



Governing Body

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Programme, Financial and Administrative Section

PFA

Minutes of the Programme, Financial and Administrative Section

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Programme, Financial and Administrative Segment

1. ILO programme implementation 2022–23 (GB.350/PFA/1(Rev.1))

1. **The Worker spokesperson** noted that the report recorded impressive results. Nonetheless, the core normative work of the Organization was increasingly sidelined and there were very few references to technical support in the follow-up to the ILO supervisory system. While new standard-setting and efforts to accelerate the work of the Standards Review Mechanism were welcome, the ratification of instruments and standard-setting were necessary. Circumstances had driven a desirable shift towards crisis response, but a more comprehensive strategy was needed. The ILO was not a humanitarian relief agency and the upcoming General Survey on the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), for discussion in 2026, was an opportunity to develop an integrated strategy for peace and resilience. Labour productivity should not be measured individually but should include total factor productivity and its relationship with the labour income share. Details of results in the regions were much appreciated, although a list of the most active private sector and civil society organizations would be welcome. With the stronger focus on global supply chains, the Office should ensure a focus on workers' rights and the public sector in the work on just transitions.
2. The results under outcome 1 were appreciated; nonetheless, more effort was needed in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States. There should be a breakdown of contributions from development partners to the different outputs by constituency. There were welcome improvements in collective bargaining, which should be promoted as a fundamental right, but it should not be put on a par with workplace cooperation. Regarding outcome 2, only one Member State had ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), during the biennium. Following the full recovery of reporting rates, further details on follow-up should be included in the next report on sectoral activities. If the regular budget allocation for labour standards was structurally insufficient, it should be supplemented where possible. Efforts should continue to be made to promote the integration of international labour standards in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. It was deplorable that results on outcome 3 were significantly below target. Concerning outcome 4, the spokesperson welcomed the tripartite appointments of national focal points for the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022, (MNE Declaration), in three Member States and called on other Member States to follow suit. He rejected the assertion that exclusively promoting enterprises was essential to preserve jobs and incomes, address inequalities and achieve social justice. Further information on the establishment of social dialogue mechanisms to promote sustainable enterprises was required and work on sustainable enterprises should be based on the full Conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007. Clarifications were also necessary as to how the ILO contributed to enhancing public-private partnerships in Africa. Regarding support for employers' organizations, public funds should not be used to provide services to individual private companies. It would be useful to follow up on promotion of the MNE Declaration by various institutions concerning the alignment of business practices with decent work and a human-centred approach to the future of work.
3. Under outcome 5, the spokesperson welcomed the adoption of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), and called on employers and Member States to allocate the necessary resources for its implementation. Regarding outcome 6, much more effort was

required regarding equal pay. Despite the ratifications of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), there were some concerns about exclusive focus on the care economy. The ILO work on gender equality should not be reduced to care, as an overly feminized sector. He regretted that there was not much progress in the ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), and that outcome 6, which dealt with the fundamental principle of non-discrimination, was less funded than outcome 4. Concerning outcome 7, the key enabling rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining needed further work. Results were only achieved in countries with active development cooperation projects covering freedom of association and collective bargaining. Such projects should be expanded and better funded. In view of the upcoming recurrent discussion and considering the Evaluation Office report discussed the previous year, the Organization should seek ways to overcome the reluctance to focus on those rights. Lastly, outcome 7 should provide further information on the implementation of the Conclusions concerning inequalities and the world of work adopted by the International Labour Conference. The ILO had a strong mandate to work on and promote living wages. The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), also included the prevention of informalization and associated measures. The Office should detail its efforts on the prevention of informalization. The spokesperson commended the work done on outcome 8, which he considered should be better funded, and called for increased work on social protection in relation to just transitions. Changing conventional approaches to the provisions of social protection related to different work arrangements often resulted in the precarization of jobs to avoid the payment of social contributions. The Office should explain its reasoning in that area.

4. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2022–23 had delivered important results to advance decent work. However, the programme implementation report should present accurate analysis rather than attractive headlines. In addition, the financial information provided lacked details of expenditure at the output level. A persistent concern was that employers' organizations were still largely confined to social dialogue. The Governing Body had proposed a holistic approach to developing the capacity of ILO constituents. The Employers' group continued to emphasize the need for a dedicated outcome for employers' and workers' organizations.
5. In Africa, while the report indicated the accomplishment of numerous targets across various ILO outcomes, the actual impact of those activities on the ground remained unclear. The full implementation of the Abidjan Declaration was crucial. Emphasis should also be placed on recognizing that social dialogue required enhanced institutional capacity for social partners. In the Americas, a subregional analysis focusing on the Caribbean countries should be included. In Asia and the Pacific, the Office should follow through on its commitment to develop an implementation plan for the Singapore Statement adopted at the 17th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting (2022).
6. The Employers' group acknowledged that output 1.1 had helped to strengthen numerous employers' organizations. However, work to support employers' organizations had been confined to that output and there was no detail of how funds were allocated. Under outcome 2, lessons should be learned for setting future targets. There appeared to be some "ratification fatigue" among ILO Member States. A more resolute consolidation of ILO standards seemed an appropriate remedial measure. Moreover, the Office should advise Member States to ratify new Conventions only once Member States were satisfied that they could implement them. The ILO could increase relevant assistance to countries. The progress in ILO support to Member States in the application of sectoral labour standards, codes of practice and guidelines

was welcome and should be continued. There had been commendable achievements under outcome 3. However, there was a notable gap in prioritizing the implementation of employment policies, with insufficient attention to their financing. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards enhancing private employment services. Regarding outcome 4, it was important to strengthen the connection between employment policy and enterprise development; there should be more consultation with employers on initiatives implemented at headquarters and in the field. The Office should be more ambitious in providing technical assistance to improve the enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises. It was also vital for the ILO to redouble its efforts to combat informality. The involvement of employers in the Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work programme was essential to ensure that their concerns were addressed. Evidence-based productivity assessments should identify and address structural barriers and develop concrete and pragmatic policy recommendations for governments, rather than relying solely on sectoral policies.

7. Outcome 5 had yielded excellent results, despite resource constraints, and needed a larger budget for better results. The Office should focus on developing knowledge products for skills anticipation, utilizing digital technology and building on experiences from various countries. Skills remained an important priority for employers. Under outcome 6, there was insufficient evidence of achievements to highlight the Office's support for constituents in realizing the transformative agenda for gender equality. The Office should be more direct and assertive in approaching constituents' requests to address the pay gap, rather than relying solely on the efforts of the Equal Pay International Coalition, which should be aligned to and contribute to the achievement of country results. Outcome 7 was by far the policy outcome with the highest total expenditure. Many of the references in the report to the fundamental principles and rights at work had failed to demonstrate how the ILO had reshaped, or intended to reshape, technical work and technical interventions.
8. Overall, the report could benefit from more analysis to inform lessons learned. It was vital to strengthen the ILO as a thought leader and research must both be based on the needs of constituents and be more unified and streamlined. An agile and resilient ILO should adhere to its core mandate and support all constituents. Decent work principles should also be enshrined in any work undertaken in conflict or crisis settings. The programme implementation report contained little information likely to help inform the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25 or planning for the Programme and Budget for 2026–27. The Office must devise a dedicated policy outcome on strengthening the institutional capacities of employers' and business membership organizations, and workers' organizations and embed enhanced budgetary transparency.
9. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Niger said that his group welcomed the achievement of 389 decent work results in Africa and urged the Office to increase the cooperation and assistance programmes that had contributed to that achievement and to make greater investment in measures to meet the continent's needs. Despite a challenging global context, the Office had achieved satisfactory results across the eight policy outcomes, in some cases exceeding its targets. The Office's commendable efforts under outcome 3 should be redoubled to achieve the desired results.
10. Noting the remarkable progress made by the Office in advancing social justice, his group lauded in particular the ILO's support for constituents in countries affected by natural disasters and encouraged it to continue to provide such assistance in an impartial and fair manner. In that vein, the ILO should extend its assistance to African countries in crisis that were not in receipt of support, such as Sudan, where more than 8 million workers had lost their jobs owing

to the ongoing conflict. His group commended the ILO for its action to support 8,000 Gazan workers who were trapped in the West Bank owing to the war in Gaza and requested the Office to work with the United Nations (UN) and other partners to explore ways of affording tripartite constituents in Gaza the necessary assistance to alleviate the devastating impact of the war on the world of work.

11. The Africa group noted with concern that output per worker had decreased over the biennium, that no notable progress had been made regarding informal work, that the activity rate among women remained lower than among men in certain countries and – above all, given the large numbers of young persons in Africa – that youth unemployment remained high. The Office, together with the African governments concerned, should adopt the necessary measures to remedy those situations. His group supported the draft decision.
12. **Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC)**, a Government representative of Mexico noted the slow progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, and called for measures to place social justice at the heart of ILO efforts regarding sustainable development, national policies and international cooperation. Her group looked forward to the use of the Regular Budget Supplementary Account resources allocated to high-impact areas as catalysts for the promotion of integrated approaches. The Office should redouble its efforts to integrate the gender perspective into the policy outcomes, and should also conduct an analysis of how its work in the area of social justice contributed to the SDGs over the coming biennium.
13. Her group noted that only 19 per cent of ILO cooperation and technical assistance efforts had taken place in Latin America and the Caribbean; the level of such cooperation afforded to the region should be commensurate with its needs in the area of international labour standard implementation. Her group would therefore like to know what percentage of technical assistance for the implementation of supervisory system recommendations had been provided in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Office should play a greater part in strengthening States' capacities to follow up on such recommendations. Her region's experience with regard to a care society should inform discussions on the issue at the next International Labour Conference.
14. With regard to outcome 1, her group underscored the importance of ensuring greater ILO support for Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to social dialogue. As to outcome 2, GRULAC stressed the importance of ILO assistance in strengthening governments' capacities to report on the application of Conventions and Recommendations. Formalization must remain the focus of efforts under outcome 4. In relation to outcome 5, her group considered that Recommendation No. 208, and the ILO strategy on skills and lifelong learning for 2022–30 provided a clear mandate for supporting Member States in relation to digital and green transitions and social justice and wished to know how many ILO programmes addressed digitalization, including artificial intelligence. GRULAC also wished, in relation to outcome 6, to receive disaggregated data on actions and programmes combating discrimination against vulnerable groups through an intersectional lens. It noted with concern that the resources allocated to outcome 6 had, once again, decreased; sufficient resources must be provided to allow for the achievement of the related targets.
15. As to future prospects, her group believed that an integrated approach should be taken to reinforcing internal coherence and coordination within the Office in order to support the tripartite constituents. Moreover, the ILO should play a leading role in generating and analysing timely empirical evidence in support of its policy guidance and advice, based on

social dialogue and interaction with decision-makers at the national and regional levels. It should also increase its efforts to ensure agile and effective responses to crisis situations and, more generally, to countries' needs and priorities.

16. **Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG)**, a Government representative of China said that her group was encouraged by the fact that results in Asia and the Pacific had met or exceeded the output indicator targets for five of the eight policy outcomes. However, it would appreciate clarification from the Office as to why targets had not been met under outcomes 1, 2 and 5 and what measures could be adopted and resources used to improve those results during the current biennium.
17. With regard to outcome 1, the Office should further support Member States in enhancing their labour administrations and strengthening their labour inspection capacities. Under outcome 2, the Office should continue to support Member States in building their capacities to fulfil their reporting obligations, including through training sessions at the International Training Centre of the ILO, and provide timely and effective technical assistance to support them in implementing international labour standards. It should also organize more seminars at the global, regional and national levels to facilitate the technical exchange of views on sectoral labour standards, codes of practice and guidance. As to outcome 3, the Office should increase its research on trends in the world of work to inform policy and implementation at the national level. In terms of outcome 4, it was important to address challenges linked to productivity and decent work systematically.
18. Regarding outcome 5, ASPAG called for adequate resources to be allocated to the comprehensive implementation of the ILO strategy on skills and lifelong learning for 2022–30. The Office should continue its efforts under outcome 6 and, in relation to outcome 7, intensify its efforts to foster a safe and healthy working environment for all. With regard to outcome 8, she stressed the importance of adopting and implementing policy measures to extend social protection and fully supported the Office's mobilization and investment of greater resources to that end. Additionally, her group encouraged the Office to increase its support to Member States in extending the coverage of social protection and enhancing its administration.
19. As to the enabling outcomes, ASPAG encouraged the Office to continue its work to ensure the optimal functioning of the Organization and effective delivery of the policy outcomes, including by stepping up efforts to implement the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25. Lastly, her group agreed that the Office should prioritize learning from its own experience in order to continually improve the use of resources to achieve better results. ASPAG supported the draft decision.
20. **Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)**, a Government representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed the exceeding of the gender equality targets under outcome 6. However, she noted that the labour market gender participation gap had remained at over 20 per cent since 2019 and requested information on how the Office might harness its recent successes to address that persistent challenge, while encouraging it to develop further policies pertaining to the specific needs of women.
21. Noting with regret that the results achieved under outcome 2 were 10 per cent below the target, she encouraged the Office to strengthen its efforts in the promotion, ratification and application of labour standards. Her group welcomed the increased focus on occupational safety and health. While the development of national occupational safety and health frameworks and reporting systems was positive, the overall numbers were below target. The explicit inclusion of occupational safety and health under outcome 6 of the Programme and

Budget for 2024–25, along with its inclusion as a fundamental principle and right at work, would hopefully galvanize developments at the national level.

22. Noting that the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training remained above 20 per cent despite numerous strategies and programmes, and recognizing that the impact of such initiatives took time to materialize, she welcomed the continued focus on the issue. With regard to enabling outcome A, it would be vital, as the Organization began to establish the Global Coalition for Social Justice, to continue to seek opportunities to promote awareness of, and commitment to, ILO priorities across the UN system and beyond. The Organization must lead by example on environmental sustainability. She therefore welcomed its continuing commitment to greening ILO operations and facilities and the progress made towards reducing emissions from air travel. Information on the cause of the increase in water consumption at headquarters, and how it would be addressed, would be welcome.
23. The absence from the document of information on progress towards the four longer-term impact indicators that linked aspects of the Decent Work Agenda to the SDGs was regrettable. Such information, even if not up to date, would have provided an important overview of global labour market conditions and helped the Organization decide on the direction and content of its work. The section on lessons learned, challenges and future prospects, while valuable, could be enhanced by the inclusion of a reference to the specific targets being carried forward to the new programme and budget. Moreover, it would be useful to include a reference to the outputs in the programme for 2024–25 that would demonstrate strengthened integration of the strategy on fundamental principles and rights at work across the Office. IMEC welcomed the regular reporting of financial data, which contributed to determining the impact of funding, could be used to plan future work and helped Member States to improve the transparency of their own development spending on contributions to the ILO. Her group supported the draft decision.
24. **Speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, a Government representative of Indonesia, outlining the ILO's contribution to achievements in Asia and the Pacific, reiterated his group's commitment to working with the Organization and supporting the delivery of its programmes. ASEAN supported the draft decision.
25. **Another Government representative of Indonesia** said that the focus on realizing social justice through decent work during the 2022–23 biennium had been critical in enabling constituents to address challenges in the world of work and in encouraging policy development. He supported the draft decision.
26. **A Government representative of Bangladesh** said that the Global Coalition for Social Justice was an important step towards achieving a new social contract based on social justice and the equitable distribution of global resources with a view to overcoming challenges such as unemployment, low productivity and informality. ILO programmes, including those promoting skills and lifelong learning and a smooth transition from school to work, were crucial for developing economies like Bangladesh. Her country would also benefit from capacity-building support for its tripartite constituents, particularly employers' and business membership organizations, and technical support to enhance its factory inspection capacities.
27. She encouraged the Office to launch capacity-building programmes in developing countries so as to establish robust institutions for social dialogue and collective bargaining, and to increase its engagement with multinational companies to ensure fair prices that allowed for investment in addressing decent work deficits. Additional effort by the ILO to address diminishing productivity and employability would be welcome, for example by allocating sufficient

resources to the ILO strategy on skills and lifelong learning for 2022–30. She supported the draft decision.

28. **A Government representative of Sudan** drew attention to the impact of conflict on the world of work, noting in particular that the war in Sudan had led to the forced displacement of thousands of workers and the destruction of infrastructure. The Office must urgently implement projects on the ground to support displaced workers in order to ensure that progress could still be made towards the outcomes contained in the document. A detailed strategy and additional financial support were also needed to enable countries affected by conflict to adopt effective labour policies once peace had been established, with a focus on capacity-building, industrial development, apprenticeships, lifelong learning and the digital transformation.
29. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services Cluster) thanked delegates for their comments, which would guide the Office on future reporting and in the implementation of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25. He noted in particular the request made by the Workers' group for a list of the names of private sector and civil society organizations providing voluntary funding to the ILO and for training on core labour standards to be provided to ILO officials. The Office would also take into account the requests made by the Employers' group for greater subregional analysis of support provided to Caribbean countries and for a more detailed level of analysis within the report in general to inform lessons learned. Responding to concerns expressed by the Workers' group regarding the limited ratification of fundamental Conventions, he reaffirmed the Office's commitment to prioritizing its normative work, while stressing that the ratification of international instruments was a matter of government sovereignty and many such processes had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress in that area would therefore require extensive efforts in terms of communication with Member States. The Office would seek to utilize development cooperation resources more effectively in the future to address issues such as gender equality. In its efforts to improve the reporting process, the Office would continue to respond to requests from constituents while also taking appropriate measures to improve the process on its own initiative.
30. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Strategic Programming and Management Department) said that the purpose of the programme implementation report was to ensure accountability to constituents, communicate key milestones and achievements to external stakeholders and incorporate lessons learned into future work. The Office would continue to make improvements within that framework.
31. Responding to concerns expressed by the Employers' group, he stressed that the Office would maintain the consolidated structure of outcome 1 on tripartite constituents and social dialogue. That approach had proved beneficial to the Office's efforts to mainstream social dialogue and enhance capacity-building, teamwork and policy coherence within the Office and had helped to improve the ILO's and constituents' visibility among other UN organizations and to prioritize decent work in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
32. The Employers' group had also asked for budget expenditure to be presented at both the outcome and output levels. However, it was standard practice across the UN system and in results-based management models to present information on budget expenditure for governance purposes at the outcome level. That practice helped to separate governance and operation accountabilities between the Governing Body and the Office and supported an integrated approach within and across outcomes. That said, some detail on expenditure under

outputs 1.1 and 1.2 had been provided in the report and the figures contained in Appendix V to document GB.350/PFA/1(Rev.1) presented the contribution of organizational units to expenditure by outcome.

33. Efforts to close the gender participation gap would continue under outcome 5 of the Programme and Budget for 2024–25, and a wide range of gender equality issues would be addressed across other outcomes. Information on all four impact indicators had not been included in the report owing to limitations in data availability. However, updated information had been provided in the Programme and Budget proposals for 2024–25, and work was under way with Member States so as to strengthen their capacity to generate relevant labour market statistics. Responding to concerns expressed by GRULAC, he clarified that the 19 per cent figure contained in the report referred to the percentage of results achieved in the Americas region in the 2022–23 biennium, rather than the proportion of cooperation and technical assistance funding allocated to the region. The Americas region had received a low percentage of development cooperation funding in recent years as levels of development in the region had increased; however, he agreed that joint efforts should be undertaken to secure more development cooperation funding for the region.
34. The failure to achieve targets under outcome 1 in certain regions, notably Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States, was partly due to political situations in those regions and limited progress in increasing the institutional capacity of workers' organizations. Turning to outcome 2, he noted that ratification rates were broadly in line with those reported in previous years. Shortfalls in the achievement of ratification targets chiefly concerned the technical Conventions, rather than the fundamental Conventions, and could be attributed to delays in national ratification processes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery efforts. Although performance on several indicators under output 3.1 had improved since the 2020–21 biennium, the continued failure to achieve those targets might be indicative of the ongoing impact of the pandemic and other economic factors on national priorities. The Office would seek to analyse the underlying causes more closely.
35. He agreed with the Workers' group that activities carried out under outcome 4 should generate decent work and wage increases for workers in addition to promoting sustainable enterprises and productivity. Regarding output 4.1, he noted that it would take time to see the results of activities aimed at improving the enabling environment for entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprises. Additional information on that subject was available on the ILO Decent Work Results Dashboard. Outcome 5, especially output 5.2, would benefit from increased funding from Member States and other donors; the Office would continue to work on resource mobilization to that end. Outcome 6 had seen positive results in comparison to the previous biennium, but extrabudgetary development cooperation resources mobilized for that outcome remained low, and it had therefore been necessary to draw on additional Regular Budget Supplementary Account resources. He therefore called on donors to provide specific support in that area. On outcome 7, he noted the limited requests from Member States to develop integrated programmes on the fundamental principles and rights at work and occupational safety and health policies and programmes. In addition, achievement of that outcome relied heavily on extrabudgetary development cooperation. The Office was therefore working to improve its understanding of those issues and to identify best practices to be replicated and scaled up in the regions.
36. Regarding the enabling outcomes, he said that the Office was looking into the development of research strategies and would provide more information in due course. Furthermore, the Office would explore how to improve the section of the report on lessons learned in consideration of feedback from constituents. In closing, he assured constituents that their

views would be taken into account in preparing future programme implementation reports and programmes and budgets.

37. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the ILO should continue to improve transparency in the reporting of budget expenditure, even if it went beyond standard UN practice in doing so. He reiterated his group's concern regarding the consolidated structure of outcome 1.
38. **The Worker spokesperson** highlighted the need for an integrated strategy and approach to the fundamental principles and rights at work and called on the Office to prioritize the promotion of those principles and rights among Member States as a key element of democracy. While "ratification fatigue" was too strong a term for the current situation, every effort should be made to avoid that phenomenon occurring in future. He asked the Office for further details regarding the campaign for domestic workers to be recognized as care workers, given that the Workers' group had not been consulted on that initiative, and for further information on preventing informalization in line with the Recommendation No. 204.
39. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Strategic Programming and Management Department) replied that the aim of that campaign was to improve the protection of all care workers. He agreed on the need for an integrated approach to the fundamental principles and rights at work, observing that funding from extrabudgetary development cooperation for outcome 2 had increased in the last biennium and that regular budget allocations amounted to 74 per cent of all resources allocated to outcome 2, the highest proportion of regular budget resources allocated to any of the eight outcomes. Lastly, he agreed that the reporting of budget expenditure could be discussed further with a view to making additional improvements.
40. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Governance, Rights and Dialogue Cluster), responding to the comments made by the Workers' group, said that the Office would proceed with campaigns to promote the fundamental Conventions in line with the discussions on the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2024–30, the independent high-level evaluation of the ILO's strategies and action on fundamental principles and rights at work, 2018–23, and the ILO Integrated Strategy for the Promotion and Implementation of the Right to Collective Bargaining. While it was true that not all domestic workers were care workers, it was important to include domestic workers in the broader discussion of the care economy that was due to take place at the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference (2024). The inclusion of domestic workers in that discussion had also been driven by the findings of the General Survey on securing decent work for nursing personnel and domestic workers, key actors in the care economy.

Decision

41. **The Governing Body took note of the report and requested the Office to take into account the observations made during the discussion.**

(GB.350/PFA/1(Rev.1), paragraph 278)

2. Delegation of authority under article 17 of the Standing Orders of the International Labour Conference (GB.350/PFA/2)

Decision

42. **The Governing Body decided to delegate to its Officers, for the period of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference (2024), the authority to carry out its**

responsibilities under article 17 of the Standing Orders of the Conference in relation to proposals involving expenditure in the 79th financial period ending 31 December 2025.

(GB.350/PFA/2, paragraph 3)

3. Programme and Budget for 2022–23: Regular budget account and Working Capital Fund as at 31 December 2023 (GB.350/PFA/3)

Decision

43. **The Governing Body took note of the information provided in document GB.350/PFA/3 on the position of 2022–23 income and expenditure.**

(GB.350/PFA/3, paragraph 11)

4. Scale of assessments of contributions to the budget for 2025 (GB.350/PFA/4)

44. **A Government representative of India** said that many Member States believed that the time was right to review the methodology for calculating the scale of assessments, which had remained largely unchanged for over two decades, in order to ensure that it was fair, equitable and aligned with the contemporary economic landscape. The current approach of linking the scale directly to gross domestic product might not provide a true reflection of a country's specific circumstances or its commitment to the principles of the Organization. It was therefore essential to consider a more multifaceted approach that took into account other important factors such as population and labour force, which would have the added benefit of being in keeping with the Organization's focus on labour-related issues. It should also be noted that a very high number of ILO staff members were from Europe and the Americas, whereas few were from Asia and the Pacific. The proportion of staff of a given nationality should not be determined solely on the basis of their country's membership or contribution to the Organization's budget. By considering a broader range of criteria, the Organization could ensure that the distribution of staff by nationality was reflective of countries' involvement in and dedication to advancing its objectives.

Decision

45. **The Governing Body, in accordance with the established practice of harmonizing the rates of assessment of ILO Member States with their rates of assessment in the United Nations (UN), decided to base the ILO scale of assessment for 2025 on the UN scale for 2022–24, and to propose to the International Labour Conference the adoption of the draft scale of assessment for 2025 as set out in the appendix to document GB.350/PFA/4, subject to such adjustments as might be necessary following any further change in the membership of the Organization before the Conference is called upon to adopt the recommended scale.**

(GB.350/PFA/4, paragraph 4)

5. Other financial questions

(No other financial questions were submitted to the Governing Body at this session.)

Audit and Oversight Segment

6. Report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (GB.350/PFA/6)

46. **The Chairperson of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC)** said that the Committee's report presented an overview of the work accomplished by the Committee in the period from February 2023 to January 2024, during which it had held three in-person meetings, as well as virtual discussions, covering all key areas of its mandate. She highlighted the policy and process improvements implemented by the Office and the results achieved during the year, and drew the Governing Body's attention to the six recommendations put forward by the Committee. Referring to the mandatory rotation of Committee members, she noted that the process to replace the three members whose terms would expire at the end of 2024 had already started and encouraged the Office to share the list of potential candidates with the Committee for evaluation. The aim of the review of the Committee's terms of reference, which was to be carried out as part of its 2024 work plan, was to determine whether improvements could be made that would limit the turnover of membership in any one year. She welcomed the support provided throughout the year by the ILO's senior management and staff.
47. **The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the positive outcomes achieved during the period under review, including the unmodified audit opinion on the 2022 consolidated financial statements, which demonstrated the ILO's robust financial governance. Nevertheless, it was essential not to ignore the challenges identified in the report. Regarding the operations of the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), which were the subject of recommendation 1, his group encouraged the Office to address the External Auditor's outstanding recommendations on that subject, in particular those aimed at senior management, in order to better support the commitment of both bureaus. The Employers endorsed recommendation 2, on completing the action plans identified in the Statement of Internal Control with regard to cybersecurity controls. The creation of a working group on cybersecurity, comprising internal and external experts, would be a commendable initiative that would provide the ILO with a dynamic and proactive strategy on information security. Regarding recommendation 3, completing the skills-mapping exercise was key to ensuring that the ILO had the talent it needed to fulfil its mandate. The adoption of a global strategy incorporating both cybersecurity and skills development, in collaboration with top academic institutions and technology front runners, would demonstrate a long-term vision that would combine innovation and excellence, reflect the demands of a constantly changing world and underline the need for the ILO to remain at the forefront of international best practice.
48. In relation to recommendation 4, on prioritizing the action plans to address the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO) in the Report on External Collaboration Contracting, the ILO should establish stricter audit and control procedures concerning the management of external contracts, placing emphasis on diligence and transparency, to avoid any damage to its reputation. A more effective monitoring framework was needed to assess the performance and integrity of external partners. His group encouraged the Office to examine the root causes of the misuse of external contracts, while avoiding the creation of additional bureaucracy.
49. The Employers supported recommendation 5, on improvements in the reporting of wrongdoings. Instilling greater transparency and accountability would help to uphold higher ethical standards at the ILO; however, a balance had to be struck between the need for such

transparency and accountability, and the need to protect confidential information. The review of the Ethics Officer's role as the focal point for the action plan on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, mentioned in recommendation 6, warranted a careful approach. Expanding the mandate of the Ethics Office in that way could compromise its capacity to address other ethics issues. It was therefore important to assess whether the current structures allowed for the effective and ethical management of abuse prevention issues and to consider the restructuring of responsibilities and reallocation of resources if necessary. An assessment of the resources available to the Ethics Office should be conducted without delay.

- 50. The Worker spokesperson** noted the Committee's satisfaction regarding the number of policy and process improvements implemented and the results achieved during the year. She recalled the observation made previously by her group that the role of the IOAC was to rubber-stamp evaluation work that had already been undertaken, an observation that was borne out by recommendations 1, 3 and 4. While additional checks and balances were useful, it was questionable whether the added value of the work of the Committee justified the time and resources spent on it. Noting the reference in recommendation 5 to "maintaining confidentiality when appropriate", she asked in which circumstances confidentiality would not be appropriate. On recommendation 6, it would be interesting to learn about the challenges associated with the dual role of the Ethics Officer, including in terms of mandate and budget and whether those could be expanded further if necessary. The fact that the Committee's operations were evaluated as meeting or exceeding expectations during its 2023 annual self-assessment did not necessarily justify an expansion of its mandate. Concerning the outstanding recommendation from the 2022 peer review on an annual communications strategy, the Workers saw no need for additional communication beyond the annual report and formal exchange with the Governing Body. On the mandatory rotation of three of the five Committee members at the end of 2024, the Committee should follow the established rules and do everything possible to ensure continuity and transfer of knowledge in anticipation of the rotation. New members should be selected so as to allow the Committee to cover all the areas of its work. She asked whether the Committee's intention was to proceed with the recruitment of all three replacements in any case and whether it envisaged staggered start dates in order to facilitate the transition. Pending clarification in that regard, she endorsed the draft decision.
- 51. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Sudan said that his group welcomed the continued efforts by the Office to ensure the effective functioning of the Committee. The group commended the recommendation by the Committee that management should address the External Auditor's recommendations on improving the controls in procurement management and in the field offices' operations on a timely basis, and agreed that management should be encouraged to complete the action plans relating to accountability and capacity for the cybersecurity controls to be enhanced. It also agreed with the recommendation to prioritize the action plans to address the recommendations in the Report on External Collaborating Contracting that had an impact on the reputation of the ILO. It noted the direction provided to management on steps to reduce financial losses and other damage caused by fraud and corruption and valued the progress being made to implement the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25 and the Information Technology Strategy 2022–25.
- 52.** The Africa group was in favour of placing a greater emphasis on ethics and on improving the timeliness of reporting on the progress made and consequences in respect of all allegations, including those related to sexual exploitation and abuse, and on maintaining confidentiality. His group reiterated the importance of the work of the Committee and encouraged it to carry

out the recruitment process in line with best practices, including ensuring equitable geographical representation and the fulfilment of the required competencies. The participation of the Committee in the peer review process in 2022 was welcome. He endorsed the draft decision.

- 53. Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed the unmodified audit opinion received by the Office and the 2022 Statement of Internal Control issued by the Director-General. Regarding recommendation 1, his group agreed that addressing procurement controls should be a priority for the Office. Noting the good progress made in respect of the skills-mapping exercise, his group encouraged the Office to implement recommendation 3 on finalizing Phase 2 of the exercise as planned, as doing so would further strengthen the ILO's human resource capacity with regard to technical policy outcomes. Ensuring greater transparency in communicating outcomes while respecting confidentiality, as proposed in recommendation 5, would reinforce organizational accountability. Referring to recommendation 6, he said that his group noted the concerns raised in respect of the expansion of the Ethics Officer's mandate and agreed that a review of the resources needed to fulfil that mandate and an assessment of the appropriateness of that expanded role seemed prudent. His group commended the work of the IOAC and supported its recommendations.
- 54. Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Mexico welcomed the active role taken by the IOAC over the past year and its increased exchanges with the Office, the members of the Governing Body and the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN system. She took note of the six recommendations, drawing particular attention to recommendation 6 and noting that, under the existing system, the Human Resources Development Department was responsible for handling complaints of harassment and sexual harassment, while the Ethics Office and the Office of the IAO were responsible for coordinating the prevention efforts and for investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which led to a fragmentation in the follow-up of cases in the two closely related areas. That could create confusion among staff members who wished to make a complaint. Noting that the separation of responsibilities had arisen out of a collective agreement with the Staff Union, she suggested updating the agreement to resolve the matter. She also welcomed the report of the Ethics Officer (GB.350/PFA/INF/10) and noted how important it was for the Ethics Office to have the necessary resources to carry out the functions related to preventing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, at least until the aforementioned fragmentation issue could be resolved. The 2023 ethics survey had highlighted concerns about reporting instances of unethical behaviour or misconduct without fear of retaliation, which must be urgently addressed, including through a review of the whistle-blower protection policy. The next report of the Ethics Officer should be discussed by the Governing Body and a corresponding item be placed on the agenda.
- 55.** Noting that several members of the IOAC would be completing their maximum terms at the end of 2024, she requested further information on the status of the Committee's selection process for new members and emphasized the importance of gender balance and geographical representation.
- 56. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United States of America thanked the members of the IOAC for their work over the past year and welcomed the use of the hybrid working modality to convene more frequently and confer with other oversight entities. IMEC appreciated the emphasis on the timely implementation of audit and oversight recommendations and on strengthening internal controls, as noted in recommendations 1, 2 and 4. It also supported the aim of completing the skills-mapping exercise for the priority groups delivering on the technical policy outcomes in 2024. With regard to the potential

reputational risk noted in recommendation 4, she asked whether that had been accounted for in the risk register, how that risk had been mitigated and whether any lessons had been learned that could be applied more widely. With regard to recommendation 5, IMEC supported the continued emphasis on transparency in reporting, noting that other organizations had made strides in that area by creating a public interface with real-time status updates for investigations into allegations of wrongdoing and related disciplinary action. Such a tool could improve staff confidence in internal oversight functions and the application of staff policies. IMEC agreed with recommendation 6 and considered that a benchmarking exercise could help identify best practices in the UN system relating to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. It would like to review the Office's organizational, human and financial resources plans for supporting the portfolio on that subject. IMEC welcomed the completion of the ethics survey and was of the view that the report of the Ethics Officer should be an item for discussion at every March session of the Governing Body, not simply a document for information. With regard to the Committee's work plan for 2024–25, IMEC encouraged the IOAC to consider the procedures for handling allegations against senior and elected officials, including the disclosure of outcomes and the enumeration of disciplinary measures. Lastly, in the interest of developing agreeable amendments to the IOAC's terms of reference with regard to member turnover, IMEC was open to discussing the matter at a Governing Body session at any time in the next year. IMEC supported the draft decision.

57. **A Government representative of Indonesia** commended the IOAC for its diligent work and insightful recommendations, particularly those relating to the timely reporting of wrongdoing, the role of the Ethics Officer and the improvements suggested by the External Auditor, which were crucial for ensuring the effective functioning of the Organization. He acknowledged the achievements highlighted in the report, which reflected the Organization's hard work and dedication. However, there was always room for improvement, so all stakeholders should work together to implement the Committee's recommendations. In that regard, he requested clarification on the definition of the priority groups mentioned in recommendation 3, as well as further information on strategies to ensure equal geographical representation in the ILO's staff.
58. **The Chairperson of the IOAC** thanked the members of the Governing Body for their comments. With regard to the reference to "maintaining confidentiality when appropriate" in recommendation 5, she said that, while confidentiality clearly had to be maintained, it was important to include sufficient information to enable people to understand what type of allegations were being reviewed and whether measures were being taken, in order to promote a culture of open whistle-blowing for all instances of wrongdoing of any kind. Responding to the comments by IMEC, she said that a process for dealing with allegations against senior management would be identified and that the Committee's role in that process, if any, would be clarified. She clarified that, further to the discussion held with the Human Resources Development Department, it had been confirmed that the priority groups currently being addressed by the skills-mapping exercise were the colleagues at headquarters and in the field delivering on the technical policy outcomes. Those would then be followed by the remaining priority groups: general service, administrative support staff and leadership in the field.
59. **A representative of the Director-General** (Chief Internal Auditor) said, with regard to the Report on External Collaboration Contracting, that one lesson that had been learned was the absolute need to have clear policy ownership, with responsibilities for oversight clearly defined and included in any subsequent internal governance document. Another important point was to ensure proper documentation for the purposes of accountability and transparency. The

remaining recommendations were more specific, relating to the actual processes for hiring, engaging and managing external collaborators.

- 60. A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) said that the Office followed up on each and every external audit recommendation and reported back to the IOAC on an annual basis, in liaison with the External Auditor. Skills mapping was an ongoing exercise; it had taken some time, but would come to fruition. Cybersecurity was something that was being taken very seriously and was also an ongoing process. The Director-General had entrusted the Treasurer's office to take the lead in reformulating the policy on external collaborators. It would work with colleagues from the Human Resources Development Department and with the Assistant Director-General for Corporate Services to address the points raised by the Chief Internal Auditor. He expected that work to be completed by the end of the year. Noting the multiple comments raised about the role of the Ethics Office, he recalled that the Ethics Officer's position had been full-time only since July 2022 and that the Director-General had increased the resources available in the current biennium. Nonetheless, additional workload always entailed resource constraints. Consideration would be given to those issues as part of the overall response to the IOAC's recommendations.
- 61.** The process to recruit new Committee members had already been launched. As with the previous such process, an independent contractor had been engaged to carry out the process. Last time, more than 200 applications had been reviewed, in accordance with the terms of reference. Over the summer, once a shortlist of around 20 candidates had been finalized, his office would contact the groups to ask for nominations to constitute a Governing Body selection panel to help further narrow down the shortlist before November 2024, for the Governing Body's approval on the appointments to be made. There were various options on how to proceed with the membership rotation, including the possibility of staggering the replacements, but those would not slow down the selection process. Lastly, he said that the Office would look at ways to strengthen the whistle-blower protection policy and to address the issues that had come out through the ethics survey.

Decision

62. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the 16th annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) appended to document GB.350/PFA/6 and requested the Office to take into account the guidance it provided; and**
- (b) **took note that the IOAC would submit to the Governing Body at its 350th *bis* Session (June 2024) any proposed amendments to its terms of reference.**

(GB.350/PFA/6, paragraph 4)

7. Report of the Chief Internal Auditor (2023) and Office follow-up to his 2022 report

7.1 Report of the Chief Internal Auditor for the year ended 31 December 2023 (GB.350/PFA/7/1)

- 63. The Worker spokesperson**, noting that four out of the seven audits planned for 2023 had been postponed, called on the Office to anticipate better the need to replace staff upon retirement, in order to ensure continuity of work. She noted the audit reports that had been

submitted during 2023 and the eight strategic recommendations made by the Office of the IAO for the Office's consideration.

64. The continued practice of issuing external collaborator contracts for the de facto employment of ILO staff and subcontracting to companies to circumvent procurement regulations and reduce staffing costs was deplorable and a matter of major concern. The Office should consider more stable means of retaining staff and should refrain from issuing external collaborator contracts to companies. She questioned the effectiveness of channelling external collaborator contracts through the Corporate Services Cluster, where the focus would be on pricing and outputs rather than on quality and expertise. The use of the UN Global Marketplace for the sourcing of consultants further illustrated the commodification of labour. Moreover, a generic UN consultant pool might not help with finding the right consultants for ILO-specific assignments.
65. She noted with grave concern that the recommendations of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) were not being observed in the selection of field office premises and in respect of the vehicles used by the Office. It was fundamental to ensure that ILO staff remained safe while carrying out their duties in the field.
66. She urged the Office to implement the existing regulations with respect to grant and inventory management and banking. Ensuring the proper management of funds and inventory and transparency on how funds were used was crucial for the ILO's credibility and effectiveness. In that regard, she called for the expansion of accountability measures for managers throughout the Office. The performance appraisal system was crucial for ensuring that Office staff were conducting their work to the highest possible standards and for merit-based career development. Furthermore, she welcomed the participation of audit staff in training activities on artificial intelligence, ethics, and sexual exploitation and abuse, and their engagement in the wider UN-system audit networks.
67. She took note of the large number of investigations undertaken by the IAO in 2023 and urged the Office to take the lessons learned from the substantiated cases investigated since 2019 into consideration to prevent further incidences of fraud and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.
68. **The Employer spokesperson** expressed concern regarding the IAO's recurring findings in the areas of grants management, external collaborator contracting, employee appraisals and safety and security issues. His group supported the IAO's recommendation on grants management and agreed that management accountability for proper use and verification was imperative and that analysis and due diligence were important controls.
69. External collaborators played an important role in supporting the provision of services to the constituents, including where specific skill sets may be required. Although there was clear guidance on the proper use of external collaborator contracts, additional measures were needed to prevent their irregular use. Therefore, his group supported the IAO's recommendations on the subject. It would welcome greater transparency and competitiveness in selection processes and greater emphasis on the principle of value for money.
70. Managers should continue to be reminded that the timely completion of staff performance appraisals was essential. Such appraisals were an important instrument for results-based management, for identifying training needs and for assessing staff performance and eligibility for retention and advancement, and would contribute to the successful implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25.

71. His group strongly supported the recommendation that the Office needed to adhere to security requirements and fulfil its duty of care when choosing office locations and should do its utmost to guarantee the safety of staff and partners travelling in vehicles.
72. Noting the lessons learned from the investigations completed in 2023, he urged the Office to avoid a repetition of the lapses in control that had been identified. Better guidance, stricter controls and increased verification were sound principles to follow in order to avoid hiring staff without the right skill set. Swift action should be taken to increase training and controls to respond to inappropriate behaviour.
73. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, the Government representative of Rwanda noted with appreciation that the audits and investigation reports issued by the IAO in 2023 had identified no material weaknesses in the system of internal control and that measures had been taken to address the issues raised. His group firmly hoped that the Office would continue to step up its efforts to that end. In particular, the Office should take measures to prevent the recurrence of the findings in respect of safety and security, managing grant agreements, external collaborator contracts, banking signatories and employee appraisals. He sought clarification on why a high number of investigation cases were being carried forward from earlier years. He wondered whether the nature of the cases meant that more time was needed to investigate them. Lastly, noting that external collaborators remained a key means of delivering the ILO's mandate and accounted for a significant amount of ILO resources each biennium, his group supported the recommendation on developing a policy on external collaboration. His group supported the draft decision.
74. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, the Government representative of Mexico noted the high level of expenditure on external collaborator contracts, particularly at headquarters and asked why the Office relied so frequently on the use of such collaborators. He also asked whether the amounts mentioned in the report came from the regular budget or from project-specific voluntary contributions. The existence of different practices for contracting external collaborators could be explained by the lack of a centralized system for ensuring the consistent application of a policy on that subject. A common practice in the UN system that could be useful for the ILO was to assign policy ownership to a single office – usually in the procurement department. He sought clarification on the status of implementation of the integrated workplace management system, which, as far as he understood, had become operational in February 2024. He asked why the Office had not accepted and what was preventing it from implementing 20 of the 103 recommendations made by the IAO, which had been categorized as being of critical or high significance, particularly those concerning the ILO's Staff Health Insurance Fund and sexual harassment. While he appreciated the breakdown of information on lessons learned and the list of investigation reports, it would be useful to have more detailed information on the sanctions imposed in respect of the substantiated cases. He noted the increase in the number of complaints related to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, which reflected the efforts made by the Office in respect of prevention, including its willingness to improve communication channels and to provide guarantees that cases would be handled appropriately and with a victim-centred approach.
75. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, the Government representative of the United States noted with appreciation that no material weaknesses had been identified in the system of internal controls for 2023 and welcomed the attention paid in the report to safety and security, and appraisal management, which were key to the welfare and retention of personnel. She shared the IAO's concerns with respect to the number of recurring findings, the inconsistency of compliance with rules and regulations, and the integrity of the recruitment process in the field, and invited the IAO to share its views on how to actively improve the implementation of recommendations

and enhance the accountability of field office management. Expressing alarm at the IAO's recommendation on grants management, she sought clarification on how major risks were considered and on how managers were introduced to and trained in respect of their financial responsibilities at work.

76. She noted that the IAO had contracted a third-party firm to support an audit in 2023 and asked whether it anticipated contracting any additional firms to support other scheduled or planned audits. She wondered whether the postponed audits had exposed the ILO to increased risks. The ILO should fill the vacancy in the IAO's Audit Unit without delay. Recognizing the IAO's efforts to address the investigations backlog, she asked whether a version of the caseload visualizations showing real values in addition to the percentages was available to review. IMEC members would also like to review a chart showing the outcomes of investigations paired with the nature of the allegation.
77. She noted with concern the reference to "minimize inappropriate behaviour particularly regarding harassment" in the context of the ILO's zero-tolerance policy for harassment. While IMEC members welcomed, supported and encouraged emphasis on education and awareness, they were no substitute for accountability for misconduct. For the zero-tolerance policy to be functional, it must exist in practice, as well as on paper. IMEC supported the draft decision.
78. **A representative of the Director-General** (Chief Internal Auditor) said that the increasingly complex and time-consuming nature of investigation cases was one reason for the large number being carried forward from earlier years. The ILO was not dissimilar to other UN organizations in that respect, but the IAO would continue to seek efficiencies to speed up the investigation process, while upholding the required standards of due diligence and impartiality. For confidentiality reasons, especially in ongoing cases or those involving appeals, which took time, it was only possible to provide a broad overview of investigations in the report, although that did include a breakdown of cases by status and type. The IAO could provide additional details on the nature of cases on a bilateral basis upon request.
79. The 19 substantiated cases in 2023 included 2 cases related to medical fraud as well as cases involving fraud relating to a repatriation grant, teleworking irregularities and attempted entitlement fraud, double dipping by an implementing partner, and sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. Cases of professional misconduct included unauthorized disclosure of confidential information, abuse of IT administrator rights, unauthorized password sharing and irregular recruitment. Inconclusive cases were cases in which an investigation had been launched on the basis of a preliminary assessment, but where there was either insufficient evidence to support a conclusion that the case was substantiated, or where the staff member in question had left the Organization or refused to cooperate with the investigation. The amounts involved in the cases referred to in the IAO report were relatively small. Cases resulting in no further action were those that were not credible or where there was insufficient or no basic evidence to justify launching a full investigation.
80. Concerning external collaborators, the IAO had found that they remained an important means of supplementing the skills and expertise available within the Organization. In terms of the breakdown of resources between the regular budget and voluntary contributions provided for development cooperation projects, those figures were not currently available but could be provided in the future if the Governing Body so wished.
81. Turning to the implementation of audit recommendations and management accountability in field offices, he stressed the importance of training and other awareness-raising activities to reinforce key compliance messages. The Office ran regular courses on enhancing performance in field operations, but should consider running them more frequently and opening them up

to directors at headquarters, for whom the elements on fiduciary responsibilities would be particularly relevant. The performance appraisal system could be used to hold repeat offenders to account, while oversight at the regional level could further support the implementation of audit recommendations and the identification of trends in any non-compliance.

82. He confirmed that the IAO had entered into a long-term agreement with a global consulting firm, which supported both internal audit and investigation services by providing skills that were not available internally, notably in relation to IT and data analytics, and local knowledge and language skills. That practice would continue in future.
83. The postponement of certain audit assignments did, in the IAO's view, involve high levels of risk in certain cases, hence the inclusion in the audit plan. In the case of one audit that was postponed, the risk level had increased due to the geopolitical tensions in the region; the IAO would conduct the audit once tensions had reduced and missions were possible. However, the risk level for the others had not generally changed, hence the continued inclusion of those assignments in the audit plan.
84. Lastly, responding to concerns about the wording used in the report with regard to inappropriate behaviour, he stressed that there was no question of reducing accountability or weakening the ILO's commitment to zero tolerance. The aim was to encourage further awareness-raising of the issues, notably in terms of reporting requirements. The Office did take appropriate action when a case was substantiated.
85. **A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) said that disciplinary cases were complicated, as several review stages were required before action could be taken, and staff members under investigation must always be given the opportunity to defend themselves. The amendments to the Staff Regulations concerning the disciplinary framework, approved by the Governing Body at its 349th Session, were currently being implemented. Every effort was made to follow up on cases, notably by recovering funds and initiating proceedings outside the Organization where necessary. Decisions in that regard were taken based on the amount concerned and the ability to prove beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law.
86. Noting that the procedures for engaging external collaborators were being revised, he recalled that external collaboration contracts allowed for the procurement of special skills and services as needed. He agreed with the Workers' group that the ILO should avoid commoditizing that type of work; efforts to that end should be balanced against the need to ensure good value for money, as noted by the Employers' group.
87. Responding to concerns expressed, he recalled that grants were a useful tool for providing rapid assistance. A revised version of the grant management guidelines was expected to be issued imminently, although it should be noted that there had been no cases of fraud in that area. Indeed, the issuing of grants was closely controlled: the ILO's policy limited the receipt of grants to government departments, employers' and workers' organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations whose mandate was clearly linked to that of the ILO, while any grants over US\$50,000 were automatically routed to the Financial Management Department for approval. Other efforts to address broader administrative issues notably included outreach and training for the field offices, with the main aim of promoting robust processes, while ensuring the Office could act flexibly where necessary.
88. Turning to the concerns raised about compliance with UNDSS recommendations, he stressed that failures to observe the correct standards were rare and were addressed swiftly when they

did occur. As for the IAO recommendations, they were systematically followed up to ensure that action was taken by the appropriate office.

Decision

- 89. The Governing Body took note of the report of the Chief Internal Auditor for the year ended 31 December 2023.**

(GB.350/PFA/7/1, paragraph 4)

7.2 Follow-up to the report of the Chief Internal Auditor for the year ended 31 December 2022 (GB.350/PFA/7/2)

- 90. The Employer spokesperson** noted the recommendations on improvements to be made in five areas. First, on project governance, the Office should continue to consider a system to formally document all discussions justifying key decisions of major projects for greater transparency and accountability. Second, beyond its achievements on the sexual harassment policy, the Office should communicate better about how sexual harassment was being addressed in the workplace. He requested the Office to provide statistics on the compliance rates with the training module on preventing and responding to sexual harassment and information on how feedback from staff would be used to update the training.
- 91.** Third, with regard to resource planning, the Office should apply the standard operating procedures for requesting and reporting on work months to support projects as from 2024, as that would enhance shared understanding and communication of results at all levels and would simplify and streamline the process. Fourth, the use of mobile payments and digital signatures, with appropriate safeguards, would increase efficiency, particularly in view of the more flexible working policies. Fifth, the Office should discourage the practice of issuing external collaboration contracts to bridge breaks in project funding and instead improve upstream planning to prevent such situations and develop a policy to manage them consistently.
- 92. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the fact that the three recommendations pertaining to the Business Process Review had been implemented, that documentation and reporting systems on major projects were in place and that an Office-wide repository had been created. The fact that the recommendations on the ILO's sexual harassment policy were being addressed and that the Human Resource Development Department was working on revising the collective agreement on anti-harassment policy and the conflict resolution together with the Staff Union was also appreciated. The Office should prioritize action on strengthening a culture of zero tolerance for sexual harassment and accelerate efforts to promote a respectful workplace environment.
- 93.** The Workers' group again urged the Office to act on the recommendations to discourage issuing external collaboration contracts to bridge breaks in project funding, which had been a systemic issue highlighted in audit reports over the years. Misusing such contracts to essentially employ staff or circumvent procurement regulations led to precarity among workers and increased the likelihood of fraud. The Office should formulate a holistic policy on the effective management of such situations rather than tackling it in individual offices.
- 94. Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of the United States expressed satisfaction that procedures for reporting and communicating on sexual harassment reflected a victim-centred approach. ILO staff should be adequately informed of the relevant policies and be confident that they would be implemented. That was essential to creating a culture of

transparency and accountability. The Office should clarify what steps it was taking to increase confidence in the sexual harassment policies and procedures and whether any changes proposed by staff representatives to them had not been accepted. IMEC would welcome the opportunity to review any documentation of lessons learned from the related discussions organized by the Ethics Officer and the Staff Welfare Officer. The mandatory online training for sexual harassment was welcome and IMEC looked forward to a discussion on how such efforts were building a culture in which staff members felt confident to report wrongdoings. In the renegotiation of the collective agreement on the anti-harassment policy and the conflict resolution procedure, parties should recall the ILO's duty to lead on all aspects of workforce management. The policy decisions made had great potential to set the standards and trends for the entire UN system. As such, IMEC encouraged parties to consider opportunities to build on related texts, including the UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment, and the various bulletins of the Secretary-General on the prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse of authority. Members of the Senior Management Team should lead by example and take steps to demonstrate their personal commitment to zero tolerance for sexual harassment.

95. On the expansion of mobile payments in 2024, she asked whether records of the mobile payments would be tracked for audit purposes. Lastly, IMEC noted with satisfaction that the majority of the 12 internal audit reports issued in 2022 were implemented in less than six months, and all in under one year. In future reporting, Governing Body members should have access to an outline of the recommendations issued by each audit, the level of significance and the corresponding action to be taken by the Office, as the work of the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight provided crucial insights into the internal reforms.
96. **A representative of the Director-General** (Treasurer and Financial Comptroller) said that the Human Resources Development department had been working hard on sexual harassment policies and related training, and the Office would report to the Governing Body on progress and follow-up. Discussions with colleagues and the Staff Union had yielded valuable input, and any future training on the topic would also incorporate feedback from different staff members.
97. In respect of the governance of projects, the Office had taken full account of the audit recommendations, a number of staff members had undergone specialist project management training and all significant projects initiated by the Office would have full terms of reference and a governance committee to address outstanding issues.
98. He noted the comments on the use of external collaboration contracts to bridge the crossover period between projects and on the need for better planning. The Office endeavoured to reduce the periods between projects to the extent possible and disapproved of the misuse of contracts, and would ensure that that was covered when the policy was revised.
99. In respect of mobile payments, tracking of transfers was automatically possible, and the Office ensured that the mobile phones were registered to a known individual. Mobile payments would be rolled out on a limited basis to countries that had such systems in place.

Decision

100. **The Governing Body took note of the information contained in the Appendices I and II of document GB.350/PFA/7/2 and provided guidance to the Office.**

(GB.350/PFA/7/2, paragraph 4)

Personnel Segment

8. Statement by the Chairperson of the Staff Union

(The statement by the staff representative is reproduced in [Appendix II](#).)

9. Amendments to the Staff Regulations (GB.350/PFA/9)

101. **The Employer spokesperson** fully supported the focus of the proposed changes on geographical mobility. However, he had noted the absence of any changes to professional and technical mobility that would allow for skills exchange and cross-learning. He asked the Office to comment on that absence. Noting with appreciation that greater alignment of the terms and conditions of employment across the Office would be supported by immediate changes in contractual modalities, he asked the Office to provide an update at the 352nd Session of the Governing Body on the progress of ongoing related work, including on harmonizing conditions of service, developing more effective mechanisms to redeploy development cooperation staff at the end of projects and ensuring more equitable access to development opportunities, including for locally recruited staff. He noted the proposed amendments to the provisions of Annex I to the Staff Regulations concerning recruitment and selection that would limit the use of the second stage of the recruitment process to geographical mobility and stated the group's understanding that, once that change had been made, only candidate staff who were in a position classified at the same grade as the advertised position, served in a duty station other than that where the vacancy was located, met the minimum requirements stipulated in the vacancy notice and had completed the standard assignment length in their current duty station, as defined by the International Civil Service Commission, would be considered. The Employers' group supported any measure that inspired greater confidence among both recruiters and candidates in the recruitment procedure, and any measure that increased the transparency of that procedure. Lastly, the group welcomed as a positive development the change whereby development cooperation staff with at least five years of continuous service with the ILO would be considered as internal candidates for the purposes of recruitment as it promoted more equitable treatment of development cooperation staff and ensured that their experience and skills would be properly taken into account. The group supported the draft decision.
102. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the fact that the amendments were the result of intense negotiations with the Staff Union. He also welcomed the changes aimed at aligning the employment conditions of ILO staff regardless of the source of their contract's financing. Discriminatory treatment of workers depending on the source of funding for their salary had been a growing structural problem at the ILO and other organizations in the UN system. As the custodian of decent work and social justice, the ILO must respect and uphold equality of treatment within its own organization if it wished to credibly promote equality of treatment elsewhere. Despite outstanding concerns, the group welcomed the progress made on employment protection and the recognition of the skills and experience of development cooperation staff. The Workers' group fully supported the Staff Union in its work and hoped that the constructive dialogue with the Administration on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25 would continue. The group expected the implementation of the amendments to yield measurable improvements and significant change promptly and supported the draft decision.
103. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Rwanda said that an efficient staff mobility framework and recruitment and selection procedure were important

for attracting and retaining the right skills and buoying staff motivation, both of which were key to improved organizational performance. The Africa group would be interested to know how the new ILO mobility policy currently being negotiated might be used as an additional tool for promoting greater representation of under-represented countries and regions. He noted that the changes under paragraph 32 of Annex I sought to authorize the Recruitment, Assignment and Mobility Committee to extend eligibility criteria and establish special requirements, and wished to know what role the Governing Body might play in making additional amendments and whether the task of taking a final decision on such matters would be delegated to the Committee. As the proposed amendments had been formally agreed on by the Joint Negotiating Committee constituting representatives of the ILO Staff Union and the Administration, the Africa group supported the draft decision.

- 104. Speaking on behalf of the countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), with the exception of Albania,** a Government representative of Pakistan expressed concern about the use of controversial concepts, such as sexual orientation, in document GB.350/PFA/9 and other documents. Such concepts had not been universally agreed on, were not in line with the national laws, customs, morals or cultural ethos of the countries in his group and had no basis in international law, which contained sufficient provisions addressing concerns about discrimination of any kind. He expressed strong reservations about attempts to insert controversial and problematic notions into ILO documents. As a specialized agency of the UN, the ILO must be guided by international law and universally agreed instruments, and its documents should refer to internationally agreed forms of discrimination only.
- 105. Speaking on behalf of the Arab group,** a Government representative of Sudan expressed appreciation for the Office's efforts to bring employment conditions into line with the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25 and welcomed the negotiations between the Administration and the ILO Staff Union on a new mobility policy. He endorsed the statement made by the Government representative of Pakistan on behalf of the countries of the OIC, except Albania, noting that the concepts mentioned did not align with the laws, customs and traditions of the Arab States. He expressed reservations concerning the use of such language in ILO documents and urged the Office to use only internationally agreed language when discussing discrimination. His group supported the draft decision.
- 106. A Government representative of Canada** said that the ILO and other organizations in the UN system, as employers, must ensure an inclusive workplace free from discrimination. Every effort must be made to prevent and address discrimination at the ILO on any grounds, including on the grounds of sexual orientation. Social justice and labour rights were at the core of the Organization's mandate, and the elimination of discrimination – in particular against groups that had been historically or disproportionately targeted by discrimination – was a universally accepted fundamental principle and right at work. The ILO must uphold its mandate; any step backwards would be unacceptable. All ILO staff members deserved dignity and equal opportunities.
- 107. A Government representative of the United States** said that it must remain abundantly clear that all staff were guaranteed protection from discrimination in hiring practices and protection from harassment at work. Failing to provide such protections would harm the ILO's ability to recruit and retain the best staff. Furthermore, discrimination, including identity-based discrimination, created a barrier between staff and the critical governance functions that ensured the productive continuation of the ILO's work. The ILO must ensure that all staff members could be confident that, if they were to experience discrimination or harassment, they would be treated fairly and with respect and would have access to meaningful resources under the Staff Regulations. It was regrettable that some Member States had taken advantage

of the discussion to push a political agenda. The Director-General must ensure that the Staff Regulations were fully respected and that all ILO employees could enjoy their fundamental right to a workplace free from discrimination on any grounds.

- 108. Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States**, a Government representative of Belgium endorsed the views expressed by the Government representatives of Canada and the United States.
- 109. A Government representative of Australia** said that there must be no discrimination of any kind in any ILO processes, including recruitment processes.
- 110. A Government representative of Colombia** expressed support for an ILO recruitment policy that prevented discrimination against women, an issue that should be taken into consideration in all ILO initiatives. He endorsed the views expressed on the importance of upholding the current ILO policy of non-discrimination.
- 111. A Government representative of the United Kingdom** said that the ILO must continue to play a proactive leadership role in eliminating workplace discrimination, which would not be possible unless it supported all vulnerable and marginalized groups facing discrimination.
- 112. A Government representative of Chile** expressed support for the ILO's ongoing efforts to prevent discrimination against women and all other vulnerable groups.
- 113. A Government representative of Mexico** expressed support for the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations. The ILO's mandate included fighting all forms of discrimination and promoting inclusivity, and ILO staff members should not have to hide their identities while working for the Organization. Her Government would always welcome any measures promoting the inclusion of all groups.
- 114. A Government representative of Iceland**, speaking also on behalf of the Government of Norway, supported the statements made by the Government representatives of Canada, the United States and other Member States on the importance of promoting non-discriminatory recruitment policies and combating discrimination in all its forms.
- 115. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services Cluster) said that the Office looked forward to continued collaboration between the Administration and the Staff Union. He assured the Employers' group that cross-learning was an important part of the Office's strategy to enhance staff capacities. The Office prided itself on championing equal treatment and would make every effort to continue to advance in that regard.
- 116. Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Human Resources Development Department) said that the Office would report to the Governing Body in November 2024 on the progress made in ongoing negotiations between the Administration and the Staff Union.

Decision

- 117. The Governing Body approved the amendments to article 4.2 and Annex I of the Staff Regulations, as set out in the appendix to document GB.350/PFA/9, with effect from 1 April 2024.**

(GB.350/PFA/9, paragraph 14).

10. Progress report on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25 (GB.350/PFA/10)

118. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the progress that had been made, in consultation with the Staff Union. However, more effort was needed in a number of areas. With regard to outcome 1, the Office should reduce further the time taken to fill vacancies. The target of 30 per cent of selection processes completed prior to the departure of staff needed to be more ambitious and include a broader range of positions than just senior management and office director positions. He asked how many vacancy announcements had been published prior to the departure of staff and how many positions had been filled in the grades below P5. More effort was still necessary to increase the number of staff with experience relevant to the three constituent groups. He asked whether experience in national or international constituent groups was included in “experience at the international level”, and how the Office had ensured that experience relevant to constituent groups had been included in its outreach to constituent focal points. Noting that it had not been possible to measure the effectiveness of training and development or the performance management framework, he asked why the Organizational Health Index survey had not been launched in 2022–23, and whether the Office had considered conducting the process internally.
119. He welcomed the initiatives on new ways of working and a respectful and ethical workplace, including tools to address mental health and well-being, the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and all forms of violence and harassment. He requested further information on the effectiveness of the related indicators, which were linked to how managers were promoting those tools. There should be a focus on measuring the impact of the tools rather than the process, and a baseline should be established. The Office could also consider evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the revised internal disciplinary framework.
120. The initiatives under outcome 3 to provide user-friendly tools and generate efficiency gains were welcome, taking into account the importance of security and data protection, particularly with regard to medical files. For 2024–25, it would be important to launch the next edition of the Organizational Health Index before the end of the biennium. The Workers’ group supported the draft decision.
121. **The Employer spokesperson** noted that outcome 1 remained a key priority for the Employers’ group, as practical knowledge of the world of work and experience in working with its constituents would help to rebalance and strengthen the diversity and relevance of the Organization. The skills-mapping exercise must assess gaps relating to effectively serving constituents; the Office should present the gap analysis and strategies to address any gaps before the November 2024 session of the Governing Body. She requested that the Office provide details, in future documents on the composition and structure of staff, of the results of the outreach efforts to attract candidates with experience relevant to the three constituents, and of hiring an external service provider to support its outreach. Having more staff members with experience in employer and business membership organizations in management positions should be a priority or a clear objective in the strategy. She welcomed the Development Cooperation Recruitment and Selection online toolkit, which should help harmonize and speed up recruitment and selection processes.
122. While certain functions required a high level of trust and fell within the discretion of the Director-General, in direct selection processes, candidates should have the required level of technical competence for the position and demonstrate their commitment to the values of the ILO. Furthermore, candidates for positions in ACT/EMP and ACTRAV should continue to have experience and understanding of employers’ and workers’ organizations, respectively.

Recruitment processes should be fair for all candidates, whether internal or external. The Employers' group commended the initiatives to support career development for women, and the fact that targets for the percentage of women in senior posts were being exceeded. The increased levels of both geographical and functional mobility in the Organization were also very positive.

123. The ILO remained in a strong position with regard to performance management under outcome 2. To reinforce a performance culture, the Office should take account of performance appraisals when recruiting and promoting internally and reclassifying posts. However, the work of the Reports Board was not an ideal alternative to the Organizational Health Index to measure the situation, as it did not take account of staff perspectives. The new policy on flexible work arrangements, which offered staff the possibility to organize work-life balance more effectively while improving productivity, appeared to be operating successfully with very few reported concerns. The various initiatives to ensure a respectful and ethical workplace were welcomed. The Office must continue to be a role model by having a zero-tolerance policy towards workplace violence and harassment. Senior leadership should raise awareness on what had been done to address substantiated cases, while offering protection to complainants, witnesses and whistle-blowers. All staff, particularly those in the field, where there might be less structured support, should be aware that allegations would be taken seriously and that perpetrators could not act with impunity, but also that unjustified complaints would be dealt with appropriately. Relevant training should be made available uniformly across all regions. Furthermore, the new policy on inclusion of persons with disabilities was a step forward in improving the process of disability inclusion.
124. The Employers' group recognized the efforts on continued innovation and digitalization of the human resources function under outcome 3, which were essential to achieve an optimal level of human resources management. In 2024–25, the group would like a comprehensive analysis of the Office's efforts to enhance constituent-relevant experience among ILO staff to be included, with key indicators to monitor progress, alongside the indicators for geographical and gender diversity.
125. **Speaking on behalf of GRULAC**, a Government representative of Mexico welcomed the efforts to foster a diverse workforce with the right skills, within a respectful and empowering environment, where the use of technology was key to improving the efficiency of human resources services. The revision of generic job descriptions and support for women's career development were among the actions that had enabled the Office to exceed its gender equality targets. The next report should also include progress on the indicators in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). The levels of geographical representation, however, were below the baseline, with 14 less-than-adequately represented countries in the Americas region. The Office should work with those countries to improve the situation. Efforts made to foster a cultural change towards diversity and inclusion were welcome, in particular with regard to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.
126. The group called for greater efforts to circulate vacancies among all Member States and requested more information on the constituent focal point initiative. The group would welcome more statistics on appointments in the information document on the composition and structure of the staff. Specific actions should be proposed to improve the work culture and merit-based recruitment processes, among other aspects highlighted by the survey of the Ethics Officer. More details would be appreciated on the flexible working arrangements, in particular on the strict limits on the use of telework outside the duty station, and on the best practices identified. Lastly, the group requested the Office to include, in future reports,

statistics on the number of cases of harassment dealt with informally, in accordance with the forthcoming update of the Office anti-harassment policy.

127. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Japan was pleased to note that targets had been exceeded for several indicators, although others had fallen short. She noted the importance of geographical diversity, including for the smooth implementation of development cooperation projects in country offices. It was regrettable that the percentage of newly recruited regular staff from less-than-adequately represented nationalities was much lower than the milestone, and that around 60 per cent of countries from Asia and the Pacific were less than adequately represented. Further measures should be taken, including expanding outreach activities and partnerships with universities and professional organizations in under-represented countries and using Junior Professional Officer and secondment programmes. The group requested the inclusion of geographical representation in the umbrella plan for diversity and inclusion. More information on initiatives to remove unnecessary language barriers in job requirements would be appreciated. The Office should continue to improve the geographical and functional mobility of staff and report on progress at future sessions. She welcomed the positive results on initiatives to increase the percentage of Professional positions held by women and encouraged the Office to continue promoting ILO-wide gender balance initiatives.
128. ASPAG recognized the positive results on the indicators for a respectful work environment under outcome 2. The elimination of violence and harassment and discrimination was essential to the promotion of decent work. The Office should continue working to build an environment in which all forms of diversity were respected. She encouraged the Office to maintain a culture where the reporting of wrongdoings was encouraged and where visible, timely action was taken to address them. As the indicators for healthy working practices and adapting to new ways of working showed less favourable results, the Office should make further efforts to improve the work-life balance of staff, including training for managers on best practices and special considerations for staff taking parental leave.
129. With regard to outcome 3, the significant efforts to leverage technology to make human resources processes more efficient were appreciated, on the understanding that sensitive personal information must be handled with the utmost care. She supported the draft decision.
130. **Speaking on behalf of IMEC**, a Government representative of Canada welcomed the Office's commitment to diversity and inclusion. She commended the achievements relating to parental leave and the digitalization of key human resources processes, and encouraged the Office to enhance its existing gender equality measures by creating comprehensive policies relating to the post-birth time period, menopause, menstruation and fertility treatment. She also welcomed the development of a code of conduct for prevention of all forms of violence and harassment at ILO events, but encouraged the Office to simplify the reporting structure for sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and to enhance transparency regarding disciplinary measures.
131. Outcome 1 remained a key priority for IMEC. Diversity of background in terms of professional competencies and practical knowledge of the world of work and its constituents were crucial to the ILO's relevance. Therefore, additional information would be appreciated on the results achieved to attract diverse candidates. It was crucial to have the highest standards of competence and integrity, as well as merit-based and transparent human resources processes, hence it was concerning that the [ILO ethics survey 2023](#) had shown that only 18 per cent of respondents at headquarters believed that hiring and promotion decisions were based on merit and performance, and that a majority had indicated that they did not believe it was safe

to challenge how things were done for fear of retaliation. IMEC strongly encouraged the Office to address that issue and to improve transparency in human resources processes.

132. IMEC was pleased to note that six of the ten indicator milestones for 2023 had been met or exceeded. Results had not been measured for two indicators as the Organization Health Index had not been conducted, but she welcomed the Office's commitment to launch the next edition of the survey to collect the relevant data so that results could be fully reflected in the next progress report. Progress on improved geographical representation and healthy working practices/adapting to new ways of working had been reversed, and the group sought information on how the Office planned to improve that trend.
133. IMEC called on the Office to step up its efforts to implement the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations to promote anti-racism, by leading the charge within the UN system to combat discrimination in all its forms. She also encouraged the Office to outline, in the 2025 progress report, the process that would be followed to develop the next human resources strategy. IMEC supported the draft decision.
134. **A Government representative of China** welcomed the positive results of the strategy, particularly in terms of skills and gender equality. However, it was concerning that the percentage of newly recruited regular staff from less-than-adequately represented countries was far below the mid-term milestone. He asked about the reasons and encouraged the Office to improve communications with the governments of those countries and to take measures to improve the recruitment processes, and increase outreach activities and other initiatives to increase representation. He also requested further details about the formulation and implementation of the umbrella plan. He supported the improvement of internal governance and building a culture that enabled diversity and career development. He supported the draft decision.
135. **A Government representative of Bangladesh** noted the progress made in attaining some indicators, while he recognized that fresh momentum was required to achieve others. It was of concern that the percentage of regular staff recruited from less-than-adequately represented nationalities remained below the target of 23 per cent. Despite the potential benefit of generic job descriptions and the ongoing skills-mapping exercise, he said that eliminating the strict language requirements could make a greater difference. Diversity could be achieved through innovative human resources programmes, including secondment, outreach, joint courses with universities from under-represented countries, job fairs and extended internships. The use of technology in human resources management could enhance efficiency through online performance management, distance learning and e-learning. He asked the Office to include more deliverables under outcome 1, including the design of new outreach programmes for the under-represented countries. He supported the draft decision.
136. **A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General, Corporate Services Cluster) thanked the constituents for their comments and for recognizing the progress that had been made in skills mapping, diversity and inclusion, recruitment, capacity-building and parental leave policy. He noted that diversity and inclusion were almost universal concerns – they were also priorities for the Office and the Director-General. Initiatives would target geographical representation, gender representation and recruitment of persons with a disability, among others, and experiences across the three constituencies would be taken into account. Efforts were under way to increase recruitment from under- or inadequately represented Member States, however there remained a lack of applications from some States and some candidates did not meet the requirements for the positions on offer. Internships, the Junior Professional Officer programme, and secondments, as well as the consideration of

the feasibility of transferring some national officers to international positions, were some initiatives already in use to enhance the geographical diversity of staff members.

137. Concerning the need for a safe and healthy working environment, it was noted that in the Upward Feedback survey a high percentage of staff agreed that their managers promoted a safe working environment, a healthy work-life balance and personal well-being. He encouraged constituents to continue to provide guidance concerning other improvements that could be made.
138. With regard to merit-based promotion and recruitment, he emphasized the importance of taking candidates' competencies into account in the competence-based recruitment or selection processes. The Office would strive to make further improvements in those processes. The recruitment of development cooperation staff had been enhanced with the introduction of a Development Cooperation Recruitment and Selection online toolkit to ensure the timely recruitment of qualified candidates for development cooperation projects. There had been 91 regular budget senior positions filled in the Office since October 2022, of which 27 P5 positions had been recruited using the competitive process under the procedure set out in Annex I of the Staff Regulations. Of those 27 positions, 22 candidates had been appointed from within the Office and 5 had been recruited from outside the Office. Of the remaining 64 appointments, 22 positions had been filled from external sources and 42 were the result of internal promotion or transfer. That showed a good balance between geographical and functional mobility, promotions and external recruitment.
139. **Another representative of the Director-General** (Director, Human Resources Development Department) welcomed the recognition of the progress made by the Human Resources Development Department in gender diversity, mobility and digitalization of human resources processes. The Office had decided not to carry out the next Organizational Health Index Survey in 2023, as it had focused on establishing the new organizational structure and implementing a range of key new policies; that survey would be run in 2024. Skills and diversity were a priority, and guidance had been sought from all constituents in order to attract a diverse pool of candidates with the relevant experience for Office positions. Information regarding vacancies was shared through the agreed constituent focal points. Within the recruitment process, international experience was categorized as any work experience gained in any international context or setting. Concerning language requirements, it was stated in Annex I to the Staff Regulations that officials in the Professional category whose mother tongue was not one of the working languages would be required to possess a fully satisfactory working knowledge of one of the working languages of the Office and might be required to acquire a knowledge of a second working language for their mobility or promotion. The Office was working to reduce the length of the recruitment process overall. The Office produced the Development Cooperation Recruitment and Selection online toolkit to provide best practice for all steps of the recruitment process, especially regarding advanced planning and managers' commitments.
140. The Office was updating the existing collective agreement with regard to anti-harassment and conflict resolution, incorporating recommendations from internal audit and best practices across the UN system. The Office had a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, ensuring that any form of harassment was acted upon in a proportional manner dependent upon the severity of the reported behaviour. The compliance rate for training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse was 95 per cent, and for the United to Respect initiative was 88 per cent. Finally, the ILO had joined the Geneva Alliance against Racism, for which the Human Resources Development Department served as the focal point. Anti-racism activities, as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit, would be initiated as appropriate.

- 141. The Director-General** said that the Office would take into account the guidance provided by constituents during the implementation of the rest of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25. The Office was seeking to reduce the length of the recruitment process, while adhering to transparency mechanisms and the existing collective agreement. While he understood the desire to clarify what percentage of positions were filled before the incumbent staff member departed, he noted that it typically took six to nine months to fill a position. He recognized that recruitment was a UN-wide problem, and emphasized the commitment of the Human Resources Development Department to addressing it. Concerning the language requirement for candidates whose mother tongue was not one of the official UN languages, he recalled his campaign promise to investigate the perception that the requirement was unjust.
- 142.** While the constituents had not mentioned it, he recognized that there was a need to improve internal communication, particularly in those areas where the perception of a situation did not match the reality. The Staff Union had raised a concern regarding the perceived lack of opportunities for staff development through internal promotion. However, according to the statistics, 70 per cent of recent positions had been filled by internal candidates. He suggested that it was a question of how the 30 per cent of external appointments were perceived; in his view, it was not right to confine new staff members to entry level positions, and he said that a level of external appointments had to be acceptable. He also highlighted that some of the 30 per cent of positions had been filled by external candidates following his appointment as Director-General, following rigorous assessment procedures. His decision to appoint some external candidates did not indicate that he was unaware of the need to ensure that internal staff had advancement opportunities at the higher employment categories. Every manager had that awareness, and he received an update every two months to ensure that such opportunities were being made available. He also emphasized that just because an appointment was political, as some inevitably were, it did not mean that the person appointed was not suitably qualified.
- 143.** He reiterated his commitment to ensuring gender parity by the end of his first term as Director-General, and emphasized that striving for that goal would not mean sacrificing quality. There was always a risk that any person appointed could later prove unsuitable, woman or man. Furthermore, there was a need for the Office to review the balance between its objectives, as in some cases, recruitment processes had been delayed owing to an initial lack of women candidates. He also agreed that the Office should continue to investigate ways to enhance geographical representation. He commended the constituents for engaging in constructive social dialogue, even in difficult situations. He highlighted the flexible working arrangements that were currently in their pilot phase, and he looked forward to the assessment of their impact on ILO staff. He recognized the challenges facing the ILO in terms of staff mobility, particularly ensuring that no staff member felt forgotten. He noted that the Office was considering appointing national staff members to international posts in order to facilitate their access to higher category positions. There was also a need to ensure the fair and comparable treatment of development cooperation staff and staff who were paid from the regular budget. He recognized the need to improve recruitment and professional development of persons with different types of disability in all areas of the ILO's work. He also informed the Governing Body that the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination would shortly be promoting a new system-wide policy of non-discrimination for all groups.
- 144. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the information provided by the Office and said that his group looked forward to receiving the specific data it had requested in the next progress report on the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25. The Office should

consider the competencies that would genuinely serve the constituents when designing job descriptions, ensuring that value was placed on experience in a given field.

Decision

- 145. The Governing Body requested the Office to take into account the guidance provided in the further implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for 2022–25.**

(GB.350/PFA/10, paragraph 65)

11. Other personnel matters

(No other personnel matters were submitted to the Governing Body at this session.)