

Committee on the Application of Standards

CAN/PV Belarus

Commission de l'application des normes

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Comisión de Aplicación de Normas

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Treizième séance, 7 juin 2025, 10 h 00**Thirteenth sitting, 7 June 2025, 10.00 a.m.****Decimotercero sesión, 7 de junio de 2025, 10 horas**

Président: M. Tabai
Chairperson: Mr Tabai
Presidente: Sr. Tabai

Séance spéciale – Bélarus**Special sitting – Belarus****Sesión especial - Belarús**

Président – Je suis ravi de vous retrouver ce matin pour l'ouverture de la treizième séance de notre commission.

Comme indiqué dans le programme de travail de notre commission, nous allons commencer nos travaux par la séance spéciale concernant le Bélarus. Cette séance spéciale sera suivie par la discussion des deux cas individuels, à savoir:

- le Ghana concernant l'application de la convention (n° 103) sur la protection de la maternité (révisée), 1952;
- le Honduras concernant l'application de la convention (n° 87) sur la liberté syndicale et la protection du droit syndical, 1948.

Je voudrais également attirer votre attention sur le fait que le procès-verbal verbatim de la discussion du cas du Burundi concernant la convention (n° 94) sur les clauses de travail (contrats publics), 1949, est désormais disponible sur la page Web de la commission. Les délégués peuvent soumettre des amendements à leurs déclarations jusqu'à lundi 9 juin à 10 heures.

La procédure d'amendement des projets de procès-verbaux verbatim peut être consultée sur la page Web de la commission. À cet égard, je vous rappelle que les amendements devraient se limiter à éliminer des erreurs de transcription, comme indiqué dans le document D.1 sur nos méthodes de travail.

Comme vous le savez, un grand nombre de gouvernements est inscrit auprès de notre commission. Le secrétariat a une nouvelle fois été contraint de placer certains gouvernements dans la salle II. Ce placement se fait sur la base d'une rotation et nous sommes désolés du désagrément que cela peut engendrer. Nous vous rappelons que, pour des raisons techniques, il n'est pas possible de prendre la parole depuis la salle II. Par conséquent, le secrétariat s'est assuré que les délégués gouvernementaux qui se sont inscrits sur la liste des orateurs pour l'examen des cas à l'ordre du jour disposent d'une place dans notre salle.

Je me permets de vous demander à nouveau de bien veiller à vous inscrire sur la liste des orateurs au moins 24 heures avant l'examen de chaque cas. Ces inscriptions préalables sont importantes pour assurer la bonne gestion du temps.

Au besoin, je pourrais décider, en concertation avec le bureau de la commission, de réduire les temps de parole, lorsque la liste des orateurs dépassera 17 orateurs.

Dans de tels cas, j'en informerai la commission, et le secrétariat s'efforcera, dans la mesure du possible, de prévenir les délégués figurant sur la liste des orateurs pour leur permettre d'adapter leur intervention au temps finalement imparti.

Enfin, je vous invite à regarder avec attention le film que nous allons maintenant diffuser, qui porte sur la prévention de toutes formes de violence et de harcèlement, dans le cadre des manifestations placées sous l'égide de l'Organisation internationale du Travail.

(Projection d'un film.)

Passons maintenant à notre ordre du jour. Comme vous le savez, à sa 111^e session en 2023, la Conférence internationale du Travail a adopté une résolution sur les mesures recommandées par le Conseil d'administration du BIT, au titre de l'article 33 de la Constitution de l'OIT, au sujet du Bélarus.

En adoptant cette résolution, la Conférence a décidé de consacrer, lors de ses futures sessions, une séance spéciale de la commission à l'examen de l'application, par le gouvernement du Bélarus, de la convention (n° 87) sur la liberté syndicale et la protection du droit syndical, 1948, et de la convention (n° 98) sur le droit d'organisation et de négociation collective, 1949, ainsi que des recommandations de la commission d'enquête, tant qu'il n'aura pas été avéré que le Bélarus s'est acquitté de ses obligations.

Sur la base de cette décision, cette question a été inscrite à l'ordre du jour de la Commission de l'application des normes.

J'informe la commission que nous avons 45 délégués inscrits pour prendre la parole.

Par conséquent, le bureau de la commission a décidé de réduire le temps de parole des délégués gouvernementaux individuels de cinq à trois minutes pour la discussion de ce cas. Le secrétariat en a informé les délégués concernés. Vu le grand nombre d'orateurs inscrits, j'attache une importance particulière au respect du temps de parole qui vous est imparti et je compte sur votre collaboration et compréhension.

J'ai l'honneur d'inviter l'honorable représentant du gouvernement du Bélarus, M. Ilhar Staravoïtau, vice-ministre du Travail et de la Protection sociale, à prendre la parole.

*Interpretation from Russian: **Government representative (Mr STARAVOITAU)*** – Recently, the discussion of the “Belarusian case” at the ILO has become routine and takes place several times a year at the Conference, during sessions of the Governing Body, and so on. From meeting to meeting, the same conclusions are adopted regarding Belarus, and the same demands are put forward to the Government. However, these demands cannot be met because they are not based on the real state of affairs – they are not objective, they are unfair and they go beyond the ILO mandate. I will dwell on a number of such demands and our position.

The first is the demand for immediate release and lifting of liability, unconditionally, for all persons who were convicted allegedly for carrying out legal trade union activities, according to the list of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP). In Belarus, there are no provisions in Belarusian legislation that would authorize punishment for carrying out legal trade union activities. The Belarusian State in every possible way welcomes legal trade union activity and promotes its development through relevant legal norms, which grant trade unions broad powers to protect workers' rights and participate in resolving the most important issues of socio-economic development.

As for the list of persons who allegedly suffered for exercising trade union rights, as we have already noted on numerous occasions, all of them were held accountable for specific criminal offences that have nothing whatsoever to do with legitimate trade union activity. These citizens participated in organizing and holding unauthorized mass events: they grossly violated public order, used violence against law enforcement officers, assisted in extremist activities and committed other illegal acts. The national competent authorities had every possible legal basis to hold these individuals accountable. Therefore, any statements about the immediate removal of charges against all lawbreakers are simply irresponsible.

Further, I wish to emphasize that Belarus is a State governed by the rule of law, in which the generally recognized principle of separation of powers is applied. All individuals mentioned by the ILO supervisory bodies have been subject to thorough investigation and objective judicial decisions. Any changes in these matters are possible only through judicial procedures. Otherwise, we would be talking about administrative interference in the activities of the courts and for us, this is categorically unacceptable.

The next important issue that I wish to clarify, as I am sure that it will be raised in the discussion today, is the measures that the Government of Belarus has taken to implement recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. I think that in the speeches of our opponents we will again hear statements to the effect that nothing has been done in accordance with the recommendations and that there is no visible progress. We categorically disagree with this.

Let me remind you that after studying the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the Government of Belarus informed the ILO Director-General that we would work on their implementation, taking into account, in doing so, the national interests of the Republic of Belarus. In the difficult situation, the Government of Belarus made every effort to return relations with the ILO to their normal state of affairs.

We have never refused to cooperate. We responded positively to proposals from the ILO on organizing work on the recommendations and tried to be as flexible and constructive as possible. As a result, concrete steps were taken in most of the areas outlined in the recommendations and significant results were achieved. In particular, measures have been taken to publish the recommendations in the media, simplify and streamline the procedure for registering trade unions, form the composition of tripartite advisory councils, and work with judges and prosecutors. We also agreed to include a representative of the BKDP in the country's main tripartite body, the National Council on Labour and Social Issues.

At this point, I consider it necessary to clearly outline the position of the Government of Belarus in relation to the BKDP. This organization has never represented any significant trade union force; it has never had anything in common with the real trade union movement of Belarus. The issues of labour, social dialogue and collective bargaining were not within the sphere of interests of the BKDP. Under its banner, a handful of swindlers have united, conveniently occupying their niche for receiving Western financial injections of funds through grants, seminars and trips abroad. Given the pseudo-trade union nature and highly politicized focus of the BKDP's activities, it never had reasonable support among the workers of Belarus and it was not a representative organization.

In a country, where trade unions unite more than 4 million people, the BKDP trade unions had a total of only a few thousand. It is obvious that by no objective criteria could the BKDP claim a place in the national tripartite body – neither in terms of the number of its members nor in terms of the content of its activities. Nonetheless, the ILO strongly recommended to the Government of Belarus to provide the BKDP with the opportunity to participate in the work of the National Council. Let me emphasize that we never had any illusions about the extremist sentiments of the BKDP leaders. However, we counted on the fact that the authority of the ILO

would nevertheless act as a restraining factor on them and would not allow them to cross the line of open anti-state and anti-constitutional actions. But this did not happen.

The events of 2020 revealed the true nature of the BKDP and the trade unions that were part of it. These entities became headquarters for organizing extremist actions. Their leaders and activists grossly violated laws, undertook actions directed against the interests of society and the State.

The illegal actions of the BKDP and its trade unions were confirmed by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus in 2022 in full compliance with the law. That court made decisions to terminate their activities. Today, the BKDP and its entities do not operate in Belarus and do not represent the interests of the country's workers. They are, in legal terms in Belarus, illegitimate. Therefore, we strongly condemn any attempts to involve representatives of this illegitimate organization in the process of dialogue on Belarus.

Any dialogue and any cooperation can be successful only if there is goodwill on both sides.

However, unfortunately, we do not see the slightest sign that the Western countries and the leadership of the Workers' group, who are the main initiators of the anti-Belarusian action in the ILO, are ready to take a more balanced position and listen to the arguments put forward by the Government of Belarus.

On the contrary, they are constantly looking for additional measures of pressure on Belarus. At this moment, our national trade union centre, representing the interests of the country's workers, the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB), has come under attack. A campaign to discredit the Federation as the most representative trade union association and a full-fledged social partner has been launched at the ILO. The ground is being systematically prepared for the adoption of a provocative decision regarding the FPB.

The Credentials Committee has been chosen as the instrument for implementing such provocative actions. Despite the information provided by the Government, which unconditionally confirms the status of the FPB as the most representative organization of workers in Belarus, the Credentials Committee expresses doubts regarding the legitimacy of inclusion of the FPB representatives in the tripartite delegation from Belarus. We express our strong protest against such a discriminatory approach.

The FPB is the largest and only trade union centre in the country. It includes 15 industry trade unions, the total number of which reaches 4 million people. This is 90 per cent of the workers of Belarus.

The FPB is independent in its activities, independent from government bodies. It independently develops and approves its charter, elects governing bodies, and organizes its activities.

The activities of the FPB are not financed or controlled by the Government of Belarus.

We strongly condemn the unfounded statements about the alleged control of the FPB by government bodies and the calls within the ILO to limit its legitimate participation in the work of the Conference.

What is the purpose of the International Trade Union Confederation in sending its unfounded protests to the Credentials Committee? The answer is simple: they want to deprive the workers of Belarus of the right to be represented at the largest annual ILO forum, and deprive the Government of Belarus of the opportunity to form a national tripartite delegation. After all, apart from the FPB, there is no other representative trade union association in Belarus.

I would like to emphasize once again our firm position: there is no reason to question the legitimacy, independence and representative nature of the FPB. The inclusion of

representatives of the FPB, as the most representative organization of workers in the country, within the tripartite delegation of Belarus to participate in the Conference, is carried out in full compliance with the ILO Constitution.

The Government of Belarus strongly demands that all provocative actions in this regard be stopped.

In 2023, the Western countries lobbied for the adoption of a resolution on article 33 of the ILO Constitution regarding Belarus. The authors of the resolution based it on measures that provide for sanctions and discrimination against our country. Two years after the adoption of the resolution, it can be said with complete and full confidence that the resolution has not brought anything positive. Moreover, through the adoption of such resolutions of a sanctioning nature, which turn the ILO into a mechanism for putting pressure on undesirable countries, the very idea of implementing article 33 has been discredited.

And the Belarusian case unconditionally confirms this conclusion.

In Belarus, indicators in the area of freedom of association and social partnership, for instance trade union density, collective bargaining coverage, meet the highest standards reaching 90 per cent. Perhaps only the Scandinavian countries can boast similar figures. Other European countries have much more modest indicators.

Against the backdrop of significant achievements by Belarus in the development of social partnership and tripartism, a logical question arises: How could it happen that a resolution was adopted in relation to Belarus under article 33 of the ILO Constitution, which, as we know, had only been applied once in the history of the ILO prior to our case?

The answer is obvious: the real state of affairs in Belarus could not be the basis for applying such an extreme measure against the country. The real reason is the policy of pressure and sanctions that the Western countries are pursuing against Belarus as

punishment for its independent domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, our position regarding the resolution remains unchanged: it should be repealed as it is unfair and politically motivated.

The policy of unfounded pressure on Belarus, based on false accusations, within the framework of the ILO has been going on for many years now. In this regard, I wish to address the members of the Committee who have a sense of justice and who understand the value of the fundamental principles of the ILO.

Together we can change the situation.

It is necessary at this session of the Conference to take steps in this direction. The unfair conclusions regarding Belarus should be rejected and the ILO supervisory bodies should be called upon to objectively and carefully consider the Government's information, abandoning the policy of double standards and discrimination.

I call on all members of the Committee to take a principled position and to support the Republic of Belarus.

Président – Je vous remercie, honorable vice-ministre. J'invite à présent les deux vice-présidents à faire leurs déclarations.

Je donne la parole à M. Tjalling Postma, vice-président travailleur, pour sa déclaration.

Worker members – This is the second time we are addressing the situation of Belarus within the framework of this special sitting of this Committee, following the 111th International Labour Conference article 33 resolution concerning Belarus. We express gratitude to the Secretariat of the Committee for ensuring that all relevant reports on this matter are readily accessible on the Committee's website.

We will rely on the facts, conclusions and recommendations in the 410th Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association, the discussions and decisions contained in the 349th, 350th, 352nd and 353rd Reports of the Governing Body, as well as the 2024 observations of the Committee of Experts. We will also be happy to know if there is an update regarding the appointment of a special envoy and the setting up of the working group of the ILO and other UN agencies and procedures.

We regret and are deeply concerned that the Government has done nothing to address the concerns raised in the discussion last year and to implement the conclusions adopted. The Government continues to demonstrate a total disregard for this Committee, the ILO and the International Labour Conference. All recommendations and calls by the ILO supervisory bodies and the Governing Body for the implementation of the article 33 measures by Belarus have been consistently ignored. It cannot be the case that the Government of Belarus is right while all the ILO supervisory bodies and the United Nations human rights bodies are wrong. We must recall that this issue has occupied the attention of ILO supervisory bodies for the past 20 years.

As I speak – and as was the case last year – our colleague and ILO Governing Body member, Mr Aliaksandr Yarashuk, remains imprisoned in Mogilev under a strict regime. He is entitled to only one visit and one parcel annually. His health is deteriorating. Mr Aliaksandr Kapshul is another detainee, serving a 15-year sentence for trade union activism and the defence of workers' rights. Ms Volha Brytsikava, leader of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BNP), is also imprisoned. On 28 June 2024, the Ministry of Internal Affairs included her on the "extremist" list by administrative order. In January 2025, the KGB escalated the designation, adding her to the "terrorist" list. The reports of the ILO referenced earlier list many other colleagues imprisoned for their trade union activities. From reports, the conditions of detention of trade unionists amount to torture: overcrowded cells, continuous lighting, lack of hygiene, and no access to warm water.

At this very moment, the unilaterally dissolution of the only independent trade union centre the BKDP remains in force. Their legitimate union activities have been labelled extremist. Forced into exile, the BKDP is now compelled to conduct trade union activities from abroad. Remaining members and workers are subject to intimidation and serious harassment.

Law enforcement and security agencies conduct raids against disloyal workers in private companies. For example, on 14 June 2024, in the Grodno Region, workers at a metalworking company were subjected to anti-extremist operation. Fully armed national security officers stormed the factory floor, forcibly detaining workers and subjected them to harsh treatment. Several of them were arrested and detained without clear charges. Shortly thereafter, a pro-government channel broadcasted confessions from detained workers, who were accused of associating with groups declared so-called extremist.

In July 2024, reports emerged that workers at two private companies producing optomechanical instruments faced routine surveillance, including polygraph tests, phone inspections, and coercive interrogations. Some were detained for days and subsequently dismissed.

In addition to these direct assaults on the independent trade union movement and its members, repressive legislative developments persist. The law on mass activities severely restricts public assemblies, including protests and demonstrations. Amendments to the Criminal Code impose harsher penalties, while the Labour Code remains unamended and non-compliant with ILO Conventions.

With the eradication of independent trade unions, the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) dominates the industrial relations landscape. While the Government and the FPB claim it is the sole legitimate trade union body, numerous reports, including those from the

Governing Body, Credentials Committee, this Committee and the Committee on Freedom of Association, seriously question this independence.

We assert that the FPB is not an independent trade union organization. State authorities, including the President of Belarus, have repeatedly expressed support for the FPB, displaying clear favouritism. The Presidential Decree No. 46 of 2024 on the State Personnel Register of the Republic of Belarus, intended to enhance the efficiency of state bodies, includes the Chairperson of the FPB on the list of state officials. This register covers senior positions in state bodies and affiliated organizations, further underscoring the close relationship between the FPB and the Government.

The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and supervisory bodies are unequivocal: under Conventions Nos 87 and 98, trade union independence means governments must not favour one union while systematically destroying another. It is worth noting that at no moment, since the recent development regarding the destruction of the independent trade unions and imprisonment of their leaders, has the FPB proposed constructive dialogue with the Government as the way forward. The absence of such a call from the FPB speaks volumes about its independence.

The only way forward is for the Government to seek the support of the ILO to address these matters in the context of the article 33 measures in a spirit of dialogue.

Président – Je donne la parole au vice-président employeur, M. Kaizer Moyane, pour sa déclaration liminaire.

Employer members – We have taken note of the oral and written information on this case provided by the Government of Belarus. We know that ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 were both ratified by Belarus in 1956. As a group, we would like to emphasize the importance of Member States' compliance with respect to all ratified Conventions, including Conventions

Nos 87 and 98, which are two of the ten ILO core Conventions. As reflected by both the Government representative and the Workers' group, this case has a long-standing history in the ILO. The Committee of Experts has issued many observations since 1997, and the case has been dealt with in various ILO supervisory structures over the years. We note that the Government transmitted written information regarding the observations and recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies on freedom of association issues and information on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. As the Government representative stated, the discussion of this case in the ILO has become, sadly, routine.

The Employer' members would like to recall that in May 2024, a high-level round table on freedom of association in Belarus organized by the ILO took place, to reflect on how to best to achieve implementation of the ILO resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 111th Session, in 2023. Three UN Special Rapporteurs participated in the round table and reported on it. The ILO Governing Body has also dealt with this case several times. At its session in March 2024, the Governing Body once again urged the Government of Belarus to receive, as a matter of urgency, an ILO tripartite mission with a view to gathering information on the implementation of the recommendations, including a visit to the independent trade union leaders and activists in prison or detention.

In the 2024 conclusions, this Committee urged the Government to, among others, take all possible measures with the greatest urgency to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and all subsequent observations made by the supervisory bodies of the ILO regarding compliance with the Conventions. Furthermore, this Committee urged the Government to accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical

assistance, as necessary, and an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention.

At the Governing Body session in March 2025, a decision concerning the follow-up to the resolution concerning the measures recommended by the Governing Body under article 33 of the Constitution was taken. The Governing Body noted with deep regret that the Government once again provided no new information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and subsequent recommendations of the Committee on Freedom of Association, the Committee of Experts and this Committee. The Governing Body once again requested the Government, with the utmost urgency, to accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical assistance, as necessary, and an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation in the country, including a visit to trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention.

The Committee of Experts made the following key observations on Convention No. 87:

- They noted with deep regret that, since its 2023 report, the Government of Belarus has made no significant changes in law and practice that would affect the application of the Convention and once again merely reiterated the information it had previously provided. Once again, the Government of Belarus reiterated its belief that the Committee misunderstands and misinterprets the situation on the ground.
- The Committee of Experts firmly urged the Government to immediately release all trade union leaders and members arrested for participating in peaceful assemblies or for exercising their civil liberties pursuant to their legitimate trade union activities, and to drop all related charges.

- With reference to the International Labour Conference conclusions and the decision of the Governing Body at its 352nd Session, the Committee requested the Government with the utmost urgency to accept: (i) an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical assistance, as necessary; and (ii) an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention.
- The Committee of Experts also urged the Government to take measures to amend without further delay Decree No. 3 (on receiving and using foreign gratuitous aid), the Law on Mass Activities and the accompanying Regulation, as well as sections 342-2, 369, 369-1 and 369-3 of the Criminal Code providing for restrictions on mass events and associated penalties, to bring them into compliance with the Government's international obligations regarding freedom of association.
- Moreover, the Committee of Experts urged the Government to engage with the ILO with a view to fully implementing all outstanding recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies without further delay. In this respect, the Committee of Experts urged the Government to receive, without further delay, an ILO tripartite mission with a view to assessing the situation, as requested by this Committee.

The Employer' members would like to highlight that in line with Article 2 of Convention No. 87, freedom of association implies and requires that workers and employers must be able to decide freely, without State interference, whether to set up their own organizations. Article 3 of Convention No. 87 recognizes the right to organize as constituting an important aspect of the activities of employers' and workers' organizations. Article 11 – according to that Article, each ILO Member State in which this Convention is in force undertakes that all necessary and

appropriate measures to ensure that workers and employers may exercise freely the right to organize.

We regret that the Government of Belarus continues to forcefully deny the concerns raised by this Committee and other ILO supervisory bodies. We further note that the Government views these concerns, and this process, as a politicized impediment to its legitimate interests to ensure its national security and in operating its judicial system.

To be clear, the Employer members do not wish to impede or interfere in the lawful and legitimate work of any sovereign State. Nevertheless, we share the Committee of Experts' concerns, and we believe it is important to reiterate the Committee of Experts' observation that the Government continues to refuse to share the judicial decisions relating to the imprisoned trade leaders and workers, despite repeated requests. If these individuals were indeed arrested and imprisoned for reasons unrelated to their lawful trade union activities, then the Government should at least be willing to demonstrate that that claim is consistent with their laws.

Taking into account all these developments, the Employer members express grave concern in line with our statements in the various ILO Supervisory bodies. We urge the Government to start engaging in a constructive dialogue with the ILO as a matter of urgency to improve the country's situation regarding freedom of association and the right to organize. The Employer members stand ready to constructively support this process. Also, the national employers of Belarus confirm their commitment to cooperation and interaction.

In conclusion, and based on the observations of the Committee of Experts, the Employer members recommend the Government to:

- (1) Immediately take steps to release trade union leaders and members arrested for participating in peaceful assemblies or for exercising their civil liberties pursuant to their legitimate trade union activities, and to drop all related charges.
- (2) Accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical assistance, as necessary and an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention.
- (3) Take measures to amend, without further delay, the identified legal provisions to bring them into compliance with the Government's international obligations regarding freedom of association.
- (4) Receive without further delay an ILO tripartite mission with a view to assessing the situation and to engage with the ILO with a view to fully implementing all outstanding recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies.

Président – Le prochain orateur sur la liste est le distingué délégué employeur-du Bélarus, M. Anatoly Nichkasov.

Interpretation from Russian: **Employer member, Belarus (Mr NICHKASOV)** –The Confederation of Industry and Enterprise of the Republic of Belarus represents the enterprises and companies of various sectors in our country representing more than 70 per cent of the employers in the country. The Employers of Belarus are deeply concerned about the sanctions imposed on our social partners.

However, we see an unfortunate tendency in the ILO where issues that should be contained in the Workers' group extend to all of the social partners, pushing into the background more relevant topics for employers and business in general, and which are addressed in the agenda of the annual session of the Conference, including this one.

Resolving labour relations issues and ensuring a decent level of life are a stimulus for global peace and stability. In this regard,, multi-level dialogue within the ILO platform is something that is extremely important and that Members of the ILO strive for.

The approach of our Confederation in Belarus, supported by the majority of our members, sees principles such as the development of human potential by creating good conditions for work, continuous staff training and implementing social programmes for workers. Carrying out training programmes and introducing into the workplace professional and training policies increases the level of involvement of work collectives and serves sustainable development, energy and resource efficiency, responsible production and consumption and safety in industry as well as environmental friendliness and many other advantages. This is work that we do in close cooperation with our social partners. Disputes are resolved on the basis of mutually recognized realistic obligations and good faith implementation. Successfully solving socially significant problems in workplace collectives in the country contributes to the formation of a decent reputation for the employer as a responsible partner. Developing the potential of our human resources and the creation of appropriate working conditions for employees are an ongoing priority for us and a matter of constant focus.

The employers of the Republic of Belarus are equal participants in all important discussions and co-authors of the decisions taken on the basis of social partnerships. In many cases, on the basis of responsibility and mutual respect our dialogue has led to the introduction of workplace safety measures and the strengthening of social equity. The employers of Belarus have repeatedly reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to the principles of the ILO.

The ILO's platform is being used as an instrument of political pressure at the moment which contradicts its fundamental principles and the goals of sustainable development, economic growth and technological progress. As we know, sanctions and restrictions have

never, anywhere in the world, contributed to development goals, especially in the area of social and labour relations, which we supposedly “care so much about” at the ILO.

As you know, on 17 March this year at the Governing Body session in this room the Employer spokesperson, Renata Hornung-Draus, indicated that the issue of Belarus in 2004 did remain on the table and cast doubt upon the ILO’s mandate to consider that. We also do.

In conclusion, I wish to assure that the employers of Belarus will abide by our international obligations on the basis of mutual respect and fairness in accordance with the fundamental principles of the ILO.

Président – J’invite le distingué délégué travailleur du Bélarus, M. Yury Senko, à prendre la parole.

Interpretation from Russian: **Worker member, Belarus (Mr SENKO)** – The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) is the legitimate and authorized representative of workers in our country.

With deep regret and disappointment we note the fact that with every year that goes by, consideration of the issue of Belarus in the ILO is becoming ever more absurd and politically motivated. Particular individuals and States are openly involved in distortion of information and playing fast and loose with the facts. All this is done with only one goal, that is strengthening pressure on our country in the service of certain geopolitical interests. We would particularly like to emphasize that all of these unlawful activities merely serve to damage the rights of the workers of Belarus.

I will give you some concrete examples. Firstly, once again we hear unfounded allegations to the effect that in Belarus there is no progress whatsoever on implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that were issued in 2004. This is absolutely not true. The Commission of Inquiry issued 12 recommendations, each and every one of them

has been worked on in detail. For instance, we have significantly streamlined the judicial procedure for the registration of trade unions. We have removed the requirement for at least 10 per cent of workers to be involved in order to create a trade union. The Government of Belarus has repeatedly put forward evidence as to adoption of decisions to give effect to the recommendations. Further, I would like to remind you of the fact that even ILO bodies have officially recognized progress on this issue and have referred to interest and satisfaction in noting the steps taken by the Government of Belarus to give effect to the recommendations. That being so, statements to the effect that in Belarus there is no progress whatsoever on this issue are simply assertions that do not stand up to any criticism.

Secondly, representatives of a number of illegitimate entities with manic stubbornness are asserting that in Belarus, there is no freedom of association or collective bargaining. In that connection, I would like to tell you the following, bearing that this has already been said.

In Belarus, we have 15 sectoral trade unions. Each and every one of them has its own constitution, its own programme of activities, independently establishes its interaction with social partners, including the decisions on tariff agreements. If we look at the sectoral trade unions, we see that more than 25,000 primary trade union organizations are involved and the absolute majority of them have concluded collective agreements. Therefore, at the initiative of trade unions in these local level documents, we see additional guarantees being provided to workers, significant additions to wages, protection from dismissal, additional leave and holidays, various forms of compensation and so on. Further, representatives of the National Trade Union and sectoral centres on a regular basis monitor compliance in practice with labour legislation. Last year, thanks to the trade unions, we were able to identify 44,000 instances where labour legislation had been violated and to deal with those situations. We managed to reinstate scores of workers who had been unfairly dismissed. We also were able to return to

trade unions unpaid monies that they were due. Each of these instances is real help and protection for workers.

Further, on a regular basis, we put forward proposals to improve our legislation and in particular, our representatives are involved in a working group that is working on amendments and additions to the Labour Code and the Code on Occupational Safety and Health. This gives us an opportunity in the discussion to put forward new norms in the interests of workers and to exclude any proposals that might work against the rights of workers and might weaken their guarantees.

I would like to emphasize that the new guarantees that are adopted are not only applied to members of trade unions but to all workers. For instance, thanks to our federation, all workers in Belarus now have additional guarantees in terms of duration of contracts. Also, thanks to our work at a legislative level, we now have additional labour guarantees for young workers and for elderly persons. All of this clearly demonstrates that in Belarus, we do have the necessary conditions for the free operation of trade unions and for the conduct of collective negotiations and bargaining. There is also the fact that the FPB is independent in its work and that it works genuinely to protect the interests of workers.

My third point, and I would like to draw this to the attention of everyone here, allegations are also levelled against Belarus due to the fact that in our country, people are supposed to be held responsible or held accountable simply for taking part in peaceful protests in 2020.

Let me just tell you one very eloquent fact as to what really happened in that time. Under the leadership of particular political forces, internet resources were created where personal data, names, addresses, and so on, of those who were against attempts to violently overthrow the authorities were posted. Supporters of the so-called changes propagated and encouraged calls against these people and their minor children – now literally – “Hang them. Kill them”. And

these are the people who now in the ILO are supposed to be speaking for independent trade unions, people who did this criminal thing. And is this supposed to be trade union work? This is not simply whipping up social division. This is internal terrorism. And these are the kind of threats and pressure that we encounter not only on the internet but elsewhere also. And these have been encountered by representatives of our trade union organization. Why does the ILO not say anything about this? Why are our rights not defended? Why are you ignoring what happened and the fact that the events of 2020 had nothing whatsoever to do with questions of freedom of association, particularly bearing in mind the fact that repeatedly ILO bodies have said that “trade union organizations should not engage in political activities that are abusive or go beyond their core functions, pursuing mainly political interests”.

In conclusion, I would like to make one more important point. For many years we have heard from those who are in favour of coercive measures against Belarus, including within the work of the ILO, that all of this is done supposedly in the interests of the workers of our countries. That is falsehood and cynicism of the highest order.

As a result of unlawful sanctions introduced by Western countries against our country, we have seen a threat to the employment and the income of workers in many enterprises in Belarus. In that situation, the Government, employers and the FPB have done their utmost to guarantee employment and wages for people. At the same time, as illegitimate entities abroad are claiming to be people who are defending the rights of workers, what is actually happening? What is actually happening is that here within the ILO, they are doing their utmost to extend the sanctions. On this instance of discrimination against the rights of workers in our country, we have sent an official complaint to the ILO, but our appeal has simply been ignored. This shows the extremely biased and unjust nature of relations of ILO bodies to Belarus and to our workers.

Colleagues, at the heart of the accusations against Belarus, we find blatant lies and slander. The Federation of Trade Unions, on the basis of real practice of working, has repeatedly put forward facts, figures and data to show that in our country, we do have the necessary conditions for the free and independent operation of trade unions and for collective bargaining. But as we see today, honest, open and the principled stances taken by the FPB are simply something that here in the ILO not everybody likes to hear about.

Once again, under pressure from representatives of a number of Western countries, we are being forced to be quiet so that workers in Belarus, those who are directly involved, those who really see the situation from within, cannot get information to participants in this Conference. This is something that we see in the unlawful decision to deprive our trade unions from votes at this Conference, and we see ridiculous arguments being put forward.

For instance, one accusation that is levelled is to the effect that the Chairperson of the FPB has experience of public service. Well, in that case, I would like to point out that we have similar practice in many trade unions throughout the world. And the very fact that this is happening only emphasizes the fact that in our country, all citizens are equal and all have the right to be elected to trade union office. Therefore, we insist on the fact that the decision under article 33 with regard to Belarus, should be repealed. It is a decision that was taken on the basis of disinformation and the imposition on participants in this Conference of a particular position taken by a number of Western countries. The ILO should not be a tool for underhand politicians. It should return to its initial functions to foster growth and well-being for all people, to defend the right to work and resolve real problems on the labour market.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement de la Pologne, M. l'Ambassadeur Mirosław Broilo, qui prend la parole au nom de l'Union européenne (UE).

Government member, Poland (Mr BROILO) – I have the honour to speak on behalf of the **European Union (EU)** and its **Member States**.

We deeply regret the continued violations and the persistent failure of the authorities of Belarus to comply with their obligations under ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98. Although two years have passed since the adoption of the article 33 resolution, the authorities of Belarus have shown persistent disregard of the guidance, conclusions and recommendations of the 2004 Commission of Inquiry, the supervisory bodies and the Governing Body, and have refused to accept and implement them. Once again, we call on Belarus to take all the necessary measures to meet the obligations it committed itself to as a Member of the ILO and by voluntarily and willingly ratifying ILO fundamental Conventions.

We remain deeply concerned by the gross and deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus, including grave violations of labour rights, especially of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. We strongly condemn the continuing persecution and intimidation campaigns against independent trade unionists, civil society organizations, democratic opposition forces, and all other segments of Belarusian society. We equally strongly condemn new forms of repression against them, such as trials in absentia, expropriation, intimidation of whole families or children being removed from their families. The situation has further worsened since the Belarusian regime's involvement in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

We strongly urge Belarus to receive as a matter of urgency an ILO tripartite mission to gather information on the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and subsequent recommendations of ILO supervisory bodies. This mission must be enabled to visit the independent trade union leaders and activists in prison and detention.

Given the gravity of the situation, the European Union has imposed several rounds of sanctions, the latest on 27 March 2025, in the face of unprecedented level of human rights violations and in the context of the election of January 2025. The EU and its Member States deplore the dissolution of independent trade unions, which undermines the legitimacy of social dialogue institutions. We repeat our call on the authorities of Belarus to abandon their policy of destroying the Belarusian independent trade union movement. We echo the Committee on Freedom of Association's (CFA) request to the authorities to take steps to review the situation of the dissolved trade unions so as to ensure that they may again function.

We deplore that political prisoners remain incarcerated in appalling conditions and express grave concern over the cases of deaths in detention. We urge the authorities to stop the repression and to respect and protect human rights and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and their full and effective rehabilitation, including trade unionists prosecuted for exercising peaceful and legitimate trade union activity. We are deeply concerned about a system of restrictions on the rights of those who have served their sentence, including limited freedom of movement, constant monitoring and frozen bank accounts.

We deplore the climate of state violence, intimidation and fear in Belarus, and the erosion of the rule of law exemplified by the complete lack of impartiality and independence of the judiciary system. We note with concern the observations of a group of independent human rights experts of 22 January 2025 about the growing practice in Belarus of conducting trials in absentia and without basic trial guarantees leading to lengthy prison sentences, deprivation of property and housing or even the death penalty. We echo the CFA's call to implement recommendation No. 8 of the Commission of Inquiry in that regard.

Considering the repeated grave allegations concerning the nomination of the Workers' delegation of Belarus to the Conference, we note with concern the CFA's conclusions concerning strong dependence of FPB upon the Belarusian authorities and increasing State control and interference in the activity of this organization. We closely monitor the Credential Committee's findings and we urge the authorities of Belarus to nominate non-Government delegates and advisers to the Conference in agreement with the most representative, genuine and independent workers' and employers' organizations.

We thank the Office for engaging with other UN human rights bodies to create a working group that coordinates action towards the implementation of the recommendations of the 2004 Commission of Inquiry and other supervisory bodies. We hope that the ILO Special Envoy will be appointed soon, and we encourage further coordinated efforts towards the full implementation of the Conference's resolution. We also urge Belarus to engage with the ILO Special Envoy, once established.

It has been more than 20 years since the Commission of Inquiry published its report and recommendations. Regrettably, they have not been implemented to date. In the last five years, the authorities have ceased meaningful cooperation with the ILO and have consistently reiterated the information already provided. We urge the authorities of Belarus to take concrete measures to give full effect to all the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the subsequent requests of ILO supervisory bodies including to amend without further delay Decree No. 3 on receiving and using foreign gratuitous aid, the Law on Mass Activities, the Criminal Code and the Labour Code to bring them into compliance with the international obligations regarding freedom of association.

We reaffirm our strong support to the application of article 33 of the ILO Constitution and will take measures in line with the resolution of the Conference of 2023 as needed. The EU and

its Member States are committed to working with the ILO and its constituents to secure compliance by the authorities of Belarus with the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations.

Président – J'invite la distinguée représentante du gouvernement du Danemark, M^{me} Kristine Byberg Schmidt, à prendre la parole au nom d'un groupe de pays.

Government member, Denmark (Ms SCHMIDT) – I have the honour to speak on behalf of the following 34 Governments: **Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and my own country, Denmark.**

The Committee is meeting today again to carry out a responsibility entrusted to us in the resolution of the Conference of 2023 concerning the measures under article 33 of the ILO Constitution on Belarus. Two years have passed since the adoption of the resolution, and more than two decades since the Commission of Inquiry issued its report and recommendations to ensure observance by Belarus of the ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98. Yet, regrettably, Belarusian authorities have systematically violated their commitments under the ILO fundamental Conventions, and the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate. This year's report of the Committee of Experts paints yet again a deeply troubling picture of persistent and systemic violations of the ILO fundamental Conventions by the Belarusian authorities. Our Governments note with serious concern that no substantial changes in either legislation or practice have been reported. Instead, despite clear evidence of systematic repression against independent trade unions, their leaders and members, the alarming and deteriorating human rights situation, the systematic shrinking of any civic space, and strong and consistent condemnation from the ILO constituents, the Belarusian authorities maintain

that the situation in the country has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. We are particularly concerned with the continued reports from the BKDP, UN Special Rapporteurs, and others, of mass repression against independent trade unions, criminal action taken against workers and their families for exercising their fundamental labour rights, and the judicial harassment of trade union members, including arrests, prosecution and imprisonment. The Belarusian authorities have deliberately dismantled independent civil society, including depriving workers of the ability to organize and advocate for their rights. We further condemn the growing practice of trials in absentia and without basic fair trial guarantees, and demand an immediate halt to such trials as well as full access to legal representation and transparent judicial proceedings.

The reports of politically motivated actions against independent businesses and their workers in Belarus, including arbitrary inspections, raids, searches, administrative fines or closures, are a matter of our grave concern. We deeply deplore the climate of State violence, intimidation and fear against peacefully protesting workers in Belarus.

We strongly denounce the Belarusian authorities' total disregard for international labour obligations. Belarus must halt the violations of its commitments without further delay and fully implement the guidance, conclusions and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, the supervisory bodies and the Governing Body.

To that end, we demand full transparency of law enforcement proceedings which bear the hallmarks of political cases. All trade union leaders and members arrested for their participation in peaceful industrial actions or protests in line with their legitimate right to freedom of association must be immediately and unconditionally released and all related charges must be dropped. Each instance of intimidation or physical violence must be investigated without delay through an independent judicial inquiry. The dissolved trade unions

must be allowed to function and fully participate in national tripartite bodies. The rule of law must be upheld, a predictable and transparent business environment must be ensured, and all enterprises must be guaranteed the ability to operate free from political interference or retaliation. We urge the Belarusian authorities to accept, with the utmost urgency, an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention, as well as an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists. We call on Belarus to immediately and unconditionally cease its support to Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which severely impacts Ukrainian lives and livelihoods, including workers, employers and their families.

We note with concern the repeated grave allegations regarding the close affiliation between the Belarusian authorities and the FPB, which has not shown to be a free, genuine and independent organization of workers. We urge the authorities to refrain from showing favouritism towards any particular trade union. Considering the need of permanent and continuous monitoring of the situation in Belarus, we encourage the ILO Director-General to appoint a Special Envoy in Belarus as soon as possible. It is also crucial that the Director-General further engages with other UN agencies, special procedures and relevant international bodies with a view to ensuring coordinated and joint action towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the supervisory bodies.

To conclude, we reaffirm our strong support to the application of article 33 of the ILO Constitution and are committed to continuing working with the ILO and its constituents to secure compliance by the authorities of Belarus with the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations. We will continue to support holding a special sitting of this Committee so

long as Belarus has not been shown to have fulfilled its obligations under ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Président – J'invite la distinguée représentante du gouvernement du Canada, M^{me} Élise Hansbury, à prendre la parole au nom d'un groupe d'États Membres.

Government member, Canada (Ms HANSBURY) – I am speaking on behalf of the Governments of **Australia, Japan, New Zealand** the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, and my own country, **Canada**.

We thank the Committee of Experts for their most recent observation about the situation in Belarus. Echoing the Committee of Experts' deep regrets, we strongly deplore that Belarus has indicated that no significant change in law and practice has been implemented since 2023, despite multiple reports on the worsening of the human and labour rights situation in the country and numerous calls from this Organization to fully implement the recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies. Persistent and widespread human and labour rights violations and abuses being perpetuated against workers and trade union and labour leaders for exercising their fundamental rights at work are well documented by the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, UN reporters and others.

We are deeply concerned by reports of more than 50 trade union and labour leaders still under criminal prosecution, that is, are either imprisoned or imposed a penalty of restriction of freedom or are released but not exonerated, the use of the judicial system to persecute trade union and labour leaders, as well as the growing practice of conducting trials in absentia without fair trial guarantees, the criminal sanctions including imprisonment for terms up to ten years for anyone who would associate with free and independent trade unions and the practice of mass detention of workers.

Notwithstanding such overwhelming evidence, the Belarusian authorities continue to systematically deny any violations of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, and maintain that the recommendations of the 2004 Commission of Inquiry have been implemented. For more than 20 years, the authorities of Belarus have repeatedly failed to protect workers' fundamental rights showing a complete and blatant disrespect for the ILO supervisory system at the expense of its workers. Once again, we take the floor to urge the authorities in Belarus to fully comply with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and to accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists to assess their health and offer medical assistance, accept an ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention, release all trade unionists imprisoned or criminalized for exercising their fundamental labour rights immediately and unconditionally, and stop widespread attacks against workers and their leaders, including mass detention and arbitrary dismissals.

We strongly believe that the resolution adopted by the Conference in 2023 resorting to article 33 was the only remaining available option to urge the authorities of Belarus to fully comply with ILO fundamental principles and rights at work, their obligations freely agreed under the ILO Constitution and the findings of the ILO supervisory mechanism.

We reiterate our full support to the ILO supervisory system including for the work of this tripartite Committee which has for over 100 years been able to engage in a constructive dialogue to provide guidance toward the realization of the ILO mission, that is to promote social justice and fundamental principles and rights at work that are essential to achieve a universal and lasting peace.

We urge the authorities of Belarus to respect the ILO supervisory system's expertise and impartiality and integrity and to fully cooperate with the ILO to implement without any further

delay all outstanding recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the ILO supervisory bodies. Finally we encourage all ILO constituents to continue taking all possible measures in accordance with the resolution of the Conference of 2023 with a view to bringing Belarus into compliance with its obligations under the ILO Constitution and Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée déléguée employeuse du Canada, M^{me} Jacqueline Vandermeulen, à prendre la parole.

Employer member, Canada (Ms VANDERMEULEN) – I am speaking as a representative of the Federally Regulated Employers – Transportation and Communications (FETCO), a Canadian employer's association, to express our deep concern regarding reports of the continued violations of the right of social partners to freely associate in Belarus.

The freedom to associate is a cornerstone of the work that we do at the ILO. Conventions Nos 87 and 98 establish the rights of workers and employers, without distinction, to establish and join organizations of their own choosing, free from interference and without prior authorization. These rights are essential for fostering balanced, constructive tripartite dialogue which, in turn, is critical for addressing economic and social challenges. The reported ongoing restrictions and punitive measures against independent organizations and their members in Belarus represent a clear violation of these principles. As an employers' organization, we recognize that the ability of both workers and employers to organize and advocate for their interests is vital for maintaining industrial harmony and advancing mutual interests. We therefore urge the Government of Belarus to align its laws and practices with its international commitments by ensuring that both employers' and workers' organizations can operate freely and without fear of reprisal.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur de la Chine, M. Chuanhua Wu.

Interpretation from Chinese: **Worker member, CHINA (Mr WU)** – We have taken note of the statements made by all sides in this Committee. Our position is consistent. Sanctions are not the goal; truly safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of workers is our shared objective. To this end, we call for all concerns to be duly addressed, for strengthened consultation and dialogue, and for efforts to promote an early resolution of this case.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement du Pakistan, M. Shah Nazar Khan.

Government member, Pakistan (Mr KHAN) – Pakistan acknowledges the commitment of the Government of Belarus to upholding international labour standards and its continued cooperation with the ILO. We believe dialogue and engagement are essential for addressing concerns and promoting labour rights. We take note of the measures undertaken by Belarus to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Commission of Inquiry. We further encourage the exploration of alternative mechanisms to address outstanding issues, rather than proceeding under article 33 of the ILO Constitution. Pakistan underscores the importance of upholding the principles of national sovereignty and advocates for dialogue and cooperation as the preferred means of resolving differences within the ILO framework.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur du Brésil, M. Antônio de Lisboa Amâncio Vale.

Miembro trabajador, Brasil (Sr. AMÂNCIO VALE) - Empiezo mi discurso expresando nuestra profunda preocupación por el reiterado incumplimiento por el Gobierno de Belarús en cuanto a las obligaciones derivadas de los Convenios núms. 87 y 98.

Hace más de dos décadas que acompañamos la inobservancia de las recomendaciones de la comisión de encuesta de la OIT. Y, ahora, somos testigos de la transgresión flagrante del último recurso invocado por la OIT en respuesta a las persistentes violaciones: la aplicación del

artículo 33 de la Constitución de esta Organización. La extinción forzosa de todos los sindicatos independientes en Belarús ha eliminado de hecho la libertad sindical y de las relaciones laborales.

El informe presentado en julio de 2024 por la Relatora Especial sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en Belarús, Anís Marín, ha reforzado nuestra preocupación al poner de manifiesto que «el nivel de compromiso, que nunca ha sido satisfactorio, se ha deteriorado significativamente en los últimos años tras las crisis de derechos humanos que se gestó en el contexto de las elecciones presidenciales de 2020». En lo que respecta a la libertad de asociación, el informe destaca que, en 2022, Belarús reintrodujo el artículo 193-1 en el Código Penal para tipificar como crimen la organización de asociaciones no registradas y la participación en ellas, señalando que, hoy en día, los procedimientos de registro son más restrictivos que nunca.

No puede haber un diálogo social genuino cuando el Gobierno está liquidando todos los sindicatos independientes y encarcelando a sus miembros.

En este contexto, cualquier cifra oficial relacionada con convenios colectivos, conflictos laborales o afiliación sindical no tiene legitimidad jurídica ni democrática porque excluye a una parte significativa de la clase trabajadora al no reconocer los sindicatos independientes. Estos datos no reflejan relaciones laborales libres, sino más bien el resultado de la coerción y la represión.

Quiero llamar la atención especialmente sobre los efectos abusivos de los convenios colectivos celebrados por los sindicatos reconocidos por el Gobierno. En efecto, la negociación colectiva beneficia exclusivamente a las personas afiliadas a los sindicatos progubernamentales, dejando a quienes son independientes sin bonificaciones, seguro médico ni pensiones. Esta práctica discriminatoria se ha institucionalizado desde 2020 a través

de revisiones coordinadas de los convenios colectivos en grandes empresas como la Planta Electrotécnica de Minsk, entre otras.

Tras la liquidación forzosa e ilegal de todos los sindicatos independientes y la imposibilidad *de facto* de crear nuevos, cualquier persona que trabaje y que no se quiera afiliar al sindicato oficial está totalmente excluida del proceso de negociación colectiva; quedando sin representación, voz ni protección.

La comunidad internacional no puede permanecer en silencio ante esta represión sistémica. La erosión de los derechos sindicales en Belarús no es solo una crisis nacional, sino un desafío directo a las normas internacionales del trabajo y a los principios fundamentales de la OIT.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement de Cuba, M^{me} Rebeca Yamile Hernandez Toledano.

Miembro gubernamental, Cuba (Sra. HERNANDEZ TOLEDANO) - Agradecemos al Gobierno de Belarús por la información presentada en el día de hoy.

Se puede apreciar que el Gobierno ha implementado la mayoría de las recomendaciones de la Comisión de Encuesta, y ello confirma la voluntad y los esfuerzos de las autoridades del país para aplicar en la medida de lo posible estas recomendaciones dentro del marco jurídico vigente. Belarús demuestra, una vez más, la voluntad de diálogo respetuoso y cooperación constructiva con la OIT. Cuba saluda esas acciones positivas que deben ser reconocidas por la Organización.

La soberanía y la autodeterminación de los Estados Miembros deben ser siempre respetadas. Es la base para que cualquier Gobierno pueda honrar los compromisos asumidos y avanzar en acciones de cooperación. Es imperativo que los órganos de control de la OIT consideren de forma imparcial, objetiva y con estricto apego a su mandato las informaciones

enviadas por los Gobiernos. Es preocupante que las respuestas enviadas por algunos Gobiernos a los mecanismos de control de la OIT no se evalúen en igualdad de condiciones con las alegaciones de los interlocutores sociales.

La línea divisoria entre los legítimos intereses sindicales y las cuestiones de naturaleza política parecería ser, con demasiada frecuencia, irrelevante para los órganos de control de la OIT. Es necesario y prioritario despejar estos procesos de la selectividad, politización, parcialidad y dobles raseros que lastran el prestigio y la credibilidad de la Organización.

La aplicación de un plan de acción para cualquier país que contenga elementos ajenos al mandato de la OIT no es aceptable para Cuba. Esta Comisión no puede ser un instrumento de coerción contra los Estados. Los principios de imparcialidad y objetividad deben ser siempre respetados. Cuba rechaza y continuará oponiéndose a proyectos de resolución, mandatos o recomendaciones de naturaleza selectiva injerencista y politizada que son inconsistentes con el mandato y propósito de la OIT. Defenderemos de manera consistente los enfoques de cooperación, ayuda constructiva y respetuosa y nos opondremos siempre a enfoques punitivos o de coacción. Los mandatos y mecanismos confrontacionales políticamente motivados que se imponen contra la voluntad de los Estados concernidos como ocurre en el caso de Belarús son inoperantes e ineficientes y están destinados al fracaso.

La OIT y sus órganos de supervisión siguen instando a los Miembros a que informen sobre la adopción de medidas coercitivas contra Belarús. Las medidas coercitivas unilaterales son inaceptables y deben ser eliminadas. Además de ser contrarias al derecho internacional perjudican la capacidad del desarrollo económico, la justicia social, deterioran la situación de los trabajadores y aumentan el desempleo y la pobreza entre los más vulnerables.

Cuba ha defendido, y lo continuará haciendo, que el diálogo tripartito y la búsqueda del consenso son los principios fundamentales e imprescindibles para que la OIT pueda cumplir de manera efectiva con su importante mandato y sus responsabilidades.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement de la République islamique d'Iran, M. Gholamhossein Hosseininia.

Government member, Islamic Republic of Iran (Mr HOSSEININIA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledges Belarus's continued engagement with the ILO and its long-standing membership, having ratified 51 ILO Conventions including fundamental ones. We recognize the constructive efforts outlined by Belarus to address labour matters through its tripartite mechanisms, including the tripartite council for the improvement of legislation in the social and labour sphere. We note Belarus' significant efforts in establishing technical cooperation projects, conducting legislative reforms to strengthening social dialogue, and enhancing trade union rights through joint initiatives with the ILO. We are confident that the ILO will continue to focus on its core mandate in a manner that ensures no perception of politicization emerges regarding Member States' cases including Belarus.

We call upon this Committee to recognize Belarus's legitimate implementation efforts and genuine commitment to international obligations; and to focus on constructive dialogue based on technical cooperation.

We urge the ILO to prioritize technical assistance and constructive cooperation, ensuring that the Organization's actions align with its constitutional mandate and respect the sovereignty of Member States. Only through genuine tripartite dialogue, mutual respect, and adherence to the ILO's fundamental principles can we fulfil our mandate of promoting social justice and decent work for all. The ILO's strength lies in facilitating cooperation and technical expertise. In conclusion, we support continued engagement between Belarus and the ILO,

grounded in mutual respect. We encourage all parties to resolve outstanding issues through constructive dialogue and technical cooperation.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement de l'Azerbaïdjan, M. Yusif Madatov.

Government member, Azerbaijan (Mr MADATOV) – The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan commends efforts of the Government of the Republic of Belarus in the promotion of a consistent policy of raising the income level of the population and providing social guarantees for the most vulnerable groups of people. Information provided by the Government confirms that the Republic of Belarus prioritized the development of social and labour issues in accordance with the generally accepted international standards and Conventions of the ILO. The Government of Belarus demonstrates its readiness to cooperate with the ILO in areas related to the mandate of this organization. For this reason, my delegation will not be able to support the conclusions of the Committee regarding Belarus.

Président – J'invite le distingué délégué travailleur du Danemark, M. Mads Emil Buur Heisel à prendre la parole.

Worker member, Denmark (Mr BUUR HEISEL) – I speak on behalf of the Nordic workers as well as the workers of Spain. Freedom of association and the right to organize is – in many ways – the foundation of a democratic society – a society based on dialogue and with the goal of growth for all its members. It is imperative for freedom as well as for stability and for peace. Unfortunately, in Belarus, and in far too many regimes alike, it is not a freedom for the people but a threat for the Government. If freedom of association were ever to be achieved, the regimes' terrifying and destructive hold over its people would be disrupted. Because of this, the State does not allow genuine unions to exist. If you are a trade union independent from the State – such as Salidarnast or the union for Radio and Electronics Industry workers, the

KGB will label you as an extremist formation. For such unions, the consequences are ultimate – liquidation of the organization and the jailing of the people involved.

From then on, simply liking these unions' social medias, can be deemed a criminal extremist offence and you risk dismissal, arrest and interrogation. Since the year 2020, 22,500 such "extremist offences" have been recorded – simply for union related activity – this is a systematic criminalization of trade union activity meant to keep the people and the labour subservient and afraid. While free trade unionists face systematic oppression, the state-led, so-called "unions" have free tax exemptions aplenty. They are legally allowed to grant discriminatory benefits through faux collective agreements to those who sell their souls, become members and thereby enablers of the State's actions. Let us all remember though, that for the people of Belarus there are no alternatives. Even after article 33 was invoked in 2023, nothing has happened. Belarus has shown no respect for their international obligations. Belarus refuses to change. If Belarus is ever to have true social progress and be a trustworthy state, it must change.

The case of Belarus serves as a reminder for us all that true freedom of association is something that must be fought for, with full solidarity. With Belarus's stranglehold on their people, the international society must keep up the pressure, with every measure available – for social justice, for peace and stability and for our brothers and sisters in Belarus.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement de la République démocratique populaire lao, M. Thiphasone Soukhathammavong.

Government member, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Mr SOUKHATHAMMAVONG) – At the outset, the Lao People's Democratic Republic takes note of the 410th Report on the Freedom of Association, and other documents by this Committee, and sincerely thanks Belarus for the comprehensive updates on the current ILO related cooperation and work in Belarus.

My delegation commends Belarus for the continued efforts in fulfilling its obligations under the ILO related Conventions and mechanisms including implementation of the decisions and recommendations adopted during the Governing Body sessions, this Committee, and other related conferences. In this regard, we would like to recognize ongoing efforts and significant progress made by the Belarusian Government which include: first, the promotion of the full employment of the population; second, the consistent policy of raising the population's income level and providing social guarantees for the most vulnerable categories; third, the Government's engagement with ILO social partners to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry; and fourth, the awareness-raising campaigns on ILO work and initiatives carried out nationwide.

We recognize the importance of tripartite participation in the ILO's work in the decision-making process and consider that tripartite representation must be designated by the country concerned. Regarding the ILO action plan on the appointment of the Special Envoy of ILO's Director-General "to supervise all activities related to ensuring prompt and effective implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry" as well as the ILO action plan on ILO technical assistance, we are of the view that the activities should be based on the request of the concerned country. For that reason, my delegation is not in a position to support the draft decision.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée déléguée travailleuse de l'Allemagne, M^{me} Miriam-Lena Horn.

Worker member, Germany (Ms HORN) – I am speaking on behalf of the German trade unions while Swiss workers align themselves with the statement. I would like to draw your attention to the inhumane and degrading prison conditions faced by political prisoners in Belarus, many of whom are trade union leaders, activists and members. These are people who

have dared to exercise the fundamental right to freedom of association which is enshrined in Convention No. 87. They are now behind bars for doing just that. In Belarusian colonies and prisons, political prisoners are labelled extremists and marked with yellow tags. This marks them as enemies of the State. They are subjected to increased surveillance, restrictions on correspondence, isolation and psychological pressure. They are held in harsh conditions: overcrowded cells, absence of medical care, food shortages, denial of family visits and in some cases solitary confinement. In the detention centres, they are prohibited from taking advantage of educational opportunities and participating in sports and cultural events. Many are forced to work, even in hazardous jobs, for example, dismantling cables containing heavy metals without any protective equipment. This is a direct violation of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and these practices continue.

We have testimonies from former political prisoners who are only released after serving their full sentence. Not only are they forced to work in hazardous conditions, they also work almost without pay, often less than one euro per month. They have absolutely no choice in the tasks that they are given. Let us be clear, this is retribution for political beliefs. It is an instrument to suppress and intimidate trade unions and any dissenting opinion. Female prisoners, including mothers of young children, are also subjected to repression. They have been sentenced to five years or more and throughout this time, they have been denied the right to see their children. This is systematic State-sponsored cruelty against people who dare to speak their minds, yet the Belarusian Government continues to deny the existence of repression.

We call on the ILO and its Members to confirm the findings of the Commission of Inquiry to continue the measures set out in article 33, to demand access for independent monitoring of prisons and colonies, as well as sending a mission of medical personnel to prisons and

colonies, to urge the Belarusian Government to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, and to explicitly name forced labour as instrument of political persecution. This is not just a Belarusian issue. It is a matter of principle for every worker and every trade union in the world. Let our voices in this chamber be louder than the silence imposed on our comrades behind bars.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement de la République bolivarienne du Venezuela, M^{me} Yoliangel Rivas Orta.

Miembro gubernamental, República Bolivariana de Venezuela (Sra. RIVAS ORTA) - El Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela agradece la información proporcionada por el Gobierno de Belarús, la cual da muestra de su compromiso con los principios del diálogo constructivo y el respeto mutuo.

La República Bolivariana de Venezuela reafirma que el diálogo social directo, genuino y sin condiciones dentro de la OIT es la mejor herramienta para fortalecer la cooperación y para alcanzar acuerdos viables y sostenibles. Por el contrario, la presión política mediática o institucional, lejos de lograr objetivos concretos en favor de los trabajadores, propicia el incremento de tensiones, la confrontación y finalmente el desenlace del conflicto. Esto es, en pocas palabras, el fracaso de la diplomacia y la negociación.

En este sentido, cualquier intento de mediatizar la cooperación internacional y la protección de los derechos laborales con propósitos geopolíticos o de agresión a la soberanía e integridad de los Estados debe ser rechazada.

Resulta esencial recordar en esta Organización que toda decisión que afecte a un Estado debe basarse en el espíritu del diálogo social constructivo, fundamentarse en hechos verificables y respetando la independencia y la legalidad interna. En este sentido, alentamos a

todos los involucrados a actuar con objetividad y equidad, contribuyendo a fortalecer los lazos de cooperación y de respeto mutuo.

La República Bolivariana de Venezuela expresa su firme rechazo a la imposición de mecanismos punitivos, los cuales se encuentran fuera del mandato establecido por la OIT y que han evidenciado ser ineficaces. Tales enfoques no corresponden a las funciones ni a los principios de la Organización, y su aplicación resulta inconveniente, además de establecer un precedente peligroso.

Por tanto, reiteramos la importancia de actuar siempre en concordancia con los principios de soberanía, igualdad y no injerencia, haciendo un llamado a la búsqueda de vías de diálogo y cooperación que fortalezcan la paz, la justicia social y el respeto mutuo en nuestro sistema multilateral.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur du Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord, M. Stephen James Russell.

Worker member, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Mr RUSSELL) – I speak for the workers of the United Kingdom. Imagine that by listening to this debate, you were committing a crime. Imagine that just by listening to most of the speeches from the workers' benches today, including this one, whether directly or through the sterling work of our superb interpreters, you were considered to be an extremist, regardless of what you did with the information I am sharing with you. But that is not far from the reality for trade union members in Belarus right now. In today's Belarus, it is not only dangerous to stand up for workers' rights, it is dangerous to even read that you have rights.

In March 2024, a court ruled that the materials, symbols and even the media resources of Solidarnast, a network of independent trade union activists, were "extremist". This was a logical continuation of the repression aimed at completely excluding workers from the free

information space. From that moment on, any interaction with independent trade unions became a crime. For reading union news – just to read it, not necessarily to act on it – to subscribing to an independent telegram channel, liking or forwarding a post, you can be arrested, fired or sent to prison. Sometimes without the right to defence, with a yellow label saying “extremist”. Workers can no longer freely receive information about their rights, about the situation in their workplaces or even the events of this Conference. The only authorized source of information is the pro-government Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. Everything else is illegal.

As we have heard from 2020 to 2024, more than 22,500 so-called “offences of an extremist nature” were registered in the country. This term does not refer to terrorism or violence, but to postings, subscriptions and interviews. People’s smartphones are checked directly at their workplaces – in factories, schools and offices. The Law to “Countering Extremism” has become an instrument of total intimidation. This is not a fight against extremism. This is a fight against the truth. This is a ban on the existence of an independent trade union movement.

In my intervention last year, I talked of how the free exchange of information is at the very core of trade union’s ability to represent the interests of our members, that workers’ rights cannot be achieved without the sharing of knowledge of what such rights are and the coordination of activities to defend them. Huge amounts of trade union time and resource goes into communicating with members, with an increasing array of digital tools deployed to bring those members into the decision-making of our unions as well as to make sure they know the law and practice of our labour rights: as democratic organizations, this is fundamental.

But today in Belarus, the right to freedom itself, freedom of information itself is under attack and with it, the right to freedom of association, of expression and the basic dignity of working people. As internationalists, we defend the rights of our sister centre trade unionists

just as we do our own, in the knowledge that to allow the abuse of rights somewhere, is to risk it happening anywhere. We will not allow this terrible situation to be considered normal and therefore call on all concerned to protect the right of Belarusian workers to be informed, to express themselves and to organize in independent, democratic and communicative trade unions.

Président – La prochaine oratrice sur la liste est la distinguée déléguée travailleuse du Japon, M^{me} Akiko Gono.

Worker member, Japan (Ms GONO) – Belarusian trade union activists are continuing to face harsh repression by the regime – both inside the country and in exile. Below are two of the most alarming and high-profile cases of the repression.

Leanid Sudalenka, a trade union lawyer and human rights defender, served three years in a Belarusian penal colony under Article 342 of the Criminal Code of Belarus ("organization and financing on protest"). He was released on 21 July, 2023, but due to ongoing political repression, was forced to emigrate. From abroad, Leanid continued to inform the international community about the situation in Belarus, including the inhumane conditions in Belarusian prisons. As a result, on 1 November 2023, a new criminal case was opened against him. He was declared wanted not only in Belarus but also in the Russian Federation. On 17 June 2024, he was sentenced in absentia to five years in a high-security prison for repeated offences, along with a fine of approximately €8,000. On 1 March, 2025, Belarusian security forces once again raided Leanid's home. They also stormed the home of his 87-year-old mother, searching for Leanid. As a result, the elderly woman suffered a heart attack and required urgent medical care. This represents not only the continued persecution of Leanid himself, but also targeted psychological pressure on his family.

Maksim Pazniakou, acting President of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), was forced to flee Belarus in 2022 after serving one month of administrative detention and facing continued threats of persecution. From abroad, he has continued his work with BKDP and has kept the ILO informed about the situation in Belarus. He regularly speaks at ILO platforms, including sessions of the Governing Body and the Conference. For his active stance, a criminal case was opened against him in December 2024, and he was declared wanted in both Belarus and the Russian Federation. Police have repeatedly visited the home of his 75-year-old mother, conducting searches and interrogations. Other family members have also been subjected to pressure and questioning.

We call on the international community to: strictly uphold the principle of non-refoulement – the non-return of Belarusian trade unionists and human rights defenders to a country where they face serious risk of persecution; ensure appropriate protection for the activists as well as for their family members; provide support for their legal status and facilitate access to residency and documentation in their host countries.

Today, international solidarity is urgently needed to protect those who continue to fight for workers' rights under dictatorship.

Président – Avant de continuer la liste des orateurs, je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du Bélarus pour un point d'ordre.

Interpretation from Russian: **Government representative (Ms BELSKAYA)** – I would like to request that attention be given to the way in which some speakers are describing a sovereign country in the words that they are using. I would invite you to cut off those who use unacceptable language within the framework of the international system of the ILO.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement du Kazakhstan, M. Ilyas Akhmetov.

Government member, Kazakhstan (Mr AKHMETOV) – Kazakhstan acknowledges the long-standing engagement of Belarus with the ILO, its expressed commitment to social and labour standards, and efforts to foster a tripartite partnership system. We also note the Government of Belarus's information on the steps taken to implement the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, as well as its openness to dialogue with social partners and the ILO, evidenced by past cooperation with ILO missions and technical projects. Regarding the conclusions by ILO supervisory bodies on the importance of the full implementation of Conventions Nos 87 and 98, we believe it is key to enhance constructive engagement between the Government and the ILO to address these matters in a collaborative manner.

Président – J'invite la distinguée déléguée travailleuse de la Pologne, M^{me} Ewa Kedzior, à prendre la parole.

Worker member, Poland (Ms KEDZIOR) – Two years ago, at the 111th Session of the Conference, we took the extraordinary step of invoking article 33 of the ILO Constitution in response to the grave and persistent violations of freedom of association in Belarus. Today, we must state clearly, the Belarusian authorities continue to ignore the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, as well as their obligations under Conventions Nos 87 and 98. The clearest example of this repression is the case of Aliaksandr Yarashuk – President of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, Vice-President of the ITUC, and a long-standing member of the ILO Governing Body. He was arrested on 19 April 2022 during coordinated raids against independent unions and, in December of that year, sentenced to four years of prison for so-called “calls for restrictive measures” – in reality, for his public criticism of the Lukashenko regime, including at this very Organization. But Yarashuk is not alone. In January 2023, Hennadz Fiadynich and Vatslau Areshka were sentenced for the same reason to nine and eight years of penal colony, respectively. In total, at least 27 independent union leaders and activists were sentenced right now for their activity, and more than 70

individuals are recognized as political prisoners connected to the trade union movement. Any criticism of the Government or State enterprises is criminalized and punished. We must therefore echo the question that has just been asked by the workers speaker of the United Kingdom. Will everyone who speaks at this special sitting – or at other ILO or international events – will have to fear arrest and imprisonment in Belarus, simply for defending freedom of association and criticizing authoritarian rule. Supporting freedom of association in Belarus is our duty, we must not fail.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement du Liban, M. Hazem Abdel Samad.

Government member, Lebanon (Mr ABDEL SAMAD) – Lebanon takes note of the report presented by the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, highlighting the significant progress made by the Government in implementing several recommendations and obligations arising from the ILO Conventions, particularly Convention No. 87 and Convention No. 98.

In a constructive spirit, we encourage the Government of Belarus to continue aligning domestic legislation and policy frameworks with the provisions of these two Conventions. In this regard, continuous commitment to inclusive dialogue with social partners and the ILO, is key for overcoming all the challenges. We firmly believe that fostering well-balanced mechanisms for the involvement of the tripartite partners in shaping and implementing social, economic, and labour-related policies highly contributes to reinforcing trust and positively impacts the work environment.

In conclusion, we wish the Republic of Belarus prosperity and a successful cooperation with the ILO.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant des travailleurs de la France, M. Tristan Chevalier.

Membre travailleur, France (M. CHEVALIER) – Je m'exprime au nom de l'ensemble des travailleurs français et belges.

En 2025, l'Indice CSI des droits et libertés syndicales dans le monde classe de nouveau le Bélarus parmi les dix pires pays pour les travailleurs. Les violations systématiques des libertés syndicales prennent racine dans la répression brutale de la grève des travailleurs des transports publics en 1995. Trois décennies plus tard, le paysage syndical est dévasté, et les syndicats indépendants anéantis.

Privés de la liberté fondamentale de s'associer pour défendre leurs droits, les travailleurs sont exposés à l'arbitraire des autorités publiques. Aujourd'hui, les répressions contre les travailleurs biélorusses ne cessent de s'amplifier.

Au sein de toutes les entreprises publiques et des administrations du pays, on trouve un service en charge de l'idéologie pour contrôler le degré de loyauté des travailleurs envers l'État. Ces structures sont intégrées à la direction et au service des ressources humaines. Les travailleurs soupçonnés de déloyauté politique sont forcés à faire amende honorable ou sont licenciés.

Les rafles de la police et des services de sécurité sur les lieux de travail sont fréquentes et se déroulent dans des entreprises publiques, privées ou à capitaux étrangers. Ce sont les agents en armes, habituellement chargés de lutter contre les criminels de droit commun, qui procèdent à ces arrestations. Les travailleurs peuvent être visés s'ils sont abonnés à des chaînes d'information indépendantes, s'ils mettent un «j'aime» sous une publication sur les réseaux sociaux, s'ils apparaissent sur des photos des manifestations de 2020, s'ils font des dons à des initiatives de la société civile, s'ils soutiennent des militants des droits humains ou s'ils soutiennent la famille d'un prisonnier politique. Oui, il y a des répressions et de l'intimidation sur les lieux de travail.

L'ensemble des travailleurs du pays est soumis à des relations de travail coercitives. Le contrat à durée déterminée, que seul l'employeur peut modifier ou rompre unilatéralement, est la règle. Les travailleurs sont maintenus dans la peur de perdre leur emploi.

Dans une grande entreprise publique fabriquant des engrais azotés, les détecteurs de mensonges sont utilisés de manière systématique, tant pour décider du renouvellement des contrats de travail que pour le processus d'embauche. Il existe également des preuves que l'utilisation de polygraphes est pratiquée dans d'autres entreprises d'État. De plus, les candidats à une embauche sont tenus de fournir des recommandations de leur ancien employeur. La loyauté est un facteur clé dans les décisions d'embauche. Il existe des listes non officielles de citoyens «déloyaux» qui se voient refuser un emploi.

L'impasse dans laquelle se trouve le système de travail au Bélarus démontre que les libertés syndicales sont une pierre angulaire de la démocratie, indispensables à la défense des droits fondamentaux des travailleurs.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement de la Fédération de Russie, M. Anton Markovskii.

Interpretation from Russian: **Government member, Russian Federation**

(Mr MARKOVSKII) – We share entirely the views expressed by the representative of the Government of Belarus in their assessment of this special sitting. We have to note that over the last year there has been zero constructive movement from the ILO to the Belarusian question. Once again, we would note the blatant politicized character of the resolution of the 111th Session of the Conference on the use of article 33, and we have a similar view of the assessment and decisions on the Belarusian question regularly taken by the Governing Body. We would once again draw attention to the fact that at all stages the Government of Belarus has shown a constructive approach to dialogue with the ILO. The Government has

implemented the vast majority of the 12 recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry of 2004 and is also taking a number of measures in law and in practice to protect workers' rights, strengthen social dialogue, liberalize the registration and regulation of trade union organizations, et cetera.

However, these steps are being ignored by the supervisory mechanisms of the ILO when it comes to considering the Belarusian questions in favour of a small group of countries and other interested parties who want to bring political pressure to bear on Minsk. It is telling that the substantial share of accusations against Minsk which are unfounded relate to alleged persecution of trade union activists. Once again, allow me to emphasize that these individuals have been tried by courts and found guilty of serious crimes.

In full accordance with the legislation of Belarus, we will not tire of pointing out that the fact that one belongs to a political movement – and the so-called independent trade unions of Belarus are political movements which have nothing to do with protecting workers' rights – does not give individuals a free pass, and demands for quashing or giving retrials to such individuals constitutes interference in internal affairs of the State and secondly go well beyond the ILO mandate.

Allow me to conclude with a slightly rhetorical question. What are the results, after two years of a campaign of sanctions waged against Belarus, one element of which is today's special meeting? The answer is simple - none, if you do not include discreditation, isolation and discrimination against Belarus and worsening of the situation of Belarusian workers and enterprise. We do not understand how these measures can be supported by supposedly right-thinking States. We call on those present to educate themselves on the facts on the ground. The Russian Federation fully rejects any measures against the Republic of Belarus which can

be adopted at the conclusion of this special sitting. We would be compelled to call for a vote on any such decisions being considered by the Committee.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée déléguée travailleuse du Canada, M^{me} Jocelyne Dubois.

Worker member, Canada (Ms DUBOIS) – Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Canadian Labour Congress and workers in Canada. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the most representative trade union federation in the United States of America, also joins this statement.

In Belarus, the release of political prisoners does not mean restoration of rights or rehabilitation. On the contrary, systemic persecution continues even after prison. Former detainees remain under so-called “preventative supervision,” which restricts their movement, prohibits attendance at public events, and obliges them to report to the police weekly. In some cases, they cannot even leave their place of residence without special permission. All of them are included on official lists of “extremists” – and in some cases, even “terrorists.” This is not just a label, it has serious consequences: frozen bank accounts, bans on employment, exclusion from education, and widespread fear and stigma.

Trade union activists released from prison are still unable to return to their professional life. Their diplomas, employment records, pension, and healthcare rights are often inaccessible. Social stigma and pressure from law enforcement persist.

We must stress that this is not about isolated incidents, but about a policy of continued punishment beyond prison walls. It is a form of control, intimidation, and exclusion, without trial, without appeal, and without the right to forget. We call on the ILO and its Member States to: reaffirm the need for full legal and social rehabilitation of all trade union activists who have suffered repression; recognize the practice of “preventative supervision” and extremist

labelling as a form of administrative persecution; continue to demand not only the release, but the full restoration of rights for everyone punished for their trade union or civic engagement. Without rehabilitation, there is no freedom. Without restoration of rights, there is no justice.

Président – J’invite le distingué représentant du gouvernement de l’Algérie, M. Bilal Bouchebout à prendre la parole.

Membre gouvernemental, Algérie (M. BOUCHEBOUT) – Nous avons écouté avec une grande attention la déclaration du gouvernement du Bélarus, durant laquelle il a été indiqué qu’il accorde toute l’attention voulue aux observations et recommandations des organes de contrôle de l’OIT.

La délégation algérienne salue les mesures significatives prises par le gouvernement du Bélarus. Nous avons le sentiment que la situation est positive, notamment avec les facilitations décidées pour l’enregistrement des organisations syndicales, les mesures prévues nécessaires à la protection des droits syndicaux et la lutte contre toute forme de discrimination antisyndicale.

L’Algérie encourage le gouvernement du Bélarus à poursuivre ses efforts et sa collaboration technique avec le Bureau.

C’est pourquoi mon pays prône vivement le maintien d’un dialogue ouvert entre le Bélarus et les organes compétents de l’OIT afin d’aboutir à une compréhension mutuelle et à la résolution des préoccupations exprimées, dans un esprit de collaboration et de respect mutuel.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée déléguée travailleuse de l’Afrique du Sud, M^{me} Zingiswa Losi.

Worker member, South Africa (Ms LOSI) – Delegates and colleagues, I deliver the statement on behalf of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to express our deep concern at the continuing systematic violation of trade union rights in Belarus, particularly the arbitrary detention and punitive treatment of independent unionists.

Since 2020, Belarusian authorities have pursued a deliberate strategy to dismantle independent trade unions. Today, at least 27 trade unionists remain in prison on politically motivated charges, including Alexander Yaroshuk, President of the BKDP. The conditions of these unionists have worsened. Mr Yaroshuk has been transferred to a high security prison, and he is now denied visitation and severely restricted in his communications. Alarming, detained union leaders are now being labelled as “terrorists” under domestic law, blocking material support and threatening their survival in detention. The case of lawyer and unionist, Ales Bialiatski, further highlights this repression.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recently declared his detention arbitrary and unlawful. His forced transfer from Russia and 15-year sentence mirrors this wider pattern of abuse. This campaign now targets not only prominent leaders but also local activists. They face harsher prison regimes, total denial of visits and reprisals against any expression of solidarity. What we are witnessing is not isolated abuse. It is a systematic attempt to extinguish the right to independent association in Belarus. We call upon the ILO to intensify scrutiny and mobilize all available mechanisms to protect Belarusian workers, unionists and their institutions.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement de la Chine, M^{me} Qionghui Huang.

Interpretation from Chinese: **Government member, China (Ms HUANG)** – We thank the Government representative of Belarus for the introduction.

The Government of Belarus has taken practical measures to simplify union registration procedures, conduct international labour standards training and create a favourable environment for social partners to exercise their legal rights freely. The unemployment rate in Belarus has decreased and the social security system improved. These should be recognized and valued by this Committee.

The Government of Belarus values the fulfilment of its obligations, addressed the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry and maintains constructive dialogue and cooperation with the social partners and the ILO. Out of the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry, most have been implemented. This reflects their efforts and active stance. We appreciate that China's position on the case of Belarus is consistent. As a specialized UN agency, the ILO adheres to the belief that social justice is the foundation for lasting peace. To achieve this, the ILO should adhere to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation on the basis of respect of sovereignty of Member States, rather than confrontation and division. We should be vigilant against some countries and forces that politicize labour issues, use this to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and serve their geopolitical purposes, which will damage the credibility of the ILO. Article 33 of the Constitution is the most severe measure of the ILO and the refusal of Member States to accept recommendations is the prerequisite. We firmly oppose the arbitrary expansion and misuse of such measure, and oppose sanctions against countries that are serious about fulfilment. Sanctions have already and will continue to impact economic and social aspects of the country and infringe on the rights of workers and employees, which is not in line with the mandate of the ILO.

Equality before the law is a basic principle of the rule of law and no one should have privileges beyond the law. Illegal acts should be punished according to the law.

We urge this Committee and ILO tripartite constituents to respect the sovereignty of Belarus, look at the social and labour situation comprehensively, listen to their introduction and commitments, review their information fairly and equally and evaluate the situation in a realistic manner to avoid the misuse of such resolution which brings the case of Belarus indefinitely listed in our discussion. We encourage the Office to communicate and exchange in depth with the Government of Belarus to provide more technical support, help the Government to better implement Conventions, protect rights and interests of workers and employers, and promote economic and social development of the country.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur des Philippines, M. Jose Sonny Matula.

Worker member, Philippines (Mr MATULA) – ‘Today, I rise to speak for those who cannot, for the brave members of the BKDP, dissolved by the Belarusian authorities along with every single independent union under its wings. Since 2022, the regime in Belarus has done the unthinkable, it has erased independent trade unionism. Offices locked, assets seized, and unionists thrown behind bars. Their “crime”? Daring to stand up for workers. Some are now serving sentences of 7, 9, even 15 years, not for violence, not for corruption, but for trade union work. This is not merely a breach of Convention No. 87. This is the total annihilation of freedom of association. Today in Belarus: Forming or registering an independent union? Impossible. Conducting union activity? Prosecuted. Workers pressured to join state-run “zombie” unions that speak for no one but the regime. Hundreds of activists have lost their jobs, many languish in prison, and others live in exile or under constant watch, knowing a knock on the door can come any day.

We thank the ILO for invoking article 33, a rare and necessary step, and for the Commission of Inquiry’s findings. Yet the Belarusian regime continues to shrug it all off,

pretending no repression exists. Our message today is clear and unwavering: recognize that freedom of association in Belarus lies in ruins; demand the immediate, unconditional release of jailed unionists; reject any puppet “workers’ representatives” created by the authorities; maintain unrelenting pressure until genuine, independent unions can rise again. Let us not kid ourselves: this is not some “internal matter”. If union rights can be crushed in one country with impunity, then the entire global house of labour is on shaky ground. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Président – Je tiens à vous informer que, vu le grand nombre d’orateurs inscrits sur la liste, nous allons continuer la discussion, si nécessaire, au-delà de 13 heures.

J’invite la distinguée déléguée, M^{me} Zar Aung Khaing, qui prend la parole au nom des travailleurs du Myanmar.

Observer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (Ms KHAING) – I address you today not only as a representative of **workers** from **Myanmar**, but also as someone who shares the same painful reality as the workers in Belarus.

This year, our country, Myanmar, like Belarus before it, was placed under the article 33 procedure of the ILO Constitution. This is a historic and rare measure, but for us it is not just a legal procedure. It is the recognition of a shameful and intolerable truth: fundamental labour rights are being violated in our countries. In Myanmar, labour activists continue to be arrested, tortured and even killed. Our people face forced labour, violent mobilization and daily terror. We have no freedom of speech, no right to organize, not even the right to live in dignity. And yet the workers are resisting.

The situation in Belarus is just as grim. Today, independent trade unions are banned and their leaders are behind bars. Thousands have been forced to flee the country or remain silent. Trade union organizations have been classified as “extremist” not because they use violence,

but because they give workers a voice and defend their interests, not those of the ruling elite. In both countries, the dictators fear the same thing: organized workers who know their rights and are not afraid to fight for them. This is why government terror against its own people has become commonplace in Belarus and Myanmar. The article 33 process is not a solution to the problem, nor is it the end, but only the beginning of real action. Let us prove together that this is not a formal procedure, but something that violators of international norms should fear.

Support – morally and politically – the free trade union movement in Belarus, both within the country and in exile. Workers pay the highest price every day. Do not leave them to fight this battle alone.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant du gouvernement du Zimbabwe, M. Clemence Zondile Vusani.

Government member, Zimbabwe (Mr VUSANI) – The discussion in the special sitting on Belarus has been on the table for quite a long time in the ILO. The Government of Zimbabwe has followed the discussions and takes note of the submissions by the Republic of Belarus. In particular, we welcome the clarity provided on the intention of their legislative amendments and implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. Belarus continues to demonstrate commitment towards fulfilling its obligations on ratified Conventions and continues to submit progress reports to the ILO.

We also take note of Belarus's submission concerning the FPB as an autonomous and bona fide trade union and all the other issues that have been said about trade unions in that country. Zimbabwe reiterates that social dialogue is a critical ingredient to fostering sustainable economic and social development and promoting decent work. Hence, the Belarusian Government should allow the unions to find each other in an appropriate and

progressive manner that allows for peaceful co-existence and the development of their country.

Zimbabwe is however very concerned on the continued use of illegal unilateral coercive measures, which continue to be compounded by the negative impact of regional geo-political tensions. These continue to militate against Belarus' ability to deliver on its mandate to promote and protect the rights of its workers and employers. Unilateral coercive measures impact the full enjoyment of labour rights.

In the same vein, it is our considered view that the ILO supervisory structures should remain objective, neutral and aim to promote constructive dialogue without pursuing political agendas that hinder the participation of Belarus as a Member State of the ILO. It is of concern to expect Belarus to deliver on its mandate of promoting decent work and social justice in the world of work in an environment that does not promote the same.

We therefore call upon this Committee in its conclusions to consider resumption of ILO cooperation with Belarusian tripartite partners on a pragmatic, non-political basis to allow constructive social dialogue.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur du Maroc, M. Younes Firachine.

Membre travailleur, Maroc (M. FIRACHINE) – Nous sommes gravement préoccupés par la dégradation rapide des conditions de santé et de sécurité auxquelles sont confrontés les syndicalistes emprisonnés en Biélorussie.

Les conditions dans les centres de détention biélorusses sont inhumaines. Les prisons sont gravement surpeuplées, mal ventilées et manquent d'un accès à une nutrition adéquate et à de l'eau potable.

Les personnes atteintes de maladies chroniques sont souvent laissées sans soins essentiels, ce qui met leur vie en danger immédiat. Il existe des restrictions importantes sur le transfert de médicaments aux prisonniers par leurs proches.

Nous voulons attirer l'attention sur la situation humanitaire urgente et critique de deux syndicalistes en particulier:

- M. Vatslau Areshka, âgé de 70 ans, militant de longue date du Syndicat biélorusse des travailleurs de la radio et de l'électronique (REP) et rédacteur de son journal, a été condamné à huit ans de prison en 2023. Depuis son emprisonnement, la santé de M. Areshka s'est détériorée de façon alarmante. Il est aujourd'hui presque aveugle et a presque perdu la capacité de marcher – conséquence directe des conditions carcérales sévères et du refus d'une assistance médicale.
- M. Hennadz Fiadynich, âgé de 67 ans, vice-président du REP, a été condamné à neuf ans de prison en 2023. Il souffre de graves maladies cardiaques et de diabète, et ne possède qu'un seul rein. Malgré ces conditions médicales mettant sa vie en danger, il est lui aussi détenu sous des restrictions de sécurité renforcées et ne reçoit pas les soins médicaux dont il a urgemment besoin.

Les deux hommes sont détenus dans des conditions qui équivalent à une exécution à petit feu. Nous appelons urgemment la communauté internationale à agir.

Nous exhortons l'OIT, les gouvernements, les travailleurs et les employeurs à utiliser tous les mécanismes disponibles pour exiger que le gouvernement biélorusse sauve ces syndicalistes.

Nous exigeons en outre que le gouvernement biélorusse se conforme à la demande de l'OIT de permettre un accès immédiat et sans entrave à des soins médicaux indépendants pour

tous les syndicalistes détenus, et appelons à la libération inconditionnelle de toutes les personnes emprisonnées pour leurs activités syndicales pacifiques.

Leur santé – et leur vie – ne peuvent pas attendre. Ils meurent pour la liberté syndicale, pour nous tous, aujourd'hui.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement du Turkménistan, M^{me} Muhammedova Selbi.

Interpretation from Russian: **Government member, Turkmenistan (Ms SELBI MUHAMMEDOVA)** – Turkmenistan welcomes the Distinguished Delegation of the Republic of Belarus and expresses its gratitude for the detailed information provided on the current situation relating to the implementations of Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

I would like to take this opportunity to share our positive experience of cooperation with the ILO. In particular, this applies to the adoption of the successive road maps between the Government of Turkmenistan and the ILO. In particular, this includes the conduct of review missions, the stepping up of tripartite interaction and coordinated work on the reform of labour legislation. Complementing this cooperation, Turkmenistan is also developing partnerships with the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) which is contributing to broadening the participation of national social partners and strengthening the capacity for social dialogue in the country.

It should be noted that the case of Turkmenistan has been repeatedly examined within the ILO's supervisory mechanisms including in the Committee.

In this regard, it was precisely the constructive dialogue, mutual respect for respective positions and the rejection of pressure that became the key factors in achieving positive results. This approach has strengthened trust and opened the way to practical cooperation. This is an experience that demonstrates just how productive cooperation between a State and

the Organization can be. It shows how the ILO can support states in implementing recommendations and how governments can demonstrate their willingness for open and responsible cooperation.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Belarus in ensuring full employment, occupational safety, the creation of decent working conditions and the observance of fundamental rights. Turkmenistan reaffirms its readiness to share its positive practices in order to contribute to effective and results oriented dialogue.

In conclusion, we wish the Government of Belarus a successful discussion.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur de l'Italie, M. Giuseppe Iuliano.

Worker member, Italy (Mr IULIANO) – I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Italian Trade Union Confederation (CISL) and I would like to inform this Committee that our organization has always been very committed to the legitimate BKDP, bewildered by the detention of 27 trade union leaders and more than 1,400 activists and exponents of democratic civil society in Belarus. There is no one better than the present international trade union community to say who is the true, autonomous, legitimate and representative trade union organization in Belarus. Finally, let me say that we are close and in solidarity with the "diaspora" of Belarusian citizens who have found refuge in our country to avoid imprisonment and repression of every democratic right.

We are profoundly convinced that article 33 must be applied because we observe an entire society under checkmate in Belarus. There is neither the slightest element of legal certainty nor the slightest respect for social dialogue, so the future of the country is uncertain. There is no official recognition of the elections of the current Government, which is also involved in supporting the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine.

The pressure on the Government must be high and authoritative. We have seen the analysis published on the repression of businesses in Belarus. We would like to point out that in Italy, we have asked both the Government and the employers' organizations to share these concerns, these analyses, and to work together to intervene with every means of international pressure to change the situation and restore democracy.

On the other hand, we are monitoring our country's companies operating on Belarusian territory and we have also asked the organizations of Italian employers to exert pressure so that these companies leave the country and do not become accomplices to the brutal system of repression of every right and every democratic principle.

In the light of what is happening in Belarus, we are convinced that in all countries, social actors, employers and workers must play an important role together in isolating the Belarusian Government and reaffirming fundamental workers' rights and principles this organization, the ILO, is based upon reaffirming.

As Italian trade unions, we strongly support the call for Belarus to receive an ILO mission and to demonstrate how, in light of the current repression of workers and employers, it is complying with its obligations under Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Belarus is an overwhelming example of the importance of the role of this Committee and its authoritative role in enforcing Article 33 and sanctioning the Belarusian Government.

Président – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement de la France, M^{me} Catherine Bobko.

Membre gouvernementale, France (M^{me} BOBKO) – La France s'associe à la déclaration de l'Union européenne et à celle d'un groupe d'affinitaires, lue par le Danemark.

La France est particulièrement préoccupée par la persistance des manquements dans la mise en œuvre des conventions fondamentales n^{os} 87 et 98 par le gouvernement du Bélarus. Cette absence de progrès est documentée par les observations de la commission d'experts, du Comité de la liberté syndicale, de cette commission, mais également des rapporteurs spéciaux des Nations Unies et de syndicalistes en exil. Tous ceux qui ont participé à l'événement parallèle coorganisé par les représentations permanentes de Pologne, d'Allemagne, des Pays-Bas et de France, le 4 juin dernier, l'ont également entendu de vive voix par des victimes et observateurs de premier plan de la situation.

Plus précisément, les observations du rapport de la commission d'experts, qui servent de base à nos discussions aujourd'hui, sont particulièrement désolantes: le gouvernement biélorusse a reconnu de lui-même que, depuis son rapport de 2023, il n'y a eu aucun changement notable qui aurait des répercussions sur l'application de la convention n^o 87.

Pourtant, comme l'a noté la commission d'experts, les violations de la liberté syndicale et des libertés publiques se sont aggravées. À l'heure où nous parlons, des dirigeants syndicaux et des syndicalistes sont détenus dans des conditions dramatiques. Si les autorités persistent à affirmer que leurs peines d'emprisonnement punissent des actes illégaux, aucune copie des décisions judiciaires les concernant n'a été produite, en dépit de demandes expresses et répétées. La publicité des décisions de justice est pourtant au cœur du droit à un procès équitable, dont l'absence contribue à entretenir un climat d'insécurité et de peur qui peut affecter l'exercice des droits syndicaux.

De même, aucun des six points soulevés par la commission d'enquête en 2004 n'enregistre le moindre progrès, alors qu'ils renvoient aux fondements même de la liberté syndicale.

C'est pourquoi nous exhortons les autorités du Bélarus à s'engager, avec l'aide de l'OIT, à adopter toute mesure garantissant le droit à un procès équitable, comme l'indépendance et l'impartialité des enquêtes sur les allégations contre les représentants syndicaux, mais également les droits de créer des organisations de travailleurs, de manifester, de faire grève, de consulter des organisations de travailleurs et d'employeurs réellement représentatives.

Il en va du respect des engagements pris par le Bélarus en adhérant à l'OIT, qui implique de reconnaître tant la légitimité de son mécanisme de supervision que la nécessité de se conformer aux obligations découlant de la ratification de ses conventions.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué délégué travailleur de l'Ukraine, M. Vasy Andreyev.

Worker member, Ukraine (Mr ANDREYEV) – On behalf of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU), I make this intervention to the Special sitting on Belarus.

In July 2022, the Supreme Court of Belarus ordered the dissolution of the BKDP and its affiliated organizations: the BNP (established in 1991), the Union of Radio and Electronics Workers (REP, with a 34-year history), the Free Trade Union of Belarus (SPB, established in 1991), and the Free Trade Union of Metalworkers (SPM, established in 1995). Concurrently, the Government designated the REP as "extremist organization", effectively outlawing union activities after arresting of independent trade unions leaders and activists earlier in the year and declaring them as "extremists".

Between March and August 2023, the Supreme Court of Belarus dismissed three supervisory complaints filed by independent trade unions, challenging the July 2022 liquidation decisions. As a result, the forced dissolution of these trade unions rendered them incapable of legally appealing the decisions.

Ongoing repression has created a climate of fear, discouraging workers from forming new independent trade unions. The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus, Anaïs Marin, highlighted during the high-level roundtable of 2024 and in her Report from 9 May 2024, that in 2022, enterprises without trade unions were instructed by the Government to establish them. In such an environment, existing and newly created organizations under the legal name “unions” remain under state control and lack independence. Consequently, the FPB ‘cannot be considered as an independent representative body of workers. The new Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus reiterates the recommendations made in the reports of his predecessor, Anaïs Marin.

Given the current circumstances, where workers are systematically denied the right to freely establish and join trade unions of their choice, and in the absence of effective legal protections for freedom of association, it is imperative that the ILO take urgent action. The ILO must promptly implement its action plan and develop further measures in line with the resolution adopted by the Governing Body under article 33 of the ILO Constitution concerning the situation in Belarus.

*Interprétation de l'arabe: **Président*** – Je donne la parole à la distinguée représentante du gouvernement de l'Égypte, M^{me} Dina Mahmoud Abdeltawab.

*Interprétation de l'arabe: **Membre gouvernementale, Égypte (M^{me} ABDELTAWAB)*** – Nous sommes donc face à cette situation au Bélarus. Nous avons étudié tous les rapports qui ont été présentés par l'OIT. Nous avons lu les documents envoyés par le gouvernement du Bélarus concernant l'application des résolutions approuvées précédemment par l'OIT et par le Conseil d'administration.

Nous souhaitons insister sur le fait qu'il est absolument nécessaire que tous les pays respectent leurs obligations. Il faut redoubler d'efforts pour ce qui est de l'application des

normes internationales. Par ailleurs le BIT doit aider ces pays à les appliquer, de façon à améliorer ces conventions. C'est son devoir en tant qu'agence des Nations Unies s'occupant des sujets de l'emploi et dans le cadre de sa mission tripartite.

La délégation de l'Égypte appelle à continuer le dialogue positif entre les deux parties afin de pouvoir appliquer les recommandations de la commission d'enquête et l'exécution de toutes les conventions, notamment la convention n° 87 et la convention (n° 144) sur les consultations tripartites relatives aux normes internationales du travail, 1976.

*Interprétation de l'arabe: **Président*** – Je donnerai la parole à titre exceptionnel à M. Ahmed Mohammed Hamad, distingué représentant du gouvernement du Soudan. Je vous rappelle qu'il est important de s'inscrire sur la liste des orateurs par avance.

*Interprétation de l'arabe: **Membre gouvernemental, Soudan (M. HAMAD)*** – Nous avons entendu les propos du gouvernement du Bélarus et nous approuvons ce qui a été dit.

Nous pensons que les sanctions ne servent à rien. Elles ne font que politiser le travail de l'Organisation. Nous croyons que le devoir de cette Organisation est d'apporter une aide technique dans le cadre d'un dialogue et d'une coopération positive afin d'arriver aux meilleurs résultats possibles.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant de l'Union internationale des travailleurs de l'alimentation, de l'agriculture, de l'hôtellerie-restauration, du tabac et des branches connexes (IUF), M Kirill Buketov.

Observer, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) (Mr BUKETOV) – This year marks a quarter of a century since the first violations of trade union rights in Belarus were reported to the ILO. It began with government interference in union affairs, pressure on delegates and elected union leaders, and targeted attacks on local unions and their representatives.

Year after year, this pressure intensified and ultimately led to mass arrests. Independent unions in Belarus have been dismantled, their offices raided, and their leaders imprisoned – including Aliaksander Yarashuk, a member of the ILO Governing Body. He is no longer able to address this Committee and to respond to the Government— an absence that contradicts the spirit of this forum as a high-level platform for social dialogue. His absence is actually self-speaking on the situation in the country.

There was hope that the application of article 33 of the ILO Constitution would help resolve the deadlock. However, even this measure has failed to prompt the Belarusian Government to reverse its repressive policies toward freedom of association.

For years, ILO supervisory bodies have documented persistent and systematic violations of trade union rights in Belarus. We have heard government statements, reviewed expert reports, issued conclusions, and adopted recommendations.

For years, the case of Belarus has become emblematic – not only of a blatant refusal to uphold the ILO's fundamental principles, but also of a prolonged delay in restoring justice.

This delay puts the credibility of the ILO at stake. When violations are this grave and extensively documented, an endless circle of observations is not enough.

We deeply regret to observe again the unchanged position of the Belarusian Government and call on the ILO to take meaningful and decisive action, including further development of the enforcement mechanisms in line with article 33, to ensure the compliance of Belarus with the fundamental ILO Conventions.

Again, we also urge the Government of Belarus to immediately release Aliaksander Yarashuk and all detained trade unionists, and to fully restore the right to freedom of association – as it is obliged to do under Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

Président – J'invite le distingué délégué représentant de IndustriALL, M. Kemal Ozkan, à prendre la parole.

Observer, IndustriALL Global Union (Mr OZKAN) – Dear participants, I am speaking here on behalf of 50 million members of IndustriALL Global Union.

Although we have had many sessions on Belarus in this house like the one that we are doing today, the repression and criminalization of democratic unionism in the country continue in an alarming degree and all free and democratic unions, the national centres, the BKDP and industrial affiliates, such as PMB, BNP and REP, were dissolved through so-called judiciary process over groundless arguments.

As there is no separation of powers in the country, there is no fair trial and rule of law, and it is obvious that the dissolution of trade unions was made in line with the political decisions. It is not us making the matter politicized, as claimed; the Government itself does it by putting forward political arguments against the concrete violations of fundamental workers' rights.

In addition to dismantling organized labour, the Government continues to carry out relentless persecution of union members and activists, and many leaders of our affiliates have been imprisoned on politically motivated charges, demonstrating a blatant disregard for fundamental rights and freedoms.

Today, even here at this meeting, we heard direct blatant accusations against our fellow trade union comrades, which we strongly condemn and refute. Our imprisoned comrades love their country much more than those accusing them, even during the session. Trade unionism is not a crime but putting genuine trade unionists in prison, preventing them to perform their duties, constitutes the real crime. Bad health conditions, psychological pressure and various kinds of mistreatment have been reported.

We wish to call attention to the unjust imprisonment of Henadz Fiadynich and Vatslau Areshka, leaders of IndustriALL affiliate REP, sentenced to 9 and 8 years, respectively. Both are suffering deteriorating health. In addition, at least five female trade union leaders and activists remain imprisoned in Belarus under brutal and inhuman conditions, sentenced to between two and 11 years for their peaceful protests.

Among them is Volha Brytsikava, Chairperson of Belarusian Independent Trade Union of Miners and Chemical Workers, affiliated with IndustriALL, who was targeted for her anti-war stance and relentless commitment to defending workers' rights.

Following repeated arrests and highly politicized trials, she was sentenced to five years in prison. Her whereabouts unknown. Her case, along with those of Hanna Ablab, Hanna Karneyenka and Alena Nazarava, highlight the regime's ruthless crackdown on independent trade unions. These women have endured relentless abuse, including solitary confinement in freezing cells, prolonged isolation from their children and systematic torture for the slightest acts of defiance.

The Belarusian Government must immediately end this cruel treatment, abolish forced labour in correctional institutions, and remove all obstacles to freedom of association, allowing workers to form and join unions without fear of persecution.

Président – Je donne la parole au distingué représentant de la Confédération syndicale internationale (CSI), M. Maksim Pazniakou.

Interpretation from Russian: **Observer, International Trade Union Confederation, (ITUC)**
(Mr PAZNIAKOU) – I am the acting as the Chairperson of the BKDP. I am addressing you on behalf of workers who right now are under the yoke of repression in Belarus.

In 2022, the authorities in Belarus by force put an end to the BKDP and all of its organizations and since then workers in Belarus have been deprived of their right freely to create independent organizations or to enter them.

Today workers are obliged to be part of a state organization which calls itself the Federation of Belarusian trade unions and they have to do that in order to avoid repression, to keep their jobs, to have the possibility of feeding their families.

All of this is confirmed by the special rapporteur on human rights in Belarus, the group of independent experts of the UN, as well as international human rights and Belarusian organizations.

Two years ago, a resolution was adopted referring to the application of article 33 with reference to Belarus for violation of the right to freedom of association and non-compliance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry.

However, the Government of Belarus has continued to ignore the recommendations of the Commission, this Committee's conclusions and decisions by the Governing Body and the Conference. The Government of Belarus is jeopardizing the whole supervisory system, accusing the ILO of partiality and going beyond its mandate. It is clearly an issue that Belarus is politicizing in order to avoid discussion of repression and violation of freedom of association.

This is an absolutely not a constructive position. It is not acceptable. Despite the unfounded accusations levelled against us by the Government, we once again call on the Government of Belarus to refrain from this dead end approach of opposition and confrontation and begin not with words, but with deeds, to comply with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The ILO is a unique organization. It can and should become a platform for serious and fair dialogue on Belarus's exit from the socio-political crisis and international isolation. The

voluntary release of all trade union leaders and activists without exception from detention by the Belarusian authorities and recognition of the mandate of the Special Envoy of the Director-General could be the start of such a dialogue.

Président – Je ne vois pas d'autres orateurs inscrits dans la liste.

Avant de redonner la parole au gouvernement du Bélarus, le bureau souhaite fournir une réponse à la question posée par le groupe des travailleurs et j'invite la représentante du Secrétaire général, M^{me} Corinne Vargha, à fournir cette réponse.

Representative of the Secretary-General (Ms VARGHA, Director of the International Labour Standards Department) – In the initial statement of the Worker Vice-Chairperson, there was a question to the Office about the follow-up to the November 2024 Governing Body decision in respect of two issues, the first one being the Special Envoy, and the second one being the establishment of a working group between the ILO and other UN institutions to improve coordination and impact of our action.

in respect of the Special Envoy, I am pleased to inform you that at the next session of the ILO Governing Body on 14 June, straight after the Conference, there will be formal notification for approval by the Governing Body of the appointment of the Special Envoy. The Director-General was able to identify a person who has his full trust in the ability to engage constructively with the Government of Belarus. So for those interested and who would be attending, the reference to the Governing Body paper is GB354/INS/11. It should be up early next week.

In respect of the question concerning the establishment of a Working Group of the ILO and other UN institutions, to coordinate and bolster joint action, I am also pleased to report that while we had good coordination but not in any institutional manner, we have now

established formally a Joint Working Group between the ILO and the Office of the High Commissioner to precisely follow up on the Governing Body decision.

Président – J'ai donc l'honneur de redonner la parole à l'honorable représentant du gouvernement du Bélarus, M. Ilhar Staravoïtau, vice-ministre du Travail et de la Protection sociale, à prendre la parole pour ses observations finales.

Interpretation from Russian: Government representative (Mr STARAVOITAU) – Chairperson, I thank you for this opportunity to take the floor once again in order to outline the position of the Government of Belarus on the issues raised.

First and foremost, I wish to express heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in the discussion and supported Belarus. Distinguished friends, your bold and honest position on the issue of Belarus is clear evidence of the fact that there are healthy forces within the ILO, and they are numerous, who are ready despite pressure and threats to defend the fundamental principles in the work of this Organization to fight for justice and to ensure that we can abolish any practice of double standards.

Now, as for those who have spoken against Belarus, here the first thing I would like to note: all of these statements are based on only one source, information that has come from representatives of the former BKDP and this is something that no longer exists. It no longer operates because of its anti-constitutional and extremist actions. People who were part of this are now abroad and therefore they are being funded by Western countries who have an unfriendly policy towards Belarus.

Supervisory bodies of the ILO receive information from this source and consider it to be a reliable source as to information of what is going on in Belarus and that is extremely naive and more to the point it is very harmful and counterproductive.

After all, it is clear to everyone that representatives of the BKDP are quite ready to fabricate any kind of complaint, accusations, anything because in fact their strings are being pulled by representatives of the EU and they do that because they want to receive Western money. The information therefore is simply falsehood, and it is playing fast and loose with the facts. It is fabrication and this means that we end up with the Committee of Experts making absurd allegations about an atmosphere of violence and fear within Belarus.

Anyone who has been to Belarus could certainly tell you it is a place where you have peace and security that reigns and you can feel that wherever you go in our country. You feel friendship, you feel hospitality and that in fact is something that has always been noted by the ILO experts when they have come to visit.

Today we have heard what our opponents have said. They have tried to call into question the colossal amount of work done by the Government of Belarus with its social partners in seeking to give effect to the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry, and here I note that detailed information about implementation of those recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry has already been repeatedly submitted to the supervisory bodies of the ILO.

Belarus has indeed done serious work and as a result of that work, most of the recommendations and there were 12 of them have indeed been implemented. Ten of the 12 have been fully implemented and the other 2 have also been implemented to the extent that they do not run counter to the national interests of Belarus. All of this has been done in close cooperation with the ILO including on the basis of joint plans of action and joint work programmes. All of the programmes have been commended by the relevant supervisory bodies of the ILO.

So let me be absolutely clear, if we think back in 2009, here it was noted that indeed there had been progress within Belarus in terms of giving effect to the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry and we also had a direct contact mission that came to Minsk in 2014 and that also commended the work of the tripartite bodies and social partnership within our country.

As a result of its work, we prepared a proposal for a whole package of measures that would take us forward in further improving the way that we work with our social partners, developing our collective bargaining process, and also mechanisms for resolving labour disputes. All of these proposals were worked out by the Government with its social partners and the ILO and they were all successful.

Then in 2015, to implement recommendation two, we made changes to our legislation by abolishing the requirement for at least a 10 per cent threshold to establish a trade union and at that time we did that it was noted in the Committee of Experts' report with interest.

All of these positive steps were taken by the Government of Belarus and all of this meant that in 2017 for the first time Belarus was not included in the shortlist of the Committee and consideration of issues relating to Convention No. 87 was in fact simply put within the regular reporting cycle.

Clearly these changes in the approach to considering the issue of Belarus within the platform would not have been possible unless serious steps forward had been taken by the Government and unless there had been a positive view of those steps from the supervisory bodies.

Sadly, following the political events of 2020, what happened was that the relationship between Belarus and the ILO was virtually frozen and that was not our wish. Repeatedly we

have referred to the situation and to what happened after the Presidential Elections in 2020. I do not think I need to go through all the details of that again.

I just wish once again to emphasize that all of the action taken by the Belarusian authorities were intended to keep constitutional order in the country, to guarantee security and to protect the lives of our citizens. The ILO standards in that process were not violated.

The Republic of Belarus is a fully-fledged Member of the ILO. We regularly pay our contributions. We send for participation a tripartite delegation. Despite all of the efforts taken to discriminate against us we now find ourselves in a situation where we are not getting any expert help from this Organization, any expert assistance.

In fact, we now see the resolution on article 33 adopted at the 111th Session of the Conference two years ago is the most obvious and discriminatory decision against Belarus.

The Western countries who were behind that in fact could not say that there had been any instance where we had failed to cooperate. However, they simply now wanted no longer to cooperate with us but just to introduce restrictions and freeze the way in which we work together.

We have to recognize that the resolution is one of the most unsuccessful and erroneous documents ever adopted in the whole history of this Organization. The policy of isolation, a blockade on possible cooperation, Unilateral Coercive Sanctions (UCMs) sanctions, all of this simply is a dead end. Ultimately it will only undermine the authority of the ILO and the fundamental principles and rights on which this Organization is based. We believe that the discriminatory resolution adopted under article 33 must be immediately repealed.

Despite the fact that cooperation between the ILO and Belarus is de facto frozen at present, there is still a potential, an opportunity for such cooperation. The system of social partnership within our country does work and function in a normal and proper way. Regularly

we have meetings of our National Council on labour and social issues and at that Council we discuss the most important issues relating to the socioeconomic development of our country.

In January this year we had a meeting of this National Council when we signed a new general agreement involving the Government and employers and workers organizations for 2025–27.

As regards some direct issues that relate to the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, here we have created a National tripartite Council. At this Council, together with the experts from the ILO, we crafted approaches that will allow us to improve the way in which collectively we resolve issues. Unfortunately, we have not been able to conclude the work we were doing on tariff and local agreements, but we stand ready to renew our cooperation in that respect also.

In recent years we have seen that opponents of Belarus within the ILO have succeeded in having politicized decisions that are unfairly taken against Belarus and our people. The ILO is a very special organization, which focus on a very unique and constructive form of interaction. The ILO has to be in favour of dialogue and cooperation. That is what it stands for.

We in Belarus, for our part, are interested in finding points of convergence and moving forward in terms of constructive dialogue with the ILO in the interests of Belarusian society and our people. If that is to happen, then the ILO bodies must be interested in playing fairly. They must recognize the realities of the world in which we live today and listen to what we are saying, as well as take into account our own national interests. We will not allow anyone to interfere in our internal affairs under any pretext.

Having any kind of policy that is against the stable development of Belarus, well-being and welfare of our people is something we will not accept. We want to have agreement within our society. We want to have an unshakable respect for our State and its independence and

sovereignty, and we will not accept anything else. Anti-Belarus activity in the ILO and decisions lead to a dead end. And repeal of those decisions, a move away from the unfair discriminatory policy pursued against Belarus is something that could be the start of rebuilding trust and confidence and moving towards joint work in the interests of the progressive development of all spheres of industry in our country. We call all tripartite constituents to recognize that, to do that and we also call upon the supervisory bodies. We are open for free dialogue on an equal footing.

Président – Je vous remercie, Monsieur le vice-ministre ainsi que votre délégation pour votre participation aux travaux de la commission et pour toutes les informations apportées à la commission.

Je donne la parole à présent au vice-président employeur, M. Kaizer Moyane, pour sa déclaration finale.

Employer members – We would like to thank all of the various speakers who took the floor to share their interventions and the information that was provided which we have taken note of. We reiterate that ILO Conventions Nos 87 and 98 are fundamental Conventions which means they require the special consideration of Governments, workers and employers.

The Employer members stress once again, that we strongly condemn non-compliance with Conventions Nos 87 and 98 when they have been ratified. These Conventions contain critical guarantees for both workers and employers in respect of freedom of association and the right to organize. We urge the Government to start engaging, or if the Government believes engagements are happening, to continue engaging in a constructive dialogue with the ILO with no further delay, to improve the situation as regards freedom of association and the right to organize. The Employer members stand ready to constructively support this process.

To conclude, given the obvious divergent understanding regarding progress on the concerns raised by the various ILO supervisory bodies, we are confined to once again recommend the Government to:

- Immediately take steps to release trade union leaders and members arrested for participating in peaceful Assemblies or for exercising their civil liberties pursuant to their legitimate trade union activities and to drop all related charges.
- Accept an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent doctors can visit all imprisoned trade unionists and the ILO tripartite mission to assess the situation and visit trade unionists that are currently in prison or detention.
- Take measures to amend without further delay several legal provisions in order to bring them in line with Conventions Nos 87 and 98.
- Receive without further delay an ILO tripartite mission with a view to assessing the situation and to engage with the ILO with a view to implementing the recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies.

Président – Je donne la parole au vice-président travailleur, M. Tjalling Postma, pour sa déclaration finale.

Worker members – We thank all those who have taken the floor in this important and very lively discussion. At the same time we are deeply concerned as we saw some officer of FPB recording our colleague, Maksim Pazniakou, a representative of the ITUC when speaking. This is against the rules and we assume that the Office is going to take action on that. We know the person who was recording and we are ready to cooperate with the Office for follow-up.

The situation of the Belarus workers, both those inside the country and those forced into exile remains deeply concerning with respect to the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining as guaranteed under Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

In spite of the resolution adopted by the International Labor Conference at its 111th Session calling for compliance with these Conventions and the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry there has been no progress at all. The interventions today affirm the ongoing destruction of trade union independence in Belarus.

The Government of Belarus maintains the same position it has held since 2004, claiming full compliance despite overwhelming and consistent evidence including from the ILO's own supervisory bodies to the contrary.

We heard from colleagues that even the Independent Trade Union Center operating from exile, the BKTB, has been designated an extremist and terrorist organization. Its leadership continues to be targeted by the authorities.

A particularly alarming development is the regulation we heard about last year which allows for the forced removal of children from families where a parent is convicted of an offense linked to the so-called extremist activities. As was said by my colleague who took the floor, the Acting Chairperson of BKTB, Mr Maksim Pazniakou now faces charges that include facilitating extremist activities. His family, therefore, is under serious threat. We believe Maksim Pazniakou is being harassed solely due to his trade union activities.

Chairperson, we must emphasize that the body of evidence from the ILO supervisory mechanisms and the UN human rights system indicates clearly that the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB), is state controlled. This view is supported by the conclusions of the credentials committee of both the 2023 and 2024 international labour conferences. A resolution adopted by the European Parliament earlier this year stated unequivocally that the

Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus has long been embedded in the Lukashenko regime's government structure.

Let us recall paragraph 599 of the Commission of Inquiry report which states: "the commission received a great deal of evidence in Minsk and during formal hearings in Geneva as to how government managers and directors have interfered in the free functioning of trade union organizations over a number of years." So as you can see, we are where we started and it is evident that no progress has been made.

Just days ago a group of UN independent experts expressed serious concern over the continued violations of freedom of association in Belarus. They called on the Government to fully cooperate with the office of the high commissioner for human rights, UN human rights mechanisms and the ILO and its supervisory bodies in order to uphold the rights of independent trade unionists. Their message was unequivocal: "Belarus must end the repression of independent trade unionists who are also recognized as human rights offenders. The country must immediately release all trade union leaders and members imprisoned for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association and repeal laws and policies that obstruct the operations of independent trade unions."

We echo this message. Immediately release all trade union leaders and members who are imprisoned for their trade union activities.

As we also heard during the discussion today, the Government continues to pressure private enterprises to establish FPB-affiliated unions. This blatant interference violates both Convention No. 87 and Convention No. 98. It must be emphasized that the deterioration of respect for these obligations harms not only workers. It also creates a climate of fear and instability for employers, damaging the broader social and economic fabric of the country.

We, therefore, strongly urge the Government of Belarus to:

- Accept the tripartite mission to assess the current situation and meet with the trade unionists affected by repression including those still imprisoned.
- Immediately allow an international humanitarian mission to ensure that independent medical profession can visit detained trade unionists and assess their health.
- Without delay, implement in law and practice the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry and the ILO supervisory bodies.
- Immediately cease interference in the formation and functioning of trade unions, particularly the practice of forcing the establishment of FPB-affiliated unions in private companies.
- Refrain from threatening employers with liquidation if they do not establish pro-government trade unions and publicly affirm that the decision to establish or not establish a trade union lies solely with workers and employers they work for.
- Amend all legislation that restricts the exercise of freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and other civil liberties to bring it into full compliance with the Conventions Nos 87 and 98.

We also want to see the full implementation of the non-refinement provision in the resolution as well as all other steps adopted by the Governing body and urge all Member States of the ILO to take their responsibility in this regard.

As a final point, we have just heard from the FPB that they are independent in their work. What the Convention expects is that they are independent in their decision making and in controlling their own structures. And this is clearly not the case.

Finally, we call on the Government of Belarus to engage constructively with the ILO so that by the next session of this Committee we may finally see progress toward the full restoration of fundamental workers' rights in Belarus.

Président – Distingués délégués, je me permets de vous rappeler qu'il est strictement interdit de filmer ou de tweeter pendant les discussions.

Et j'informe le groupe des travailleurs que le bureau fera le suivi concernant votre demande à cet égard.

Nous avons maintenant terminé la discussion sur ce cas. Les conclusions seront adoptées dans la matinée de jeudi 12 juin.

Miembro gubernamental, Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia (Sra. MACDONAL) – La miembro gubernamental del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, no habiendo podido inscribirse en la lista de oradores dentro de los plazos, informó a la Secretaría de la Comisión que su país se suma a la declaración dada por la miembro gubernamental de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela.

Président – J'invite les deux vice-présidents à s'approcher du podium.

Distingués délégués, je vous informe que, vu le grand nombre d'orateurs inscrits pour la discussion des deux cas de cet après-midi, la commission a décidé de commencer la discussion de ces deux cas à 14 h 30 pour finir à 18 h 30.

J'ai le plaisir de vous confirmer que nous avons terminé nos travaux pour ce matin et je vous souhaite un excellent appétit. Le bureau vous informe que le restaurant est toujours ouvert. Je tiens aussi à remercier les interprètes pour leur collaboration pendant cette séance.

La séance est levée à 13 h 25.

The sitting closed at 1.25 p.m.

Se levantó la sesión a las 13.25 horas.

DRAFT