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Plenary sitting: Outcome of the work of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy

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Friday, 14 June 2024, 2.35 p.m.

President: Mr Buzu

Outcome of the work of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy: Presentation and discussion

The President

I am pleased to declare open this 17th and last plenary sitting of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference.

We resume our proceedings by turning our attention to the work of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy and its proposed resolution, which contains the Committee's conclusions, the text of which can be found in [Record of Proceedings No. 8A](#). The report on the Committee's proceedings is contained in [Record of Proceedings No. 8B](#).

It is my pleasure to welcome the Officers of the Committee, namely: Mr Jordan (Barbados), Chairperson, who replaced Mr Sorreta (Philippines); Ms Janahi (Bahrain), Employer Vice-Chairperson; and Ms Chang (Canada), Worker Vice-Chairperson. The Reporter is Mr Novales Bilbao (Spain).

I will first give the floor to Mr Novales Bilbao, so that he may present to us the outcome of the Committee's work. The Officers of the Committee will then take the floor.

Mr Novales Bilbao

Reporter of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy (Original Spanish)

It is an honour for me to present for adoption the proposed resolution and conclusions of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy. First of all, allow me to thank the Committee for the trust it showed in appointing me as Reporter.

The subject of this discussion is very significant for my country, Spain, which over recent years has made important progress in the pioneering use of innovative approaches in health and social care and family support, which has made it possible to improve outcomes in the fields of health and longevity and has improved citizens' quality of life, including work-life balance for both women and men.

The Committee believes that our deliberations have been extremely timely and that taking action in favour of decent work and the care economy is urgent. The debates affirmed the centrality of care work to our societies and economies, highlighted the persistent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and shed light on the huge amount of unpaid care work that is done by women, which impacts their participation in the labour market. They also recognized the shortcomings in working conditions and staffing in the care sector and that sector's importance in a period of demographic, technological and environmental changes.

Over the past two weeks, the Committee's delegates have focused their discussions on three points.

Firstly, the essential aspects and components that make up the care economy, taking into account the diversity of social, economic and political contexts in which care, paid or unpaid, is provided, as well as the great heterogeneity of the care workforce.

Secondly, the gaps that remain, as well as the effective measures that the constituents have taken to foster resilience and the good functioning of a care economy that promotes decent work, gender equality, accessible and quality care services, and inclusive and sustainable economic and social development.

Thirdly, the priority actions that the ILO constituents and the Office should take to promote, advance and support coherent and integrated policies and investments in the sphere of the care economy, including through social dialogue, multilateral coordination and partnerships.

In total, 12 plenary sittings were held, with two extended sittings. In addition, the drafting group held 6 sittings with one extended sitting. The number of sittings and the discussion of the more than 228 amendments received are a testament to our collective effort that has led to these detailed conclusions.

We have had fruitful, frank and direct discussions that were always characterized by a true spirit of social dialogue. The Committee has managed to accomplish its work and reach a consensus thanks to the tireless work of the Chairperson, Mr Sorreta from the Government of the Philippines, who actively guided discussions during the first week. Unfortunately, owing to unexpected health issues, Mr Sorreta was unable to continue working with the Committee. Mr Jordan, Minister of Labour, Social Security and Third Sector of Barbados, was appointed to lead the Committee during the second week. I would take this opportunity to thank him most sincerely for his skilful guidance, insightful contributions and unwavering commitment to ensuring that our dialogue was productive and effective.

The outcome has also been the fruit of the work of the two Vice-Chairpersons, Ms Janahi, representing the Employers' group, and Ms Chang, representing the Workers' group, as well as the Government members. I wish to thank all the Committee's members for their commitment and constructive contributions, which often resulted in them working late into the night. I would also like to express appreciation for the dedication of the members of the drafting group, who proposed to the Committee a set of draft conclusions for discussion.

Allow me also to acknowledge the great efforts made by the Office in preparing and presenting an exhaustive report with a vision of the future. In particular, I wish to thank the representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Drake, the deputy representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Dasgupta, the Coordinator of the Committee, Ms Licata, the senior expert, Ms King, and all the technical and coordination staff of the Secretariat, including experts, translators, interpreters, editors, report writers, technicians and administrative staff, for their invaluable contribution and support.

The proposed conclusions are structured in five parts. Part I is entitled "Context – decent work and the care economy, an urgent need for action" and acknowledges that a well-functioning and robust care economy is critical in order to improve resilience against crises and achieve gender equality and inclusion, while addressing other inequalities. However, significant gaps remain and urgent action is needed to ensure decent work in the care economy.

Part II, entitled "A common understanding of the care economy", clarifies what elements make up the care economy and who its main actors are. Our Committee's conclusions highlight the heterogeneous nature of the care economy and the organization of care, both within and outside the household, which relies to a great extent on work done by women, particularly in the social sector, in health and education and by domestic workers, community health and care workers, and workers in the social and solidarity economy.

In Part III, entitled “Guiding Principles”, on the 80th anniversary of the Declaration of Philadelphia our tripartite Committee members were unanimous in reaffirming that “as labour is not a commodity, labour in the care economy is not a commodity”. All care workers should enjoy decent work. Investing in the care economy and promotion of the protection of all care workers, including migrant workers, can lead to social and economic development. The ILO’s 5R Framework for Decent Care Work provides a framework for developing integrated and coherent strategies to achieve decent work in the care economy through recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work, as well as reward and representation of care workers. Our conclusions also recognize the primary role played by the State in care provision, along with the private sector, the social and solidarity economy, and households.

Part IV, entitled “Advancing decent work in the care economy”, contains a range of recommendations to guide the policy action of governments, employers’ organizations and workers’ organizations, with the support of the ILO, to achieve a resilient, productive and inclusive care economy, especially in the context of the technological, demographic and environmental changes that the world of work is experiencing.

Finally, Part V, entitled “The Role of the International Labour Organization”, covers the leadership role of the ILO in promoting the care agenda on a global scale through its research reports, international statistical standards, and its technical support and policy guidance. Mobilizing partnerships, including in the context of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, will be decisive to harnessing the potential of the care economy to contribute to the Decent Work Agenda, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and a just transition.

To conclude, I sincerely believe that the conclusions drawn from our discussion will greatly guide and enhance our collective efforts to promote decent work and social justice in the care economy. On one final note, looking beyond these conclusions, during the discussion there were ideas that perhaps have not yet found their moment, such as that care should be considered a public good and, therefore, is the responsibility of governments, like health, education and so forth, or that access to care could be recognized as a human right. Personal testimonies were heard and the inclusion of emotions as an essential component of care was advocated.

We also considered the mental health perspective that was ultimately incorporated into the conclusions, as it often involves caring for the elderly, children or people with disabilities, which requires special skills, and we also discussed social reproduction, a concept not yet fully defined that can be understood as factors of inequality inherited between generations that will have to be accounted for better in the future. There were intense moments that allowed us to appreciate the profound human element of this broad sector of activity. These discussions introduced what we might call a more real element to the debate and the message is that societies must continue to progress so that social justice becomes a reality in the care economy.

And with that I have the honour and privilege of presenting to the International Labour Conference the proposed resolution and the conclusions related to the general discussion on decent work and the care economy, with a view to their adoption.

Ms Janahi

Employer Vice-Chairperson of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy

Today I stand before the Conference for good reason, not to close off a session of the Conference so that we can each get back to our daily work, but because we each played our

part, and that is the very purpose of the ILO: advancing social justice and decent work throughout the world through tripartite dialogue and action. Today, I stand here on behalf of the Employers, to proudly share the collective vision of the tripartite constituents, reached through robust dialogue on the care economy and care workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic put our care economy to the ultimate test: could it expand and specialize, so as to mitigate the number of people turning into patients or – even worse – fatalities? Since the pandemic, we have been seeing staggering statistics on the care economy. The demand for care is increasing at pace. The demand for paid care services is projected to rise from 8.7 per cent of global gross domestic product to 14.9 per cent in 2030. The United States of America voiced its wish to boost the supply of long-term care and caregivers. Japan mentioned in our Committee that it will need 2.53 million caregivers by 2025; that, for the record, is next year. This makes sense. Humans are living longer and healthier lives, and demographics reveal large cohorts of ageing populations in certain countries. This is why the supply of care is fundamental. Without a supply of quality care, we simply cannot create jobs, promote career development and achieve decent work. There is already a projected skills shortage of 10 million health and care workers by 2030, and today we already require an additional 3 million health and care workers to keep our care system running. In short, we are here at the ILO today to advance decent work in the care economy for good reason.

During our discussions in the Committee, we found common ground on many topics. Most workers in the care economy, both paid and unpaid, are women. As such, our Committee took a position on promoting gender equality and social co-responsibility and on supporting the provision of formalized care work. Our Committee agreed that the provision of quality care requires upskilling and reskilling, ultimately enabling jobseekers and workers to work as caregivers, nurses, doctors and supervisors. Strengthening the role of the care economy has a positive multiplier effect, as healthier people, enterprises and societies boost productivity across countries and regions. The opposite also holds true. Not investing in the care economy denies a lifeline to other sectors and puts economic and social health and growth on the line, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Skills recognition and skills certification are needed to facilitate swift and effective labour market transitions to the care economy. Advancing decent work in the care economy necessitates the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, and these enterprises, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, need support to ensure the much-needed supply of care. Importantly, we recognize the added value of the private sector in promoting decent work in the care economy. The private sector complements public services and the care economy creates jobs and sustainable careers, reduces health and care costs and drives innovation in the industry. Therefore, public-private partnerships have leveraged the strengths of both the public and the private sectors and can help scale quality care services without overburdening either side, fostering a more sustainable care ecosystem.

This may not come as a surprise, but we also disagreed on some issues. We took some time to discuss whether care can really be considered as an absolute human right, the notion of linking a rights-based approach with a principles-based approach, and the importance of collaborative efforts between employers and workers on effective workplace cooperation.

We would like to strengthen and enrich the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work, as we missed the “how” in this concept. In other words, how will the 5R Framework be implemented? Our proposal was to include another “R”: resources. Although this is not an official sixth “R”, we firmly believe that adequate resources are critical to advancing the 5R Framework. We also stressed the need for representation to refer to the representation of employers as well as of

workers. Employers in the care economy may also require representational strength and association if they are to effectively contribute to promoting decent work in the care economy. While we were unable to mutually agree on the scope of representation, we believe that there is significant value in care employers and service providers being represented, if appropriate, so that their collective voice can be heard in negotiations and decision-making processes.

These are just some examples of our different views, which demonstrate the diversity and breadth of the care economy, the need for enhanced mutual understanding between different stakeholders, and the need for more dialogue. And we are here at the ILO for these reasons. Through social dialogue, the Employers and Workers narrowed their differences in the evening of the Committee's last sitting. I sincerely thank Ms Chang and her team for the intense negotiation, which led us to many agreements and enabled us to reach consensus.

The outcome of today is that we did as much as possible to get to a set of conclusions. Some points require additional discussions, and we will take these forward in our capitals. It makes sense that we sometimes disagree, because we each have our own backgrounds, experience and roles to play. And, even more importantly, we work towards a common objective to reach an agreement. This is key, because having common objectives enables us to share a common interest.

On a more personal note, I would also like to share some observations after my first time as an Employer spokesperson for a Committee discussion. After these intense two weeks, I cannot stress enough how fundamental it is for everyone to stay curious. No representative takes the floor or submits an amendment for the sake of amending. No; every proposal consists of an idea, and ideas shape discussions, and discussions shape the world of work that we live in. Throughout these two weeks, I experienced from our Chairperson, the ILO experts, our Government representatives, and the Workers, a natural curiosity. This curiosity, in terms of willingness and ability to participate, even with respect to concepts that not everybody could grasp, such as social reproduction, is not only conducive to moving the discussion forward, but it also moved me. The eagerness of the representatives to understand, encourage and influence one another speaks volumes about why we are here today, and I thank them for that.

I would like to thank the Chairperson for stepping in and accepting the unexpected, involuntary, formidable task. His patience, humour and enduring personality carried us through, and we were not always an easy class to manage. I also thank the ILO experts. Without them, we would be left sifting through facts and figures and not engaging in a content-driven discussion as we did. Thanks also to the coordinator, operators, note-takers and interpreters for their hard work. Without them, we would not understand one another enough to have made a tripartite agreement possible. Thanks to the Government representatives. They represented their countries well and we were honoured to work with them. Thanks also to the Workers, and especially the Worker Vice-Chairperson, my friend. She truly is a great counterpart, and I am sincere when I say that I hope we will have another opportunity to work with each other again in the near future. It was a pleasure to meet and work with her. Lastly, thanks to my fellow Employer representatives, and the teams from the International Organisation of Employers and the Bureau for Employers' Activities. They are now my "care family". I cannot thank them enough for their unwavering support. I wish them safe travels and will miss them all until we meet again. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone in this room for their curiosity in this discussion, and the ILO, for we could not work without it.

Ms Chang**Worker Vice-Chairperson of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy**

On behalf of the Workers' group, I am pleased to speak to you today about the conclusions of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy. Workers came to this Conference with very high expectations. Inspired by the ILO's groundbreaking 2018 report *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* and the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work, workers and their trade unions across the globe have been organizing, advocating and campaigning to draw attention to the importance of decent work in care, the centrality of care for achieving gender equality, and the need to future-proof our economies by investing in quality care services for the people who depend on care. We have also stepped up our efforts, claiming care as a public good and as a universal human right, which includes a right to provide care, to receive care and to exercise self-care.

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered the ways in which care is fundamental to human, social, economic and environmental well-being, as well as to sustainable development. It exposed and exacerbated the vulnerabilities and inequalities within our care systems. It brought into stark relief the severe labour shortages, low pay and poor working conditions of care workers and the challenges experienced by workers with care responsibilities, in particular women who are juggling paid work and unpaid care work.

It is within the backdrop of the pandemic and its devastating impacts that our Committee was tasked with crafting a road map for the ILO and its constituents to advance decent work in the care economy. We would not be here today if it were not for the care workers, informal and formal, the domestic workers, the community health and care workers, the migrant care workers, and all the other millions of care workers who have been tireless in their advocacy. They have really pushed to keep this high on the agenda of the global trade union movement.

We wanted to see workers' voices, their stories and their lived experiences reflected in the discussion. We indeed agreed in the Committee that we need to pay particular attention to workers with care responsibilities – in particular women, and racialized and ethnic minority workers who assume a disproportionate share of unpaid care work – and to care workers who are most at risk of insufficient or inadequate protection, including due to obstacles to accessing and exercising their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Like the informal economy workers who lack adequate access to social protection and care services. Like the many healthcare workers who often have to work excessive hours without any rest breaks and who, during the pandemic, continued to care for us while risking their own health and unable to see and care for their own families. Like the domestic workers who are often denied an employment contract and a living wage. Like the elderly care, home care and disability support workers who are often trapped in precarious and insecure work. Like the community, health and care workers who are not even considered as workers and have no access to opportunities for training and skills development. Like the migrant care workers who often fall victim to predatory recruitment agencies, and many others who continue providing care for our loved ones in the most difficult circumstances.

We agreed that urgent action is needed if we are to reverse the global care crisis and build resilience in the face of ongoing transformations in the world of work, demographic shifts, climate change and technological change. We emerged with a clear, common understanding of the care economy and a set of guiding principles and actions for the development of national care policies and systems. The conclusions that we have in front of us recognize the primary responsibility of the State to provide care, fund, regulate and ensure high standards of quality,

safety and health for care workers, and ensure and recognize the need to allocate the necessary resources, as well as ensure that national care systems are underpinned by robust policy and regulatory frameworks.

Above all, care work is fundamentally a human activity. The labour involved is multifaceted, physical, mental and emotional, and requires a high level of skill. For too many care workers, these skills are not always recognized. Our conclusions underscore the importance of skills recognition and the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and to reward care work, including through equal pay for work of equal value, and to guarantee representation of care workers through social dialogue and collective bargaining, as guided by the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work and grounded by international labour standards.

Decent work builds resilient economies and societies, whether it is caring for children, the elderly, the sick or the disabled. All care workers should enjoy decent work. Our conclusions recall the Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944 in stating that, just as labour is not a commodity, labour in the care economy is not a commodity. This was an important statement to make, especially in the context of migration and care work and the global care chain. In today's world, care labour is too often treated like a commodity. We speak of skills shortages and mobility as if care workers were assets to be traded, gained or lost, rather than human beings who, like anyone, deserve decent jobs that will help them live healthy and fulfilling lives, support their families and feel like part of the community.

While the text of the conclusions includes good language on migrant care workers, we had hoped to deliver more for these workers who are among the most marginalized and vulnerable, despite their vital contribution to economies, communities and families. It was also important for our conclusions to acknowledge the impact of care worker migration on origin countries, particularly small island developing States and other countries that are experiencing what was referred to in our discussion as "brain drain". It is important that our future work on care keeps in mind the realities of countries of both origin and destination.

We also emerged with a tripartite commitment to build on the strong foundation of the ILO's work in promoting decent work in the care economy, and we agreed that, by reinforcing the ILO's leadership role within the multilateral system, we can help ensure the centrality of decent work in advancing the care agenda at the global, regional and national levels. I truly believe that what you have here before you today are conclusions that can help transform the lives of millions of people worldwide who provide and receive care. While governments and employers' and workers' organizations all have a role to play, this change must be informed and led by workers' organizations and workers themselves. This change must also incorporate strategies to address the social norms and gender stereotypes that continue to place a disproportionate share of unpaid and paid care work on women and others affected by multiple and intersecting discrimination, contributing to ethnic, racial and gender-based occupational segregation and the undervaluation of care work.

To this end, the ILO's technical support on strengthening social dialogue, including collective bargaining, will be a key driver for achieving decent work for all care workers, in particular the most exposed to exploitation and abuse, and expanding access to paid leave entitlements and services for workers with care responsibilities. The ILO's technical support to the constituents for the development of national care policies and systems, as well as support on ensuring sustainable and adequate financing for care, would promote quality care, decent job creation, gender equality, professionalization and formalization of care jobs and help ensure universal access to care. The convening of a tripartite meeting of experts would be a

crucial first step in assessing gaps in the ILO's body of international labour standards in relation to paternity, parental protection and other types of care leave entitlements. We are looking forward to the action plan that the Office will develop to present to the Governing Body. Let us all work together to make it a reality.

Mr Jordan

Chairperson of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy

My colleagues have already presented very ably the work done by the Committee. I will draw your attention to a few points that I consider to be important.

Care work, both paid and unpaid, is essential to all other work. The Committee's discussion on the care economy and the world of work was a historic first. Never before have the tripartite constituents formally and comprehensively discussed the care economy and the world of work at the highest institutional level of the Organization. Accelerating global transformations – including the impacts of the climate crisis and rapid advances in technology – have made this discussion extremely timely. Urgent action is needed to ensure decent work in the care economy and to promote decent work by ensuring access to care for all.

Understanding and putting in perspective the social and economic complexities of the care economy has been challenging. The two Vice-Chairpersons spoke about some of these challenges. But the Committee nonetheless succeeded in arriving at important common understandings. Listening and sharing experiences have been the drivers for a successful outcome.

The care economy, decent work and gender equality are intimately linked. Women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. This is a structural barrier for substantive gender equality, including in respect of women's equal participation in the labour market. Women are also the greater part of the care workforce, with strong occupational segregation by gender, race or ethnicity persisting. It is clear from our discussion that a well-functioning and robust care economy is critical for achieving gender equality and inclusion, and addressing other inequalities.

Based on the discussion and its outcomes, it is evident that building a well-functioning and robust care economy is a shared policy objective of countries across all regions, irrespective of their level of development or their size. This is also illustrated by the active participation of ILO Members from large countries, advanced and developing countries, and small island developing States. While the nature and scale of the challenge may differ, according to national contexts, countries all around the globe face the challenge of building comprehensive and strong care systems that are resilient to crises, in order to advance on the path of inclusive and equitable sustainable development.

Sharing our respective challenges and experiences has helped the Committee to build a forward-looking common agenda. The conclusions chart an important tripartite road map. They articulate principles to guide the process of designing and implementing integrated and holistic approaches and policies for decent work and the care economy, and they identify actions that governments and the social partners, as appropriate to their spheres of responsibility, should take. Importantly, the State has a primary responsibility for care provision, funding, regulation and ensuring high standards of quality, safety and health for all workers and all recipients of care.

The conclusions highlight the importance of the fundamental principles and rights at work, and of labour and social protection for care workers, particularly for groups of workers

who may be excluded from such protection, such as migrant workers, domestic workers, and community health and community care workers. They also highlight the decent job creation potential offered by the care economy and the important role of skills development. Critically, the Committee stressed the need for well-designed care leave policies and services as a lever for gender equality, for supporting workers with family responsibilities and for achieving work–life balance.

Solutions and support will have to be tailored to diverse needs and contexts. In this regard, the conclusions call on the ILO to leverage the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the United Nations Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, and propose the creation of a South–South platform to promote decent care work.

Bringing together governments, workers and employers, key actors in the care economy, the ILO plays a leadership role in promoting decent work in and through the care economy. The conclusions place a responsibility on the Organization to strengthen and expand its work further in this area, including through collaboration and partnerships with other players and providing technical support and policy advice to the constituents. The 5R Framework for Decent Care Work, as developed by the Office, was acknowledged as offering useful guidance in this regard.

It has been a great honour for me to step in to chair this Committee after Mr Sorreta of the Philippines was prevented from completing his tenure owing to health reasons. I give very special thanks to the two Vice-Chairpersons and to the Reporter for their patience, for their support, for their advice – sometimes guidance – and the spirit of genuine cooperation throughout our discussions.

Last, but certainly not least, I cannot but express on behalf of the Committee our sincere gratitude to the entire ILO team for their professionalism, their high quality technical knowledge and their tireless efforts, without which we would not have been able to succeed. I must offer my own specific gratitude to Ms Drake, and to Ms Dasgupta, who were to my right, both of them, and to Ms Licata, who was to my left, who I leaned to and on quite frequently and who was an excellent team member for me.

A strong and functioning care economy is key for sustainable prosperity, gender equality and social justice for all. This is an important part of our pursuit of a human-centred approach to the future of work. We have a historic opportunity and a responsibility to move this agenda forward jointly with our partners. Let us grasp that opportunity.

The President

I thank the Reporter and the Officers of the Committee for their statements. I now open the floor for the discussion of the outcome of the Committee's work.

Ms Abramo

Government (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries
(Original Spanish)

It is an honour to speak again on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) at this session of the Conference. Once again, the importance and power of this unique forum for tripartite dialogue on the core issues of the world of work are evident. I would like to begin by thanking all the members of the Committee, who have worked tirelessly over the past few days. I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Jordan, for

conducting the work in an impeccable manner, which was key to our success. I would like to thank the Employers' and Workers' representatives for their commitment, collaboration and constructive spirit and the Governments for their invaluable cooperation. I would also like to convey our sincere thanks to the Office for its continued support.

Over the past few days, we have taken a huge step towards societies that place care, people's well-being and decent work at their core. As we have already stated, our region has reached important agreements that prioritize the care agenda. In various regional forums, we have reached a common understanding of the importance of care for equality, social justice and the sustainable development of our societies and economies. In these agreements, we affirm that care is a form of work, a necessity for all people and a right: to care, to be cared for and to exercise self-care. In addition, nine countries in the region have argued before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States that care is a human right. These views have been expressed in the discussions that have taken place over the last few days, and we very much welcome their outcomes.

The conclusions of the discussion state, in accordance with the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia, that care work is not a commodity. They also state that the current social organization of care is unjust and that it is necessary to make progress towards a better division of care work, whether paid or unpaid, between men and women, and to promote social co-responsibility for the provision of care among the State, which has primary responsibility for it, the private sector, families, the community and the social and solidarity economy.

The care economy is characterized by multiple and intersecting forms of inequality that, in our region, are structural and persistent. Making these inequalities visible and recognizing them is the first step towards confronting them. Recognizing them means, inter alia, naming and measuring them. Statistical and cognitive invisibility is a severe form of discrimination. This is why, during the discussions, we reiterated the importance of explicitly mentioning these inequalities and generating statistical evidence in order to develop better informed and more efficient public policies. We are referring to the poorest women, indigenous women, women of African descent and all other racialized women, domestic workers, migrant women, women in the informal sector, young women whose education and work is put on hold because of their family care responsibilities, women living in rural areas, women with disabilities, women living in the most precarious urban areas and community caregivers.

We are sure that the conclusions of the Committee will be crucial for reinforcing the work undertaken by the ILO's tripartite constituents to promote decent work and the care economy. This will undoubtedly be strengthened by the action plan that the Office will have to present to the Governing Body at its next session. We hope that the next steps will be towards an instrument that is able to address the current gaps in the ILO's body of standards on key issues such as paternity and parental protection and long-term leave.

Ms Coenen

Government (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland and Norway align themselves with this statement. We sincerely thank both of the Chairpersons we had during this session of the International Labour Conference, Mr Sorreta and Mr Jordan. On Tuesday morning, Mr Jordan took up the mantle at very short notice and ably guided us through the rest of the discussions to these conclusions. We also

express our appreciation for all the work that Mr Sorreta had carried out prior to that, and we wish him good health.

Ongoing megatrends in the global world of work, including demographic shifts, climate change, technological developments and, more recently, growing labour shortages and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, have accentuated the need to put the topic of decent work and the care economy on the agenda. At a time when the topic of care has moved up on the agenda, the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy has sought to tackle issues such as the unfair distribution of unpaid care work, gender equality, investment in care, access to quality care services, decent working conditions, labour shortages and skills mismatches. The Committee, under the agile leadership of Mr Sorreta and Mr Jordan, now presents a set of conclusions that will guide constituents and the ILO in their work, not only to ensure decent work for care workers, but also to foster the benefits that investing in care brings to society and humanity as a whole.

As you all know, the unique tripartite structure of the ILO, founded on social dialogue, gives an equal voice to workers, employers and governments. This practice does not make it easy, but we were once again able to agree to a broad set of conclusions in our Committee. We warmly thank the social partners, in particular the Employer and Worker Vice-Chairpersons, and of course, all our colleagues in the Government group for their engagement and valuable contributions. We also express our warmest gratitude to the Office for its support and guidance. The European Union and its Member States acknowledge the strength of the ILO, with its unique tripartite composition and its expertise deeply rooted in the world of work. This expertise should be used to point us in the right direction to build robust and resilient care systems, improve decent work prospects and eliminate gender inequality.

Everyone in the Committee, including a large team of technical, security and logistical staff behind the scenes, has worked very long hours, and our Committee may even hold the record for the longest sitting. This did lead some of us to start reflecting on the discrepancy between the kind of working conditions that we are striving for worldwide and the ones we have experienced ourselves over the last few days. I will leave this up to the consideration of everyone here, but the most important message that I want to give you is that we are very grateful for what we were able to achieve. We look forward to continuing our joint work in following up on these conclusions.

Ms Mayers-Granville **Employer (Barbados)**

I have two words: intense and rewarding. The discussions, the insights and the conclusions we reached will have a lasting impact on the future of work in the care economy. We considered: the demand for care being impacted by ageing populations; the supply of care, noting the global skill shortages and contextual issues of family and community carers; and access to care and the need for adequate resourcing. While time prevented consensus on a few areas, what was overwhelmingly obvious to all three groups of constituents was that the care economy is critical. We acknowledged the vital role that women play and called for a re-evaluation of gender norms towards better balance.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all members of the Committee. Their contributions were invaluable. The advocacy of Ms Chang, the Worker Vice-Chairperson, on behalf of migrant and domestic care workers and persons facing vulnerabilities, was particularly admirable. The contributions made by various Governments added significant context to our discussions. And special thanks to Mr Sorreta of the Philippines, for his

chairmanship, despite having to step down due to illness. Mr Jordan of Barbados, at short notice, expertly continued to chair the Committee, ultimately leading to the conclusions.

I must also express my thanks to Ms Janahi, our dedicated Employer Vice-Chairperson, for effectively conveying the Employers' positions. She was ably supported by the International Organisation of Employers and officers from the Bureau for Employers' Activities and guided by Employer representatives.

As the long nights wore on, the coffee from the vending machine became crucial for sustenance. By 2 a.m. on Thursday, fatigue was setting in, but our determination and perseverance were commendable as we worked tirelessly to ensure that as many areas as possible were included in the final outcome document. I am proud of the work done and the impact that we will have on the care economy.

Ms Coronacion **Worker (Philippines)**

Thank you for this opportunity to once again address the International Labour Conference and thank you to the Committee for the extraordinary effort that went into drafting and crafting this document. We have achieved successes, particularly in asserting that labour in the care economy is not a commodity and that the State carries the primary responsibility for care provision, funding and regulation. However, I must register the Philippine Workers' delegation's vehement objection to the insertion of a reference to public-private partnerships in the outcome document's guiding principles. It is difficult for me to understand why the Employers and most Governments could not accept such straightforward language as "care work is the right of all people". Perhaps admitting this would make it impossible for them to justify their main agenda. I refer to paragraph 25, which states, "[p]ublic-private partnerships that leverage the strengths of both public and private sectors can help scale quality care services without overburdening either side, fostering a more sustainable care ecosystem". Including this in the guiding principles contradicts our assertion that decent work in the care economy is the primary responsibility of States. It can and will worsen the experiences of many care workers around the world, including the migrants and domestic workers we represent.

The historical and practical record is clear. Public-private partnerships have consistently fallen short of delivering on their promises of improving care services without overburdening either sector. From a human rights perspective, the commodification of care through public-private partnerships often leads to the prioritization of profit over people, undermining the quality and accessibility of essential services. Paragraph 25 undermines all of the strong and positive provisions that we have agreed upon in this text. We remain adamant that we cannot accept any language on public-private partnerships, as this institutionalizes further privatization in the care economy. We emphasize that this represents a disservice, especially to our migrant workers, who stand to suffer from further abuse and rights violations. As such, we do not treat this matter as settled. Workers and unions will continue to push back against all efforts to commodify care work and undermine the rigid protections that we have fought hard to enshrine.

Mr Babu **Government (Bangladesh)**

Allow me to express my heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to my outstanding colleagues from all three benches, who have been actively engaged in discussing and negotiating the outcome document on the care economy. I would also like to thank the

Chairperson of the Committee, Mr Jordan of Barbados, the Deputy Director-General, Ms Drake, and other colleagues of the Office.

As we see the present, and project the future of the world of work, we come across the predominance of care workforces and the increasing demand for care work. Workers with a wide range of expertise and experience are contributing to health and community-held social sectors and domestic care work. Hence, the ILO, with its values grounded in the Declaration of Philadelphia and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, has responded in the form of the outcome that has been presented to the Conference for adoption today.

Bangladesh considers that care workers in all sectors equally deserve a decent working environment, social protection, fair wages, and the right to organize and bargain collectively. However, the protection of migrant care workers requires our special attention, as they are often engaged in highly informal care work and face cultural, legal and many other obstacles in realizing their rights as workers and as human beings. The outcome document mandates the Office to promote international labour standards, provide technical support and policy guidance, provide technical assistance to protect migrant care workers, support the constituents in exploring fiscal space, and so on. At the same time, the tripartite constituents have also been urged to design and implement integrated and coherent care policies and systems, promote policies to create decent jobs in the care economy and strengthen policies to tackle inequalities, discrimination, violence and harassment. We strongly believe that governments, especially from the developing world, will need more technical assistance and financing, as well as effective social dialogue, to achieve the goals we agree on here today. We are optimistic that the spirit of cooperation shown in drafting the document will continue, for the purposes of effective implementation.

Mr Naumann
Employer (Germany)

We appreciate the outcome of the discussions of the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy and the fruitful tripartite negotiations which took place. I want to sincerely thank the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Committee, especially Ms Janahi, and the International Organisation of Employers for their outstanding contributions throughout. Members of the Employers' group will be able to carry back many important impressions and experiences.

The spirit of the tripartite discussions and the tripartite character of the ILO encourage all stakeholders to take other perspectives into account, and this is exactly the way we need to handle the major challenges we face in our societies. For example, in Germany, the demographic shift and its consequences are one of the most debated issues. We feel the demographic consequences on the ground. Social security systems are under financial pressure and even the best ideas and biggest budgets cannot succeed if we do not have the workforce to do the job. Therefore, a well-balanced approach is needed. The importance of skills and labour shortages cannot be underestimated. We should also put emphasis on the value of private care enterprises, services and agencies for good quality care. In conclusion, all of society benefits from a well-advanced care system, and social dialogue and the social partners have to play a major role in it.

Ms Britez
Worker (Argentina)
(Original Spanish)

On behalf of the Workers, we would like to reaffirm everything that our spokesperson in the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy has said, and express our support for the statement made by our colleague from the Philippines. We are delighted to be here to present the conclusions reached by the Committee.

These two weeks were intense and emotional. We highlighted the importance of care as a crucial driver in our lives. Care is not a commodity and, here at the ILO, we know what that means. We paid tribute to carers and I would like to give special thanks to all those who have devoted their lives to caring for others.

The discussions enabled us to identify the enormous challenges faced in care sectors, and in particular those faced by domestic workers. In this respect, I would like to note that I represent the International Domestic Workers Federation, which serves as the voice of more than 75 million domestic workers. We also identified the challenges faced by migrant workers who, as our colleagues have pointed out, continue to suffer violations of their rights, and by care workers in the health sector, community care workers, care workers employed in the informal economy, home care workers and all those who carry out this type of activity.

We gave thought to the importance of receiving high-quality care and to the central role of governments in developing public policies that support care systems. The conclusions presented here contain a framework of principles that will guide the work of the ILO and of us all, whether Workers, Employers or Governments. Emphasizing the importance of guaranteeing decent working conditions for care workers and quality services for those who receive care, we also developed guidance for ILO action. We are very proud of this work and of course fully support its implementation.

I would like to thank all the members of the Committee, in particular the members of the drafting group, our spokesperson, Ms Chang, her advisory team and all the colleagues from the Bureau for Workers' Activities, who provided the Committee with their constant support. The Workers will continue to strive for a world that is more equitable and that provides opportunities, and for a care economy that is more visible and based on decent work.

Mr Nirmal
Government (India)

I wish to begin by thanking all the Committee members and ILO experts for the intense and productive discussion on this important subject of global significance. As the global population ages, the demand for care services is set to rise, creating numerous job opportunities.

India recognizes the importance of the care economy for job creation and boosting female labour force participation. India is undertaking various skilling, upskilling and reskilling initiatives to align care workers' skills with international standards. India is also engaging with various countries to facilitate demand-driven supply of skilled care workers from these countries, ensuring decent working conditions for the migrant workers. Global skills mapping in the field of the care economy is the need of the hour to provide equitable, sustainable and inclusive access to decent standards of living for all.

The Committee's conclusions underscore the essential role that care work plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with the active participation of all stakeholders. The care burden on women hinders gender equality and limits women's participation in the labour force. The conclusions will not only help in improving female labour force participation and economic activities, they will also foster equality and quality skilled and affordable care services that can enhance human capital development, which is vital for global economic growth. The way forward requires a concerted effort and policymaking at the national, regional and global levels to recognize the demand for the care economy, thereby promoting gender equality and fostering a robust and resilient labour market.

Ms Chenard

Employer (Congo)
(Original French)

It is a great honour for me to participate in my very first session of the International Labour Conference within the General Discussion Committee on Decent Work and the Care Economy. First of all, I would like to congratulate the ILO for its excellent organization and the work accomplished. I also applaud the professionalism and leadership of our Chairpersons, including Mr Jordan, and our Vice-Chairpersons, including Ms Janahi, as well as the dedication of the teams, in particular the International Organisation of Employers and the Bureau for Employers' Activities, and the delegates who worked tirelessly, even beyond 3 a.m. when necessary.

After long and sometimes intense discussions, we succeeded in producing a balanced text that takes into account the concerns of all constituents. A key point highlighted was the importance of public-private partnerships in promoting the care economy. Public-private partnerships are essential to the development of the care economy sector. These partnerships can play a crucial role in improving health services and, more generally, in ensuring sustainable economic growth.

I look forward to exploring this subject further in future discussions, particularly those on the informal economy, which, according to the reports we have from the United Nations Development Programme and the ILO, creates 80 per cent of jobs in Africa, 68 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 53 per cent in Latin America. The situation of workers in regions that represent 80 per cent of the global population cannot be improved without addressing the problem of the informal economy.

I will conclude by saying that participating in this session of the Conference has allowed me to come to understand the importance and profound impact of the work accomplished here. The instruments prepared here have the potential to improve the lives of so many people. However, this will be the case only if they are actually implemented at the local level. I therefore ask and implore Governments that have ratified instruments to ensure their monitoring and effective application at the national level.

Ms Gandiwa Magaya

Worker (Zimbabwe)

The care economy is composed of both paid and unpaid workers. Among them are marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as domestic workers, community healthcare workers, migrant care workers, and informal economy care workers, the majority of whom are women who have already been socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged. Most care workers suffer discrimination for reasons of gender, disability, race, social status, ethnicity or

economic status, to name but a few. It is therefore a milestone achievement that we are gathered here to celebrate strong conclusions that include the need to promote: gender equality and equity in the care economy; equal access to skills development, business opportunities and social protection for care workers; the protection of migrant care workers in situations of vulnerability; gender-responsive policies in the care economy; and our roles as tripartite partners.

The incorporation of the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work will enable us to monitor progress in ensuring that decent work in the care economy is achieved in an equitable manner. This was a journey that was painful but worth taking, as today we adopt conclusions that will see a more gender-equal, human-rights-based and inclusive care economy with decent work. There can never be social justice without gender equality in any part of the world. On behalf of the care workers of the world, allow me to conclude by saying, “Nothing for us, without us”.

Resolution and conclusions concerning decent work and the care economy

The President

We will now proceed with the adoption of the proposed resolution concerning decent work and the care economy, which contains the Committee’s conclusions, the text of which has been published in Record of Proceedings No. 8A.

If there are no objections, may I take it that the Conference adopts, as a whole, the proposed resolution and the conclusions contained therein?

(The resolution and conclusions are adopted.)

I would like to thank all the members of the Committee, and the members of the Secretariat working behind the scenes, for their commitment and dedication. Good job, and congratulations to them all for these excellent results. I take note of the comments made with regard to the working conditions in the Committee. We will see how we can improve them next year.

(The Conference continues its work in plenary.)