said that the ongoing conflict had caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip with significant repercussions on the labour market, employment and livelihoods. She echoed calls for an immediate ceasefire and sustained and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. She commended efforts to collect and analyse data on the crisis and its impact on jobs and businesses, which would be crucial in devising effective, evidence-based policies and recovery interventions. She noted the implementation of the first two phases of the ILO's three-phase emergency response programme. The recovery phase would depend on the Office's success in mobilizing resources and the cessation of military operations, and called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Acknowledging the challenges faced by the ILO staff members employed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she emphasized that their safety and security must be ensured. The focus

of the recovery phase of the emergency response programme on persons with disabilities would be important, given the number of injuries reported. Noting the lack of response to the Office's funding appeal, she called on Member States and development partners to contribute where possible. She expressed support for the amendment proposed by the OIC.

130. **A Government representative of Sudan** said that a document could not fully reflect the unprecedented suffering of the Palestinian people and expressed solidarity with them in their ordeal. The United Nations General Assembly's warning in December 2023 that the impact of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory threatened international peace and security, especially in view of the magnitude of the loss of life and catastrophic humanitarian situation, should have been heeded. That situation, in addition to the displacement of Palestinian workers, the total paralysis of the labour market and loss of 66 per cent of jobs, represented a clear challenge for the ILO and its fundamental principles. He called for an immediate cessation of those flagrant violations of the Organization's principles, international humanitarian law and all international Conventions. It was vital, in order to prevent politicization and double standards, to take into account the amendment proposed by the OIC.
131. **A Government representative of Chile** said that the ILO's emergency response programme had contributed to efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian population. However, the ongoing violence, population displacement, loss of employment, lack of economic growth and social challenges contributed to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Her Government remained committed to a two-State solution, although such a solution was as yet far off. She therefore called for multilateral actions that would address the humanitarian crisis and work towards sustainable and lasting peace. Condemning all acts of terrorism and violence against civilians, she called for the immediate release by Hamas of any hostages and expressed concern regarding the military operation in the Gaza Strip. Her Government called for an immediate ceasefire and respect for international humanitarian law and the measures required by the ICJ Order. She commended the ILO's efforts under its emergency response plan, but expressed concern regarding the lack of funding to continue working on the ground. The ILO should work with other UN agencies to provide multidimensional responses to the humanitarian crisis. Commending all those working for a sustainable solution to the crisis, she supported the draft decision, in particular subparagraph (j), which would provide the necessary funds for the implementation of the emergency response programme. She emphasized the importance of adopting the draft decision by consensus.
132. **A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** said that the Israeli occupation had led to the deterioration of the Palestinian economy and the subsequent impact on employment, social welfare and sustainable livelihoods. The war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, ethnic cleansing and forced displacement committed by the occupying regime constituted gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The international community, and the UN Security Council in particular, had failed to bring the illegal occupation to an end. He expressed concern regarding UNCTAD's findings on the economic cost of military operations conducted by the Israeli regime in the Gaza Strip, as illustrated by the significant population displacement, a decline in gross domestic product, and an increase in unemployment. The situation was exacerbated by blockades on humanitarian aid and basic provisions, which affected vulnerable persons, employers and workers. He called on the ILO to act in the face of such tragedy, especially to address widespread job losses and dangerous working conditions, noting that existing and emerging issues had a damaging impact on the labour force in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The ILO should amplify the voices of the workers and employers of the Gaza Strip, condemn all violations of human rights, enforce the measures required by the ICJ Order and

implement actions to meet the essential needs of workers and employers in the Gaza Strip. He echoed the call for an unconditional ceasefire as a means to ending the genocide, and said that the situation should not be allowed to become normalized.

- 133. A Government representative of Algeria** said that swift and effective action needed to be taken to end the human tragedy caused by the continuing Israeli occupation and aggression against the Gaza Strip and condemned the systematic grave violations and crimes committed daily by Israel against Palestinian civilians, including workers and members of their families. That tragedy was exacerbated by the deteriorating socio-economic and health situation, the spectre of famine and the refusal by the occupying power to allow humanitarian access to the areas where it was most needed. The Israeli assault had a significant impact on the labour market and caused thousands of Palestinians to lose their jobs. The ILO and all concerned parties in the Organization should make every effort towards achieving a permanent and lasting ceasefire. The ILO should work closely with other agencies, including UNRWA, to accelerate open humanitarian access and provide essential services to refugees and displaced people. The Organization's efforts to support the labour market and enhance social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory through the Decent Work Programme and the programme for development cooperation. He urged all ILO Member States to develop urgent assistance plans and programmes to improve the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories and underscored the need to ensure the security of the ILO teams and United Nations agencies working in those territories, particularly in view of the restrictions, pressure and harassment that they faced.
- 134. A Government representative of Libya** said that the document highlighted the impact of the Israeli occupation on people's ability to make a living in Gaza and the West Bank, further aggravating a socio-economic and humanitarian crisis. He condemned the serious violations of international human rights law and the ongoing occupation, which deprived the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination, their right to return and their right to pursue their own socio-economic and cultural development. Gazans had suffered for years but had endured hellish conditions for the past five months, during which a greater number of children had been killed than in all wars worldwide over the past four years. She condemned the systematic starvation of civilians, who were struggling to survive without access to food, water or healthcare, and the systematic destruction of infrastructure and residential areas, including places of worship, health facilities and schools. The genocide was continuing despite the ICJ Order of 26 January 2024 and the appeals for humanitarian access to be allowed into Gaza. The ILO must do more to ensure respect for the fundamental principles and rights of the Palestinian people and ensure that all necessary measures were taken to promote social justice and decent work for all those living in the occupied territories.
- 135. A Government representative of the United States** said that the situation in Gaza since the terrorist attack on 7 October was heartbreaking, and the scale of civilian suffering devastating. Her Government was continuing to work at the highest levels to urgently conclude and implement an agreement for an immediate ceasefire of approximately six weeks, together with the release of all hostages. They were also continuing to work to ease the humanitarian situation by lifting all barriers to the provision of assistance, including through airdrops and the establishment of a maritime corridor. Israelis and Palestinians equally deserved to live in safety, dignity and peace. The access and safety of ILO staff was essential to the delivery of its mission in Gaza and the West Bank, and she welcomed the Organization's readiness to engage in broader United Nations recovery and reconstruction efforts. It was crucial that Palestinians with work permits be once again allowed to work in Israel, to the greatest extent possible. She was deeply saddened by the news of the destruction of the offices of the PGFTU. Efforts to

work with local workers' and employers' organizations to provide support for workers and employers, in coordination with United Nations humanitarian agencies, were welcome.

136. With regard to the draft decision, the ILO is not a humanitarian organization and should remain focused within its mandate. The United States did not generally support the convening of special sittings of the Conference, which had previously been used to amplify political comments not germane to the ILO's world of work mandate. However, in light of the severe labour and employment impacts of the current crisis, her Government would not block the convening of the proposed one-time special sitting, provided that the conditions and modalities conformed with past practice. She urged all constituents to use it as a platform for constructive input on how the ILO could best support efforts towards sustainable, decent working conditions that contributed to lasting peace. She therefore accepted the draft decision, as amended.
137. **A Government representative of China** expressed deep concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and called on the international community to take urgent action, focused on a ceasefire and the protection of civilians. He noted the consistent progress of the ILO emergency response programme and the enhanced programme of development cooperation. His Government supported continued active monitoring of the situation, consolidation of experience and mobilization of resources from all parties, in order to advance the emergency response programme and protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers and employers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and alleviate the humanitarian crisis, with a view to implementing the two-state solution and achieving lasting peace in the Middle East. He supported the amendment proposed by the OIC.
138. **A Government representative of Colombia** condemned the ongoing attacks against the Palestinian people that were leading to a genocide. All deaths were regrettable, but the right to self-defence against terrorism must be proportionate and be implemented in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law. All Governing Body Members should come together to condemn actions taken against innocent civilians on all sides. The figures concerning loss of employment contained in the report were concerning, but there was no reference to the number of workers killed. The Preamble to the ILO Constitution stated that the Organization was "moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world". Its priority must therefore be to demand respect for the fundamental human right to life. The continued attacks on civilian targets in Gaza were killing thousands of Palestinians. The goals of the Palestinian Decent Work Programme for 2023-25 could not be achieved if there were no people left in Gaza.
139. He welcomed the ILO's efforts to provide emergency income support for Gazan workers ousted from their jobs in Israel and stranded in the West Bank without any social protection. He also welcomed the development of the three- to six-month tripartite emergency response plan, prioritizing emergency relief and income support for vulnerable workers, especially in Gaza. He supported the draft decision, but noted that it would be good to include in subparagraph (b) a clear condemnation of the loss of more than 30,000 human lives, and a call to respect international humanitarian law, which was the only way to promote social justice, as noted in subparagraph (d). Lastly, he called for a ceasefire, a humanitarian aid corridor, the release of all hostages and talks leading to lasting peace in the region.
140. **A Government representative of Mexico** expressed regret at the dire humanitarian situation and loss of life in Gaza and reiterated the call for an immediate and lasting cessation of hostilities throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure were contrary to international humanitarian law and must stop.

Basic services needed to be reinstated and restrictions on the movement of people and goods must be lifted, as those had serious repercussions for the people of Gaza and the socio-economic fabric of the West Bank. Border crossings must remain permanently open for the entry of humanitarian aid. The ongoing crisis had serious repercussions for the Palestinian labour market and the well-being of Palestinian workers and their families. He noted with concern the estimated 66 per cent of employment lost in Gaza. Mexico supported the efforts of the ILO, within its mandate, to respond to the immediate needs of workers and employers in the occupied Arab territories. In that regard, he supported the three-phase emergency response programme, as well as the continuation of the ILO's coordinating role between humanitarian actors and national institutions in the field of social protection. Maintaining the security of ILO officials and staff in the field would be important, in that regard.

141. On the other hand, Mexico reiterated its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism in all forms, and called for the immediate release of all hostages. Israel had a right to ensure its own security, but should do so in accordance with international law. The security of Israel could not come at the expense of the Palestinian people or go against international humanitarian law. The recurring cycles of violence and destruction would only stop once the structural causes of the conflict were addressed. Therefore, Mexico reiterated its support for a peaceful two-state solution. He supported the draft decision, as amended, and welcomed the efforts made to achieve consensus.
142. **A Government representative of Israel** authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with article 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders on a matter concerning the situation in her country, said that the sole reason for the current situation was that on 7 October 2023, Hamas had carried out one of the largest and most horrific terrorist attacks of modern times in Israel. In just a few hours, more than 1,200 Israelis had been murdered and more than 240 hostages taken to Gaza, of whom 134 remained.
143. The report only presented part of the story and ignored the existence of Hamas, a terrorist organization that had controlled Gaza for 17 years, abusing Palestinian livelihoods, stealing their aid and using their money to build terror tunnels. Hamas had pursued a terrorist agenda at the expense of development, lining its leaders' pockets through corruption. The report did not reflect that prior to 7 October, her Government had been working to improve the conditions in Gaza. Since 2021, the income of Gazans working in Israel had risen by 34 per cent. Her Government had upgraded the Kerem Shalom crossing and extended the hours of the Erez crossing, used daily by 20,000 Palestinian workers and intentionally targeted by Hamas on 7 October.
144. As well as ignoring the role of Hamas, in every report the ILO ignored the lack of democratic institutions in the Palestinian Authority, the hatred taught in its schools and its inaction against terrorist groups. It also ignored the huge sums of money that the Palestinian Authority paid to terrorists and their families, amounting to more than 8 per cent of its annual budget. That money should instead be spent on improving Palestinian livelihoods, including labour conditions. Hamas's brutality must end and the Palestinian Authority must stop shielding Hamas from accountability through disinformation.
145. Since the beginning of the war, Israel had facilitated the transfer of more than 305,000 tons of humanitarian aid into Gaza, opened the Kerem Shalom crossing and opened another crossing to allow more aid into northern Gaza. In recent weeks, it had facilitated airdrops of more than 1,250 humanitarian aid packages. She welcomed the maritime corridor, noting that the first boat carrying 200 tons of food was on its way. Unless the ILO accurately presented the situation

as a whole, in all its complexity, it would be impossible for it to address the fundamental issues and improve the situation on the ground.

146. **A Government representative of South Africa**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with article 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, said that his Government, which had stated its case before the ICJ, was on the side of human rights. The Palestinian people continued to suffer at the hands of the Israeli military. Their fundamental human rights, including labour rights, were trampled upon and their existence threatened. There had been huge job losses in Gaza and, as indicated in the report, only 10,000 of the 171,000 workers from the West Bank formerly employed in Israel and the settlements were currently able to work there. He expressed concern that Israel's bilateral labour agreements with fellow ILO Member States might be used to replace Palestinian workers and urged the Organization and Member States concerned to review them. His Government believed that there were sufficient grounds to initiate action against Israel under article 26 of the ILO Constitution and other international human rights treaties.
147. On 26 January 2024, the ICJ had directed Israel to prevent its military forces from engaging in acts detailed in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to take measures to prevent and punish incitement to genocide, to ensure that humanitarian aid reached Gaza promptly, to prevent the destruction of evidence relating to allegations of genocide and to submit a compliance report within a specified time period. In view of the critical role of tripartism in upholding decent work principles and advocating for social justice, he appealed to the Workers' and Employers' groups to call on Israel to implement the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ. Given the urgent need for basic services and humanitarian assistance in Gaza, he urged those Member States that had announced their intention to defund humanitarian work by certain United Nations agencies in Gaza to reconsider. He supported the draft decision, as amended.
148. **A Government representative of Türkiye**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with article 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, commended the ILO for its continued efforts to respond to the needs of its Palestinian constituents and to allocate additional funding for emergency relief activities. However, the level of humanitarian need was unprecedented. The impact of the indiscriminate attacks by Israel was devastating, with more than 30,000 people killed, more than 72,000 injured and 1.7 million people displaced. Some 70 per cent of homes in Gaza had been destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people were starving and disease was rife. He therefore called for continued, unhindered humanitarian access to facilitate the urgent delivery of aid and the declaration of an unconditional and permanent ceasefire. The ILO had a responsibility to contribute to peace and social justice for all in the region. He therefore encouraged the Office to continue reporting on the social, economic and labour market impact of the attacks by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Lasting peace and security in the Middle East could only be achieved through a just solution to the conflict, based on international law. He supported the draft decision, as amended.
149. **A Government representative of Tunisia**, authorized by the Officers of the Governing Body to speak in accordance with article 1.8.3 of the Standing Orders, thanked the Office for the document, which provided a picture of the devastating impact of Israel's aggression in Gaza, including an increase in the unemployment rate to 46.1 per cent, and pointed to incursions by Israeli security forces and settlers into Palestinian territory in the West Bank and restrictions on the movement of Palestinians. He strongly condemned the systematic violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, which amounted to genocide. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those who needed it, in accordance with the ICJ Order. The socio-economic and humanitarian consequences of the conflict, including the forced displacement of

thousands of Palestinian people and the ongoing threat to the lives and livelihoods of the people in Gaza, were catastrophic. All international organizations, irrespective of their individual mandates, needed to stand together to put an immediate end to the aggression. He called for an immediate ceasefire and the unhindered entry of humanitarian aid. He commended the roll-out of the ILO's emergency response programme, which had assisted many workers who had lost their jobs, working in partnership with other organizations, including UNRWA. The Director-General's annual reports to the International Labour Conference were of vital importance. He deplored the failure to grant ILO staff the necessary visas, which had prevented them from travelling and doing their jobs.

- 150. The Chairperson** noted the request for the floor from a representative of the Palestinian Authority and indicated that the Officers had considered the matter and, in keeping with past practice and article 2(2) of the Standing Orders, had decided to authorize the representative of the Palestinian Authority to speak.
- 151. A representative of the Palestinian Authority** (Minister of Labour) said that in the sixth month of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, more people were being killed and displaced and infrastructure being destroyed with every passing hour in an unprecedented war of genocide. To date, more than 110,000 people, mainly women, children and the elderly, had been killed or injured. One million people in northern Gaza had no access to food, power or water. In the south, 1.3 million refugees from northern Gaza lived without shelter or basic necessities, under constant threat, in a town built for 100,000. The difficult situation was neither new, nor the result of 7 October; the Palestinian people had lived under the yoke of occupation for decades. While history could not be changed, it should also not be ignored. Restrictions had been imposed on the Palestinian people, preventing them from living and working in peace, as part of a deliberate policy, manifest in settlements on Palestinian land and the wall, designed to drive them out of a land that was historically theirs.
- 152.** The Occupied Palestinian Territory was already known as the largest open-air prison in the world; Gaza was becoming the world's largest mass grave. The international community could not stand idly by. The President of the Palestinian Authority had consistently held out his hand for peace while the hands of the President of Israel and his partners in government held weapons.
- 153.** The Vice-President of the United States had recently spoken of her heartbreak at what was happening in Gaza, including the recent flour massacre, when more than 200 hungry people had been deliberately targeted and killed after rushing to obtain food. He called on the Government of the United States to recognize that it was the only country that could put an end to the slaughter.
- 154.** He thanked the Government of South Africa for its efforts to hold Israel accountable for its principled actions in defence of the Palestinian people, and its historical efforts to end apartheid. The Palestinian people would not leave their land but would continue to resist for freedom. Nothing could be done to address the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory without first ending the occupation, which had destroyed the Palestinian economy, pillaged Palestinian land, water and wealth and withheld the tax revenues from which Palestinian salaries were paid. Some 40 per cent of Palestinians were unemployed and thousands of families starving; that burden of unemployment, which the Palestinian economy was unable to bear, would have an impact on regional stability, specifically in Israel and Palestine.
- 155.** He thanked the ILO for its work, and commended in particular the regional offices in Beirut and Jerusalem, underscoring that Israel had denied visas to ILO staff wishing to enter Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He called on the international community to oblige the

occupying power to assume its responsibilities and put an end to the destruction of the economy and labour market of Gaza. The ILO should adopt a clear position and redouble its efforts to protect workers, restore their rights and put an end to the serial violations that had been taking place over more than 54 years.

- 156.** Israel claimed to have facilitated the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza. As an occupying power, it had a legal obligation to do so in order to relieve the famine inflicted on the population. Contrary to those claims, however, Israeli forces had recently destroyed the largest aid depot in Gaza, an UNRWA facility, and attacked, killed and injured starving Palestinians waiting for aid at other locations on previous occasions. Israel had spoken of Hamas brutality on 7 October; such claims should be investigated and any perpetrators duly held to account. However, over subsequent months, Israeli attacks in Gaza had led to the deaths of thousands of civilians, including women and children. While many countries had condemned the events of 7 October 2023, they had not condemned the subsequent events. Israel did not respect the rights of Palestinians, international law, the international community or the principles underpinning it. It was time to urge it to do so, and to investigate and hold Israel accountable for its actions. Its proclaimed intention to invade Rafah placed the 1.6 million forcibly displaced Palestinian civilians there at risk of a new massacre. He called on the United States to lift its veto in the Security Council and approve a resolution that would stop the bloodshed. The world could not stand idly by watching a genocide take place on television. The killing of 30 Israeli children on 7 October could not be used to justify the killing of 13,000 Palestinian children.
- 157. A Government representative of the United States** said that her Government was working towards a sustainable resolution of the Gaza conflict and, more broadly, towards a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians could live side by side and enjoy equal security, dignity and freedom. Her Government recognized the security challenges faced by Israel and its legitimate right to defend its people and territory from terrorism, such as the attack of 7 October, while acting in accordance with international humanitarian law. The terrorist actions of Hamas in taking hostages, including women, children and elderly people had no justification or legitimacy, and must be universally condemned. It should also be recognized that Hamas cynically used Palestinian civilians as human shields by locating command posts, weapons and ammunitions in hospitals, residential buildings, schools and mosques. Hamas must agree to the ceasefire deal, which would enable more humanitarian relief to reach Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Her Government believed allegations of genocide were unfounded but was deeply concerned by the number of civilians killed, injured and displaced in the conflict and would continue to lead international efforts to enable more humanitarian assistance to reach Gaza. Lastly, she noted that the ICJ had not made a decision about genocide or called for a ceasefire in its ruling, but had called for the unconditional, immediate release of all hostages being held by Hamas.
- 158. A Government representative of Israel** said that the representative of the Palestinian Authority had failed to condemn the massacre on 7 October 2023, and instead justified the acts perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli citizens. Allegations of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people were completely false. The ICJ ruling had recorded no findings on the merits of the case brought against Israel, but had simply reinforced obligations to which Israel was already committed. Israel had a legitimate right to defend itself against genocidal Hamas terrorists. It was impossible for Palestinian workers to return to work in Israel in the wake of the events that had taken place. Israel had both hands extended for peace; anyone claiming to reach out for peace could not protect terrorist organizations with one hand and hold an olive branch with the other.

- 159. The representative of the Director-General** (Director, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States), responding to the comments of the Governing Body members, said that the ILO's emergency response had used data analysis from the earliest stages to plan support. The qualitative assessment of the impact of the crisis on the economic and labour market activities was being used to design recovery interventions, including through work with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on business support. An adaptable approach was also being taken, with ongoing monitoring of the situation on the ground to align support with evolving needs. In addition, the ILO participated in scenario planning with other UN agencies. A review of the Palestinian Decent Work Programme was planned for the second half of 2024 in order to evaluate relief efforts and integrate the findings of multiple assessments, including the rapid damage and needs assessment.
- 160.** Partnerships and stakeholder engagement also formed part of the ILO strategy. Emergency employment will be provided for men and women in Gaza in health and waste management, while work was also being carried out with constituents on the ground, including the Palestinian Employment Fund and the PGFTU to strengthen their ability to respond to the crisis. In addition, an Enterprise Support Unit will be established within the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture to offer essential technical support services to enterprises significantly affected by the crisis.
- 161.** Although the annual mission to the occupied Arab territories could not take place in its traditional format, the ILO remained committed to issuing the associated report as scheduled. Work on the mission had already begun, using a combination of online interviews and in-person interviews in neighbouring countries. Although access on the ground remained challenging, ILO staff continued to deliver to the best of their ability with the support of the Regional Office for the Arab States and headquarters, despite the destruction of ILO office in Gaza.
- 162.** Turning to funding and resource mobilization, she said that the ILO was engaged in UN joint recovery planning and programming, and had developed concept notes for funding partners. It was hoped that doing so would help mobilize resources, especially as Member States reaffirmed their support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Meanwhile, the Organization was using its limited internal resources and had realigned some ongoing work under the Decent Work Programme to meet emergency needs. It is crucial for Member States to increase their funding in support of the operation to allow full implementation of the emergency response programme, which is a three-phase strategy to improve the employment and labour market conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in both the immediate and long-term.
- 163.** She reassured the Governing Body that the ILO's emergency work was firmly within its mandate as part of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, whereby immediate relief interventions were strengthened with measures to promote decent work. The Organization was providing relief to workers, and supporting its constituents to provide assistance, so that they could continue working during the crisis and be part of the recovery. Social protection was a key element of the ILO's work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the Decent Work Programme, and had led to the development of a draft social security law and a range of protection measures, including allowances for elderly people and those with severe disabilities. When the situation allowed, it was hoped that the same scheme would be extended to Gaza.

Decision

164. The Governing Body:

- (a) took note of the developments outlined in document GB.350/POL/4(Rev.1), including the grave repercussions in the Gaza Strip on jobs, livelihoods and enterprises and the way forward outlined in paragraphs 29–36;
- (b) reiterated its most profound concern at the dire and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, and the severe impact that it is having on workers, employers and the civilian population, particularly women, children and others in vulnerable situations, as well as at the extremist settler violence and economic situation in the West Bank;
- (c) took note of all relevant resolutions on the Middle East and recalled Security Council resolutions 2720 (22 December 2023) and 2712 (15 November 2023), and the decision it had adopted concerning document [GB.349/POL/4\(Rev.1\)](#), which included a call for all parties to facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip;
- (d) stressed the need to respect the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work and relevant international labour standards and the importance of taking all necessary measures to promote social justice and advance decent work for all Palestinians;
- (e) stressed the importance of ensuring the access, safety and security of ILO staff to deliver on the ILO mandate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory;
- (f) welcomed the ILO's readiness to engage in broader United Nations recovery and reconstruction efforts;
- (g) recalled the relevance of the Director-General's annual reports to the International Labour Conference on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories and urged all parties to facilitate the annual mission to Israel and the occupied Arab territories;
- (h) requested the Director-General to continue offering his good offices to support Palestinian workers' access to their workplaces in conditions of occupational safety and health, as well as to strengthen efforts to address long-term priorities as highlighted in several of the Director-General's annual reports to the International Labour Conference, such as the issue of social security funds and permit system reform;
- (i) requested the Office to engage with the relevant authorities to report on dismissals of Palestinian workers due to the current crisis, as well as any restrictions on their access to the labour market, and to report back on this matter to the Governing Body;
- (j) supported all efforts to mobilize resources for the continued implementation of the emergency response programme, calling on Member States to urgently fund the programme;
- (k) requested the Director-General to convene a resource mobilization meeting, on the margins of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference, in June 2024, to prepare for the operational execution of the emergency response programme and to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian constituents;

- (l) recommended to the International Labour Conference that at its 112th Session, the Appendix to the Report of the Director-General on “The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories” be discussed in the framework of a special sitting in accordance with the same modalities and conditions as those applied in all similar special sittings on the same subject in the past, with a view to providing specific guidance to the Office and the Director-General on appropriate follow-up actions to the findings of the report; and
- (m) requested the Office to monitor the situation and assess its impact on the world of work and update the Governing Body on the ILO’s efforts, including on the follow-up to the special sitting discussion at the 112th Session of the Conference, through the standing item on the enhanced programme of development cooperation in the occupied Arab territories at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024).

(GB.350/POL/4(Rev.1), paragraph 37, as amended by the Governing Body)

Multinational Enterprises Segment

5. Promotional activities with regard to the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, including in the context of relevant developments outside the ILO (GB.350/POL/5)

165. The Governing Body had before it two amendments to the draft decision, which had been proposed by the Employers’ and Workers’ groups and circulated by the Office.

166. The Employers’ group’s amendment read:

41. The Governing Body:

- (a) requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance to strengthen the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and its operational tools, including in the context of relevant developments outside the ILO; and
- (b) requested the Director-General not to produce the global report to the Governing Body on the three most recent regional meetings; and align the regional follow-up with the new cycle of ILO regional meetings during the 2025–2028 trial period.
- ~~(b) decided to:–~~
 - ~~(i) temporarily suspend the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration as outlined in Annex II of the MNE Declaration;–~~
 - ~~(ii) align the regional follow-up with the new format of ILO regional meetings during the 2024–28/2025–29 trial period; and–~~
 - ~~(iii) assess, based on a report, how the regions have maximized the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration during the trial period and decide how to proceed with the regional follow-up mechanism.~~

167. The Workers’ group’s amendment read:

41. The Governing Body:

- (a) requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance to strengthen the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and its operational tools, including in the context of relevant developments outside the ILO; ~~and~~

(b) decided to continue implementing the regional follow-up outlined in Annex II, aligning it with the format of regional meetings; and

(c) decided to establish a special tripartite working group of the Governing Body to promote more effective implementation of the MNE Declaration, taking into account the new strategy on decent work in supply chains, with a view to submitting a report in 2027, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Declaration.

~~(b) decided to:-~~

~~(i) temporarily suspend the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration as outlined in Annex II of the MNE Declaration;-~~

~~(ii) align the regional follow-up with the new format of ILO regional meetings during the 2024-28/2025-29 trial period; and-~~

~~(iii) assess, based on a report, how the regions have maximized the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration during the trial period and decide how to proceed with the regional follow-up mechanism.~~

168. The Chairperson said that, since the publication of the document, Cabo Verde had informed the Office of the appointment, on a tripartite basis, of national focal points for the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), making it the 12th Member State to have appointed national focal points.

169. The Employer spokesperson said that the MNE Declaration was an invaluable instrument, together with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN Guiding Principles), which was the agreed policy stance of the ILO on business and human rights. As a voluntary framework, the MNE Declaration provided important guidance for tripartite action to tackle decent work deficits at the national level. The ILO's role was to promote the principles of the MNE Declaration and full alignment with the UN Guiding Principles. Initiatives such as the proposed legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises, or legislation on mandatory human rights due diligence, diverged significantly from the UN Guiding Principles. It was neither the role nor mandate of the ILO, or any of the operational tools, to support the implementation of any such initiatives or laws. While applicable to global supply chains, the MNE Declaration must not be reduced to focusing only on them. With respect to the MNE Declaration operational tools, the ILO Helpdesk for Business on International Labour Standards (ILO Helpdesk for Business) deserved a special mention as a relevant and useful tool for all. He called for building on its success and strengthening it to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness. The Office should prioritize its country-level support for awareness-raising and capacity-building activities of constituents at the local level. More information in the report on such activities and their impact would have been welcome. Moreover, the report contained no insights into what the Office as a whole, beyond the MNEs and Enterprise Engagement Unit, was doing to promote the principles of the MNE Declaration. Regarding national focal points, it was important to recall that the MNE Declaration gave equal weight to using similar tools and processes where they existed, rather than simply setting up separate focal points; the Office should not favour one approach over the other. Regarding development cooperation programmes, projects must ensure the full engagement of constituents and provide funding for them to participate in UN regional forums on business and human rights to raise awareness and build capacity. Within regional projects, ILO engagement must remain within the remits of the mandate and promote responsible business conduct. The Employers proposed a longer period of time between discussions of the Governing Body on promotional activities of the MNE Declaration, with reviews every three or

four years, leaving space for other items on the Governing Body agenda and providing the Office with sufficient time to gather information on the impact of promotional activities.

170. Introducing the Employers' amendment to the draft decision, he recalled that, according to the Rules for regional meetings, flexibility and tripartite ownership were two key aspects of their functioning, meaning that each region should decide for itself the most appropriate option for regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration. It was therefore up to the regional constituents to consider whether or not to have special sessions or any other approach regarding the MNE Declaration, and to decide their preferred format. The Employers' amendment sought to continue with the process of regional follow-up, currently working well and giving each region complete autonomy over the format and agenda, and then to align the MNE Declaration follow-up with the following cycle of regional meetings. To do that, the Employers proposed not to produce the global report of the present cycle because the European meeting would likely not take place. Instead, they proposed starting the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration with the following four-year cycle of ILO regional meetings from 2025 to 2028, as discussed in document GB.350/INS/7. There would be, as usual, a regional report on the MNE Declaration for each region, followed, after the four-year cycle of ILO regional meetings, by a global report. That was the basis for subparagraph (b) of the Employers' proposed amendment, which would replace the existing subparagraph (b) in its entirety.
171. **The Worker spokesperson** said that it was paramount to continue and further enhance support for the efforts of the tripartite constituents to apply the principles and practical tools of the MNE Declaration. At the national level, it was of key importance for the Office to continue supporting Member States, including in appointing national focal points to promote the use of the MNE Declaration. His Group commended Member States that had already appointed such focal points and encouraged other to do so, taking example of the collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) national contact points. The promotion of the MNE Declaration should be in line with the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains that foresees strengthening of the ILO Helpdesk for Business on due diligence. Dialogues between host and home countries of MNEs and between enterprises and unions were also included in that strategy. It was regrettable that use of the company-union dialogue operational tool had been limited so far. The Office should redouble its efforts by introducing the tool to the social partners and training more ILO staff as mediators. Integrating the MNE Declaration into development cooperation projects was critical, as was ensuring that any enterprise wishing to cooperate with the ILO through cooperation projects showed a clear and public commitment to the MNE Declaration principles, demonstrating that they were already complying with them and were committed to doing even more.
172. Introducing the Workers' amendment to the draft decision, he said that, as indicated in the report, including the MNE Declaration in the ILO agenda could be further expanded, including in relation to developments in the area of corporate responsibility and the evolution towards legally binding measures. Working together was key. The question was how to guide enterprises in complying with human and labour rights. His group welcomed the many collaborations with other international organizations which offer opportunities to promote the MNE Declaration. The financial sector was increasingly required to comply with requirements relating to the disclosure of social and environmental performance. The era of uncontrolled operations was over, and the world was moving towards binding regulations, calling for labour rights and the redistribution of benefits throughout the supply chain.
173. Therefore, it was important to maintain a regional follow-up mechanism, in whatever format, as it was the result of a tripartite agreement adopted by the Governing Body. His group therefore proposed deleting the part of the draft decision that sought to temporarily suspend

the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration. Having no forthcoming regional meeting constituted a de facto temporary suspension and there was therefore no reason to include it in the decision. There was also no reason to prematurely abandon the drafting of the regional reports. The Office should continue to work on the reports, until there would be a tripartite agreement that the regional follow-up should be carried out differently. Information already compiled for the three regions should be retained and a global report should be drafted with information about Europe, where the meeting had not yet taken place. For the next regional meeting the regional follow-up should be adapted to the new format.

174. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Morocco highlighted continued relevance of the MNE Declaration amid the myriad challenges faced by the world, including climate change, migration and conflicts. Multinational enterprises should not only behave in a responsible way but also contribute to economic and social progress and decent work. The Abidjan Declaration adopted during the 14th African Regional Meeting in 2019 defined promoting the MNE Declaration as a commitment, with an emphasis on support to tripartite constituents. The group took note of the Office's efforts in that regard but observed that the goal of promotion was to contribute to the effective implementation of the MNE Declaration and evaluate its impact on working condition, and this included information on limitations and difficulties inhibiting the implementation of the Declaration, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. The Africa group had expected the document to also include conclusions and recommendations arising from promotional activities at the regional level, as they would have conveyed a fuller picture of the challenges experienced in implementing the MNE Declaration and the proposals for improvement suggested by regional constituents. The Africa group called on the ILO to play a greater role in initiatives to strengthen the social responsibilities of businesses, including by promoting relevant instruments such as the UN Guiding Principles. In addition, the ILO should strengthen and promote its operational tools, such as the ILO Helpdesk for Business. The Africa group would like clarification on the limited use of the company-union dialogue.
175. The Africa group would like clarification on the Office's proposals relating to the regional follow-up mechanism of the MNE Declaration; it supported however the idea of aligning the regional follow-up cycle with the trial period for ILO regional meetings. The regions should be allowed to determine the most appropriate means for regional follow-up, including how to collect inputs from governments, employers and workers, what topic to select for the thematic report and what format to give to discussions. The group supported the measures proposed to ensure the optimal implementation and promotion of the MNE Declaration and supported the draft decision as amended by the Employers' group.
176. **Speaking on behalf GRULAC**, a Government representative of Mexico valued the work of the Office and the International Training Centre of the ILO to increase capacity-building activities on the MNE Declaration, and the Office's contributions to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, for its country-level work and its thematic reports submitted to the Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly. Her group also valued the results achieved by the ILO action programme on decent work outcomes in supply chains, the fact that the programme had been integrated into the structure of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, and the ILO's interaction with other initiatives in the UN system. She welcomed the efforts made to encourage and support dialogue between the home and host countries of multinational enterprises to identify opportunities for cooperation on advancing decent work in supply chains. In that connection, she took note of the strengthening of the ILO Helpdesk for Business. Further efforts to integrate and harmonize the MNE Declaration and the UN Guiding Principles and any other relevant international instruments should continue. As such,

the Office should continue to strengthen collaboration between technical departments to proactively align the different technical areas covered by such instruments and facilitate coherent national and regional follow-up action. The group noted with interest the progress made in countries that had designated national focal points which served to institutionalize governance of the Principles, facilitate inter-ministerial coordination and, with due support from the Office, promote the attainment of relevant goals. Particularly appreciative of the ILO's efforts to collaborate with other international organizations to promote and harmonize decent work, trade and investment policy, she emphasized the need to promote local and regional initiatives among constituents. Requests for technical assistance from the Office to support such initiatives would allow the Office to adapt to the needs of each Member State. As to the draft decision, she could support subparagraph (a) but had some doubts as to whether the actions enumerated under subparagraph (b) were compatible with one another. Temporarily suspending the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration would complicate the implementation of the actions enumerated in subparagraphs (b)(ii) and (iii). Holding a special session during ILO regional meetings would provide a tripartite dialogue platform to discuss promotional activities at the regional level in greater depth. The regions should be allowed to autonomously determine their own priorities and requirements on the basis of relevant international instruments, technical assistance from the Office and their own experience. GRULAC took note of the amendments proposed by the Workers' and Employers' groups and would listen attentively to discussions as they moved towards consensus.

- 177. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States**, a Government representative of Belgium said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Iceland, Norway and Armenia aligned themselves with the statement. She reiterated her group's support for the promotion and mainstreaming of the principles of the MNE Declaration, which played an important role in achieving social justice. As such, the Global Coalition for Social Justice should give further impetus to the implementation of the Declaration. As part of efforts to promote responsible business conduct in the European Union, references to the MNE Declaration had been included in several important EU initiatives as well as in trade agreements, which would ensure that businesses addressed adverse impacts of their actions, including in their value chains both inside and outside Europe.
- 178.** The promotional activities carried out by the ILO and its constituents were commendable and the work of the ILO Helpdesk for Business was valuable with its support to conduct due diligence. Given the key importance of mainstreaming the principles of the MNE Declaration and labour rights in investment and trade policies, she welcomed the progress outlined in the document, including the increased involvement of the World Trade Organization, UN Conference on Trade and Development and the OECD. The activities conducted by the Office and the social partners on sustainability reporting and disclosure were appreciated. The appointment of national focal points had proven a good practice for mainstreaming the MNE Declaration at the national level. She encouraged continued collaboration between the ILO, OECD and the UN Human Rights Council in fostering human rights and implementing the principles of the MNE Declaration and encouraging policy coherence. The EU and its Member States supported the proposal to align the regional follow-up cycle with the new format of ILO regional meetings for the trial period. To achieve efficiency and coherence, the process should be implemented on an equal footing while taking into account regional contexts and priorities. The Office report following the trial period would be helpful. The EU and its Member States supported the draft decision as drafted by the Office but are open to hearing views from others on the amendments.

- 179. A Government representative of Japan** said the promotion and implementation of the MNE Declaration, along with the launch of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, was of growing importance for ILO constituents in view of the enormous impact of multinational enterprises, especially on developing countries. Under Japan's presidency, the G7 Labour and Employment Ministers meeting issued a Declaration that a smart mix of measures was needed to achieve better outcomes for people. Following an expert proposal on promoting corporate efforts to respect human rights, Japan, together with the ILO Office in Japan, was producing materials for enterprises to improve their knowledge of international labour standards. Japan supported the temporary suspension of the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration and the alignment of the regional follow-up with the new format of ILO regional meetings. As supply chain issues varied from region to region, he suggested that regional thematic panels should include not only follow-up of the MNE Declaration but scope for other measures, including human rights due diligence laws. Japan supported the draft decision as drafted by the Office and took a neutral stance towards the amendments presented by the Employers' and Workers' groups.
- 180. A Government representative of the United States** welcomed the Office's increased promotion of the MNE Declaration, including through its support for constituents in making better use of it. As constituents continued to explore a broad range of regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms to address decent work deficits in the operations of multinational enterprises, he encouraged the Office to systematically explore how it could support the development of such mechanisms to reflect the central role of social dialogue, including collective bargaining. He also encouraged the Office to explore how emerging approaches to worker-centric due diligence and worker-driven social responsibility could be strengthened by guidance provided by the MNE Declaration. In addition, the MNE Declaration has a prominent role in the ILO supply chain strategy, with four specific outputs. He would welcome the Office exploring with constituents, how to increase uptake of the company-union dialogue procedure. He would also welcome the ILO Helpdesk for Business stronger reflecting the emphasis in the MNE Declaration on the central role played by freedom of association, collective bargaining, industrial relations and social dialogue in due diligence. He welcomed the continued high number of users of the Helpdesk and recognized its important role in making information from the ILO supervisory machinery accessible. In view of the importance of policy coherence in business and human rights and responsible trade and investment, he welcomed the Office's promotion of the MNE Declaration among other international organizations and actors in the broader context of trade, investment, supply chains, sustainable finance, disclosure and transparency. He supported the continued regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration and was flexible regarding the amendments proposed by the Workers' and Employers' groups.
- 181. A Government representative of Pakistan** said that, as one of the few Member States to have designated a national focal point for promoting the MNE Declaration, with the Employers' Federation of Pakistan currently serving as focal point, his Government had taken a proactive approach to promoting responsible business practices and fostering sustainable development in partnership with international entities. Notable efforts included the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee on just transitions and the adoption of a national action plan on business and human rights, with support from the ILO and the UN Development Programme. He also highlighted the recent formation of the Business Task Force on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) that strengthened the connection between the MNE focal point within the employers' organization and UN agencies and ensured a comprehensive and cross-cutting approach to implement the MNE Declaration across various sectors and initiatives. He supported the draft decision and was flexible regarding the Workers' and Employers' groups' amendments.

- 182. A Government representative of Colombia** said that, amid the rise in private sector initiatives to promote sustainability and contribution towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the MNE Declaration played an important role. His Government highly valued the work of the ILO and OECD in promoting policy coherence in responsible business conduct and would welcome greater focus on its region. Colombia was one of the beneficiary countries of the EU-ILO-OECD-OHCHR project on Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean. Colombia had developed a national action plan on business and human rights and has an OECD national contact point. It was important to continue to promote the MNE Declaration in ILO regional meetings during the 2024–28 trial period. His Government was participating in negotiations by the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights on a binding instrument, which, if adopted, would strengthen responsible business conduct in the future. His Government aligned itself with the spirit of the Workers' group's statement.
- 183. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Jobs and Social Protection Cluster) said that the Office had taken note of the link identified by Governing Body members between ILO regional meetings and the mechanism for regional follow-up on the MNE Declaration. She also took note of the multiple statements confirming that the regional follow-up mechanism of the MNE Declaration was working well. She thanked Governing Body members for their guidance on how to further promote the MNE Declaration and support tripartite constituents in making full use of the instrument and its operational tools to advance decent work and inclusive growth. She offered the information that the 2023 report on the ILO Helpdesk for Business, just released, had shown that the service remained well used and appreciated. The Office would continue to strengthen this – as well as the other tools of Annex II. Governing Body members had highlighted the centrality of sustainable enterprises to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; to deliver social justice and realize decent work for all, and the importance of the guidance embedded in the MNE Declaration to shape such a contribution. Development cooperation was indeed an important tool for supporting constituents in acquiring the necessary capacity to promote and implement the MNE Declaration in line with their individual social and economic realities, and she wished to thank the funding partners that had made that development cooperation possible. Lastly, she noted that the promotion of sustainable investment and responsible business conduct, guided by the MNE Declaration, was also a key part of the ILO's work on the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, which was part of the Office's efforts to apply the principles of the MNE Declaration across all of its areas of work.
- 184. Another representative of the Director-General** (Head, MNEs and Enterprise Engagement Unit) wished to clarify that the Office was proposing in subparagraph (b)(i) of the draft decision to temporarily suspend the current second cycle of the regional follow-up mechanism and thus not produce a global report of that second cycle, and allow for a new cycle of the regional follow-up with its four elements to coincide with the trial period of the new format of regional meetings, as proposed in subparagraph (b)(ii). The proposal in subparagraph (b)(iii) was to prepare a report on the results of the regional follow-up in the four regions at the end of that trial period. The Office welcomed the commitments expressed by Governing Body members to maximizing the regional follow-up mechanism and stood ready to engage with the regions to achieve that objective. Consultations would be held once the organization of the first ILO regional meeting in the 2024–28 trial period had been confirmed.
- 185.** Responding to comments on the limited use of the company-union dialogue, she wished to clarify that the Office had indeed promoted the service through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities. She added that the Office needed to receive a joint request from

both a multinational enterprise and a union to start the dialogue facilitation. The Office had taken due note of the suggestion to explore, in collaboration with constituents, ways of further promoting the service.

186. **The Worker spokesperson** said that the Workers' group was open to building consensus on the proposed amendments. The group could agree to the Employers' proposed amendment to subparagraph (b) of the draft decision. As to its own proposed amendment to introduce a subparagraph (c), the group could show some flexibility. The idea behind subparagraph (c) had been to ensure that the MNE Declaration became mainstreamed into the everyday work of the ILO. The group would be grateful if the Office would clarify whether each region could decide whether or not to discuss the MNE Declaration during its regional meeting. The group was concerned that making the discussion of the MNE Declaration voluntary at regional meetings ran counter to commitments to promoting and strengthening its implementation.
187. **The Employer spokesperson** said that his group was also open to building consensus. The group would support the Workers' group's amendment to subparagraph (b) if a subamendment was introduced to replace the word "format" with "cycle". That would ensure that the format of regional meetings safely continued to be at the discretion of the regions. The Employers' group saw no need for a working group to be established and therefore did not support subparagraph (c) of the Workers' group's amendment.
188. **The Worker spokesperson** agreed with the subamendment proposed by the Employers to change the word "format" to "cycle". However, he wished to know how consistency would be ensured on the follow-up to the MNE Declaration in the different regions and the differences that might arise during the various regional meetings.
189. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Jobs and Social Protection Cluster) noted that the Governing Body members had expressed their commitment to a well-functioning regional follow-up mechanism, which substantiated the concern that a discussion would not be on the agenda.
190. **Another representative of the Director-General** (Head, MNEs and Enterprise Engagement Unit) indicated that Annex II and the description of the regional follow-up of the MNE Declaration referred back to document GB.320/POL/10 concerning the implementation strategy for the follow-up mechanism of and promotional activities on the MNE Declaration and the related decision adopted at the 320th Session (decision point (b)). She read out paragraphs 23 and 24 of document GB.320/POL/10, which highlighted the four elements for collecting information on the effect given to the MNE Declaration (information gathering, a report prepared by the Office, a discussion during the regional meeting, a global report at the end of four regional meetings) which is summarized in the regional follow-up in Annex II of the MNE Declaration.
191. **The Worker spokesperson** said that his group's proposed amendment to subparagraph (b), as subamended by the Employers, could be retained, and not the proposed subparagraph (c) provided that the concerns expressed by his group were taken into account.

Decision

192. The Governing Body:

- (a) **requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance to strengthen the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and its operational tools, including in the context of relevant developments outside the ILO; and**

- (b) **decided to continue implementing the regional follow-up outlined in Annex II of the Declaration, aligning it with the cycle of regional meetings.**

(GB.350/POL/5, paragraph 41, as amended by the Governing Body)