

## Committee on the Application of Standards

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## Commission de l'application des normes

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## Comisión de Aplicación de Normas

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### Sri Lanka (ratification: 2000)

[Convention \(n° 138\) sur l'âge minimum, 1973](#)[Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#)[Convenio sobre la edad mínima, 1973 \(núm. 138\)](#)

### Written information provided by the Government

The Government has provided the following written information, as well as statistics on the nature of violations and penalties applied relating to the employment of children, and statistics on the school enrolment and dropout rates among children under the age of 16.

The Government extends its appreciation to the Committee of Experts for its expression of satisfaction regarding the increase in the minimum age of admission to employment to 16 years. The Government remains fully committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that every child is protected from the risks of child labour.

Further, Sri Lanka joined Alliance 8.7 in 2018 and has been an active member of the forum since then. The country submitted its action plan on child labour, forced labour, and trafficking-in-persons at the 18th Global Coordination Group (GCG) meeting in April 2024, demonstrating its commitment.

Sri Lanka has a strong legal and administrative system to prevent child labour. Presently, the minimum age for employment is 16, and no child under that age can be employed. This is in line with the national education policy. In 2021, the list of hazardous types of work was expanded from 51 to 71 to protect young children.

The Department of Labour has taken many innovative initiatives to eliminate child labour completely from Sri Lanka. One such activity is engaging with grassroots communities and local organizations to raise awareness about child labour. With the support of the Community Police, the Department of Labour has started awareness campaigns and capacity building at community level. These are progressing well, and we hope this will help us to achieve our target.

The Department of Labour maintains a comprehensive regional office network that spans the entire island, enabling effective inspection and monitoring activities across all districts. This widespread presence allows labour inspectors to respond promptly to complaints and conduct regular inspections, even in rural areas. Moreover, Labour Inspectors possess a strong subject knowledge and received a specialized training on child labour issues, which enhances their ability to identify and address child labour issues in the informal sector. As a result of these institutional strengths and ongoing enforcement efforts, Sri Lanka is in a relatively strong position in the region to eliminate child labour.

The grass-root level civil society awareness on social responsibility towards the elimination of child labour has been initiated in collaboration with the Community Police Division of the Sri Lanka Police by the Department of Labour. The pilot programme has been conducted covering the Colombo District in 2024. Accordingly, four divisional Officers In-Charge (OIC) of Police Station and Community Police OICs of each Police Station in Colombo District were given a special training on the 20th of August 2025. Then community police advisory committees had been convened by each community police OICs and 587 community level leaders and religious priests had been convened. Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of the Department of Labour participated as resource persons in those awareness programmes. In parallel to this programme, trainings were provided to police OICs officers engaging in community police divisions and officials from the Department of Labour (Labour Inspectors) on the elimination of child labour. Details of the programmes are as follows. In these programmes, 244 officers participated.

A training of trainers (ToT) programme was also conducted in 2025 to create a pool of trainers from labour inspectors to conduct awareness programmes island-wide to promote social dialogue and to eliminate child labour. In this programme 63 officers were trained.

The Complaint Management System of the Department of Labour has a separate field for lodging complaints on child labour occurrences. Even anonymous complaints are investigated and the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) has been introduced with a separate access for complaints received via the 1929 child help line.

Sri Lanka has already managed to bring the prevalence of all forms of child labour to a minor level. As per the Child Activity Survey 2016, the percentage of child labour was 1 per cent. A study on child labour in Colombo District has been done recently (2024) by the Statistics Division of the Department of Labour with a sample of 1000 households to identify the risk and prevalence of child labour. As per the study, only 0.3 per cent reported as children engaged in economic activities which is less than the statistics of the 2016 Child Activity Survey.

## Discussion by the Committee

**Président** – Nous allons commencer l'examen du cas concernant le Sri Lanka et l'application de la convention (n° 138) sur l'âge minimum, 1973. J'ai l'honneur d'inviter l'honorable représentant du gouvernement de Sri Lanka, Monsieur le Secrétaire adjoint principal au ministère du Travail, à présenter ses remarques initiales.

**Government representative** – On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I wish to express our deep and firm commitment in protecting children and the elimination of all forms of child labour. The rights, safety and well-being of children remain a national priority for Sri Lanka. In the meantime, we value the observations made by the Committee of Experts and appreciate their constructive inputs in supporting our continued efforts to protect every child in our country.

Relating to the Convention, the principle is clear: to effectively abolish child labour and progressively raise the minimum age for employment. The Government of Sri Lanka has taken measures accordingly. The minimum age for employment in Sri Lanka is 16, whereas in a few countries it is still 14 or 15, the minimum age is in line with national education policy.

In Sri Lanka, several government institutions such as the Department of Labour, the National Child Protection Authority, the Ministry of Women and Children, the Women and Children Bureau of the Police, trade unions and Employer organizations and civil society organizations are working collectively to protect the rights of children.

We follow a whole of government and whole of society approach to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded. The mechanism is connected effectively horizontally and vertically.

Further, Sri Lanka is surprised to note its inclusion in the final list despite the Committee of Experts expressing satisfaction with the progress made on the Convention. Sri Lanka has been successful in reducing child labour and this inclusion in the list undermines the country's efforts to eliminate child labour. In addition, we have a regular national tripartite forum and neither trade unions nor employers have recently raised this issue in the national discussions.

Sri Lanka prohibits young persons aged between 16 and 18 from engaging in hazardous jobs, thereby offering greater protection. Seventy-one jobs have been identified as harmful for young persons including domestic work, construction and fisheries.

This revision aims to prevent young persons from engaging in dangerous works that pose risk to their health, safety and well-being. By harmonizing these laws, Sri Lanka has enforced restriction on child labour across all sectors including prohibiting employment of those under 18 in hazardous settings.

Sri Lanka also has a robust policy framework. The National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labour, adopted in 2018, has been successfully implemented. It guides all related activities and provides direction to stakeholders.

The Department of Labour for implementing child labour elimination maintains 78 branch officers across the island enabling effective inspection and monitoring across all districts. Labour inspectors are trained specifically on child labour issues allowing them to identify and address child labour cases especially in the informal sector.

Sri Lanka has made substantial progress in eliminating child labour over the recent decades. The 2016 child activity survey indicated around 43,000 children in the child labour showing a sharp decline from 900,000 reported in 1999. A 2014 study conducted by the Department of Labour in the Colombo district, covering 1,000 households, found only 0.3 per cent of children engaged in economic activities, a further decrease from the 2016 survey. This demonstrates a continuing decline in child labour in Sri Lanka.

The National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour established under the 2017 National Policy on Child Labour acts as the main inter-agency coordination mechanism. It includes all stakeholders, trade unions, employers, non-government organizations and it is chaired by higher authority like the Secretariat of Labour. All matters related to child labour are discussed and coordinated effectively through this committee. This committee meets quarterly and it has a minimum of four meetings every year.

Sri Lanka being part of Alliance 8.7 submitted its national road map in April last year, focusing on four priorities, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, across child labour, forced labour and human trafficking. Sri Lanka has clearly displayed its determination in the elimination of child labour.

At the grassroot level, district and divisional Child Development Committees convene to discuss child labour issues. Labour officers, probation officers, police officers, village officers attend these meetings. The matters that they are unable to resolve will be escalated to the National Level Committee and effectively addressed.

The Ministry of Education has taken steps to address school dropouts through School-based and Zone-based Committees. When a student drops out, these committees, with the help of community leaders, act swiftly and take action to reintegrate them with school. Sri Lanka provides pre-education up to university level to ensure school attendance. The

Government also offers free uniforms, meals, textbooks and sanitary pads for female students. This comprehensive support ensures that no child is left behind due to poverty.

In 2024, there were only 5,000 school dropouts, less than one per cent of the total student population. Each case is addressed separately and seriously. Some children dropout due to poverty or incompatibility with traditional education. There are many other factors and they are also addressed. For example, the children of migrant workers are continuously monitored by Development Officers. If any child drops out of school, these officers intervene and take necessary steps to help the child to return to school.

In 2018, with the introduction of the compulsory education policy, the Government also introduced vocational training opportunities for children under 16 who find it difficult to cope with the traditional education system. This allows them to transit into the vocational stream and prevents them from dropping out of education system.

To combat child labour in the informal sector, Sri Lanka works with community leaders through a pilot initiative using existing community policing mechanism. In Colombo, special training was provided for divisional officers-in-charge, police and other officers. A total of 587 community leaders participated. In parallel, 244 police and labour officers were trained on child labour elimination. This programme has been expanded to other provinces also. This approach has been highly successful. The Department of Labour is able to receive information about potential school dropouts and take proactive measures to prevent them from falling into child labour.

The Department of Labour conducts group inspections to identify potential child labour in the informal sector, especially in the fisheries sector. In 2024, we had 47 group inspections and we have identified potential child labour. We were able to take action proactively.

It should be noted that in Sri Lanka, no child labour has been reported in the formal sector. In the informal sector, awareness is key to reduce child labour. In this regard, a dedicated hotline is available for the public to report child-related concerns. Complaints received through the hotline are categorized and referred to the relevant agencies. For example, reports related to child labour are directed to the Department of Labour while the cases of abuses are referred to the police. In addition, the Department of Labour has digitalized its complaint management system to improve access to the public. There is also a dedicated WhatsApp number to file complaints to the Labour Department.

In 2023, Sri Lanka introduced a pledge programme encouraging employers to publicly commit that they will not recruit children into their workforce. The aim of this initiative is to raise awareness and strengthen the commitment of employers and workers to prevent child labour. In this regard, we have conducted 24 pledge collection programmes in the plantation sector and 40 programmes in industrial sectors to ensure the employer formally commits to not employing children.

Further, we have observed a steady decline in child labour cases in recent years. In 2022, we have identified 11 cases and in 2023, 12 cases and in 2024, we have only 2 cases indicating a decline. Most child labour reported were involved in manufacturing and two were in domestic work.

All identified child labour instances have been prosecuted. Of the 12 legal cases, five are ongoing. Three lacked evidence and four were concluded. One led to compensation of Rs. 500,000 and two resulted in fines of Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 8,000 penalties. In 2024, two new cases were filed and one additional case was filed in 2024 and legal actions are continuing.

Furthermore, the Department of Labour conducts 80,000 inspections annually with limited staff of 500 labour officers. Plants are under way to recruit 100 more officers. Each time when they inspect, they check for child labour also and they have to report the age of each worker in the reporting system. Our ultimate goal is to create an environment where children do not need to work but can grow, learn and thrive. That is our focus, and the Government is committed to continuing these progressive actions.

**Employer members** – Sri Lanka ratified the Convention in the year 2000 and the Committee of Experts made prior observations on this case in 2024, 2020, 2019, 2017, 2013 and 2011. This is the first time the Committee discusses Sri Lanka's application of the Convention. We thank the Government of Sri Lanka for having submitted relevant information to the Committee regarding the application of this Convention in law and in practice. We find this information is very promising, as is the strong commitment expressed by the Government's representative towards ensuring that every child is protected from the risks of child labour.

The Committee of Experts' observations highlight significant steps taken by Sri Lanka but also persisting gaps in areas where further efforts are required to ensure compliance with the Convention in law and practice. First, regarding the minimum age admission to employment or work (Article 2(2)) and compulsory education (Article 2(3)), the Employer members welcome with satisfaction the legislative amendments made to the Employment of Women, Young Person and Children Act in the year 2021.

These amendments have successfully raised the minimum age for admission to work or employment from 14 to 16 years. We also note with satisfaction that a "child" is now defined as a person under 16 years and a "young person" as someone between 16 and 18 years old. This is a significant step forward in protecting children.

Furthermore, we commend the Government for aligning the minimum age for admission to employment with the age of completion of compulsory education which is 16 years, as stipulated under the Compulsory Attendance of Children at School Regulation No. 1 of 2015. This alignment is critical for ensuring children remain in school and do not enter the workforce prematurely.

Regarding the application of the Convention in practice and labour inspection, the Employer members take note of the Government's extensive efforts and numerous initiatives undertaken between 2021 and 2023 to eliminate child labour. In particular:

- the diverse awareness-raising campaigns conducted as well as seminars in fishing communities and outreach to school personnel, child protection officers and private sector workers.
- The collaboration with the community police to initiate awareness campaigns and capacity-building at the community level, including a pilot programme in Colombo in 2024 that trained 587 community leaders and religious priests.
- The training programmes for labour inspectors, probation officers, labour officers and police officers.
- The improved complaint management system within the Department of Labour including a separate field for child labour complaints and access for the National Child Protection Authority to the 1929 Child Helpline.

We also acknowledge the support provided by the ILO to Sri Lanka including its designation as an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country, the development of Child Labour Free Zones,

the national community strategy, the training module on School to Work Transition and the preparation of the Roadmap for the Elimination of Child Labour. Sri Lanka's active participation in Alliance 8.7 and submission of its action plan in April 2024 further demonstrates its commitment.

However, the Committee of Experts' observations outlined persisting gaps and areas requiring reinforced action. We echo the Committee of Experts' concern regarding these issues. We must express deep concern regarding the report of the United Nations (UN) special reporter on contemporary forms of slavery following his 2021 visit. We cannot overlook the persistence of child labour in the domestic, hospitality, cleaning and several service sectors in particular regarding rural areas and among ethnic minorities. Some children are even engaged in the worst forms of child labour including prostitution and are forced to drop out of school to support their families.

The Employer members are of the view that the prevalence of these unacceptable practices illustrates the need for a holistic approach, and the many challenges a country can face when enforcing new regulations.

Against this background the Employer members would like to request the Government to redouble its efforts to progressively eliminate child labour with a strong focus in the informal economy and children living in rural areas.

We would like to request the Government to take measures to ensure that in practice thorough investigations and robust prosecutions are carried out and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions are imposed to deter adults from employing and abusing children. To strengthen the capacity and expand the reach of the labour inspectorate in addressing child labour particularly in the informal sector. To continue to provide comprehensive information on the number of children identified engaged in child labour as well as the number and nature of violations detected and penalties applied with regard to the employment of children and young persons. To ensure that the definition of child labour used in national child labour service to calculate child labour statistics aligns with international standards so that the estimated population of children in child labour in the child activity survey is correct. To implement the necessary measures to ensure that effective implementation of the Compulsory Attendance of Children to School Regulation and to continue to provide updated information on the school enrolment and completion rates of children below the age of 16.

The Employer members would like to highlight that, while substantial, prosecuting and sanctioning adults and removing children from child labour are not stand-alone solutions. As such, these measures cannot be sufficient, effective or sustainable if not implemented in conjunction with strategic policies aiming to address the root causes, risk factors and socio-economic circumstances, that either lead to or result in the exploitation of children.

The Employer members are of the view that the Government's efforts could translate into greater results if combined with programmes to address vulnerabilities to child labour, particularly for ethnic minorities and areas identified as having the highest risk of child labour. We encourage the Government to intensify its efforts to increase capacity among tripartite constituents and to seek further assistance from the ILO and other international development partners to develop and implement multidimensional sustainable strategies to eradicate child labour built upon timely and effective consultation with the social partners.

We believe the strong commitment and the persisting efforts of the Government of Sri Lanka to address this issue is an example of how the work of the ILO including the work of the

Committee of experts and hopefully now the work of this Committee, can have a positive impact in the life of workers and employers and the life of children around the globe.

**Worker members** – This is the first time that our Committee is called upon to examine the application of the Convention by the Government of Sri Lanka. We begin by acknowledging the important legislative efforts made by the Government to comply with the Convention.

The amendment of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (No. 47 of 1956) through the 2021 Amendment Act No. 2 has raised the minimum age for admission to employment from 14 to 16 years. This reform brings national law into compliance with the minimum age requirement of the Convention. It also harmonizes with the age of completion of compulsory education as established under Regulation No. 1 of 2015 on compulsory school attendance. This alignment is not only consistent with the Government's international obligations under the Convention, it is a vital step in safeguarding the right of every child to education and protection from premature entry into the labour market.

The Worker members also take note of the range of initiatives undertaken between 2021 and 2023 to raise awareness and build capacity to address child labour. Campaigns through television, radio and print media, community level seminars and targeted trainings for child protection officers, teachers, labour inspectors, police and probation officers demonstrate a comprehensive approach.

We particularly welcome the creation of social dialogue platforms across the 11 Zonal Offices and the identification of ten villages under the Child Labour Free Zone programme for carrying out special initiatives aimed at eradicating child labour. These community-based initiatives are critical to long-term prevention and child protection. However, while acknowledging these important strides, the Worker members must emphasize that the existence of child labour in Sri Lanka remains a serious concern.

The UN special report on contemporary forms of slavery has identified persistent child labour in domestic work, the hospitality industry, cleaning services and general informal sectors. The informal economy which often escapes regulatory oversight presents a significant challenge for the effective implementation of the Convention. Children working in informal sectors are especially vulnerable to exploitation, hazardous conditions and deprivation of education and social protection. These risks are heightened in rural areas populated by ethnic minorities where children are often forced to drop out of school to support their families. Research by the ILO also reveals that children in rural areas face barriers to accessing education, including difficulties in traveling to school in some regions and an inadequate number of teachers.

The Worker members, therefore, urge the Government of Sri Lanka to intensify its efforts to extend the reach and capacity of the labour inspectorate, ensuring that all children engaged in labour, particularly in informal and rural settings are identified, protected and supported to exit child labour.

The Worker members take note of the information provided by the Government indicating that in 2021 and 2022, 204 and 145 complaints of child labour were received, leading to the identification of 7 and 4 cases respectively. While this reflects that reporting and investigation mechanisms are in place, the low number of confirmed cases suggest that labour inspection remains insufficient, particularly in the informal economy where child labour is most prevalent.

The lack of resources allocated to the labour inspectorate is all the more concerning in view of the persistence of worst forms of child labour, including child trafficking, commercial

sexual exploitation, child pornography and child prostitution, including the continued “beach boy” phenomenon in tourist areas.

We call on the Government to strengthen the capacity, training and coverage of the labour inspectorate with special attention to the rural economy, vulnerable communities and high-risk sectors. Increased efforts in monitoring, including inspection visits and rigorous follow-up on complaints are essential to ensure that violations are detected and addressed in a timely and effective manner.

Moreover, we are concerned by the lack of data on penalties imposed for violations of the minimum age statutory requirements. Legal reforms and awareness campaigns are critical, but without meaningful enforcement, including sanctions for violations, progress risks being undermined.

We echo the Committee of Experts’ call for the Government to provide information on the number and nature of violations detected and penalties applied with regard to the employment of children and young persons.

In conclusion, the Worker members recall that Sri Lanka is a pathfinder country under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7, an international initiative designed to fast-track efforts to eliminate child labour and forced labour. This status is both an opportunity and a responsibility. As a pathfinder, Sri Lanka is expected to set a high standard for leadership, implementation and transparency.

We therefore urge the Government to sustain and deepen its efforts to continue strengthening enforcement mechanisms, expand the reach of the labour inspectorate, improve access to education and protect all children from economic exploitation and abuse.

By honouring its international commitments under the Convention and by demonstrating political will and accountability, Sri Lanka can not only secure a better future for its children but also serve as a positive example for other countries striving to eliminate child labour.

**Employer member, Sri Lanka** – I am pleased to share our progress, through Sri Lanka’s inclusion under the Convention in the Committee’s discussion, for the reason that Sri Lanka has made great strides in combating child labour during the last two decades in particular.

We as the Employer members of the ILO and the national employers’ organization, recognized by the Government of Sri Lanka, have worked closely on this subject to achieve the required level of compliance in relation to the Convention. It is important to highlight that successive governments have taken serious note of complete eradication of child labour from the working environment in Sri Lanka. We have fully supported Government initiatives through the National Labour Advisory Council and various other committees and initiatives taken in promoting child labour free working environment.

I must state that we, guide companies on labour law and international Conventions on child labour and advise employers on the strict implementation of such regulations and laws in relation to employers.

I would like to highlight the recent developments in the child labour legal provisions and policy framework in Sri Lanka for the attention of the Office. The Government of Sri Lanka in its address did mention certain steps that have been taken to address, during the last few decades, or in particular the last few years the strengthening of the legal framework and the policy decisions taken by the Government.

Sri Lanka has a strong legal and administrative system to prevent child labour. Presently the minimum age of employment is 16 years which was increased from 14 years to align it with the mandatory school going age of Sri Lanka.

In 2021, the list of hazardous jobs was expanded from 51 to 71 to protect young children. This covers hazardous jobs that children between the ages of 16 and 18 cannot be employed in, such as domestic work and fisheries, etc. By the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2021, the minimum age of employment was revised from 14 to 16 years. This was a significant measure taken to further strengthen the legal provisions against child labour. Along with these steps, the Government has indicated its commitment towards further strengthening the legal provisions and the legal framework.

In addition to that, Sri Lanka has a policy-level framework to ensure proper mechanisms are in place. It developed the National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labour, which was adopted in 2018 and has been successfully implemented. This policy guides all related activities and provides direction to all stakeholders involved.

The Department of Labour in Sri Lanka maintains a comprehensive regional office network across the island. The number of working children has dropped considerably with the Child Activity Survey done in 2016 showing 0.5 per cent as child labour and the study conducted by the Department of Labour in 2024 has identified a further reduction up to 0.3 per cent children in economic activities.

The National Steering Committee on Elimination of Child Labour established under the National Policy on Elimination of Child Labour in 2017 acts as the inter-agency coordination mechanism to address and eliminate child labour in the country.

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon is represented as a committee member in the National Steering Committee and progress meetings are held to evaluate the situation periodically.

The district and divisional child development committees' issues related to children, including child labour, are discussed through these divisional child development committees. Labour officers, probation officers and police officers attend these meetings to discuss the welfare of children at local level which even penetrates not only the cities but also the rural areas through this mechanism.

Further, to ensure student attendance, the Government provides free education including free uniforms and free meals, free books, etc. These are mechanisms where, in order to see that the poverty in the rural areas does not drive them towards child labour, the Government has adopted measures taken that have greatly helped to eradicate child labour in rural areas.

The Government has paid special attention to the fisheries sector and in 2024, 47 group inspections have been carried out covering inland and coastal fishing areas. In addition, 22 awareness sessions have been conducted in 22 district labour offices targeting small and medium level employees in the plantation sector.

So, these initiatives by the Government have also taken the steps not only in the concerned areas which are the rural sector, to cover the rural sector, the recent initiatives by the Government has certainly concentrated on those projects and targeted the medium level employers and also the plantation sector.

We wish to emphasize that important measures required to address the child labour in Sri Lanka have been taken by the Government and we will further support all measures of the Government in the future as well.

We are confident that Sri Lanka has a strong case to support its position as a country which made great progress and we are happy to note the precision of the Office, which is encouraging, and we will take further steps as it may be necessary to further strengthen our fight against child labour.

**Worker member, Sri Lanka** – I would like to focus my remarks on the Convention which Sri Lanka ratified in the year 2000. This Convention is not just a legal comment but a moral one rooted in our shared responsibility to protect rights, dignity and the future of children across the globe.

First and foremost, I wish to associate myself with the comments made by the Government representative and acknowledge the notable steps Sri Lanka has taken to combat child labour. Since ratifying the Convention, our country has introduced a range of legislative and policy measures aimed at eliminating child labour and promoting access to education. One of the most significant actions has been taken in raising the minimum age for employment to align it with the age of completion of compulsory education.

According to the Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka, child labour rates have shown a downwards trend over the past two decades. The 2016 National Child Activity Survey indicated that child labour among children aged 5 to 17 stood at approximately 1 per cent. While even 1 per cent child in labour is one too many, this statistic reflects important progress when compared with previous decades. In addition, Sri Lanka has taken steps to strengthen the school enrolment to the provisions of free education, school meal programme, free textbooks and transport assistance.

We are pleased to note that the current Government has continued to invest in these areas recognizing that education is the most effective long-term solution to child labour. Trade unions have also played a key role in advocating for stronger enforcement of labour laws and in some cases directly supporting families to access education for their children. Importantly, our role extends beyond monitoring and reporting. We see ourselves as stakeholders in shaping national labour policy and we are committed to contributing constructively to dialogues with the Government, employers and international partners. However, despite this progress, challenges remain.

Child labour is not only a legal issue, it is an economic and social issue, deeply intertwined with poverty, inequity and lack of access to quality education. In certain rural and plantation areas we still find vulnerable communities where children are engaged in hazardous form of labour or leave school early due to financial pressure at home. Informal and hidden forms of child labour remain difficult to monitor and regulate effectively.

We must also remain vigilant in the context of economic shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic, the recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka have put additional pressure on families. The roots of child labour is poverty and eliminating poverty is the way to eliminate child labour. International collaboration and technical support from organizations such as the ILO have been critical.

Going forward, we believe that regional dialogue and information sharing among trade unions and Member States can strengthen our collective response. Child labour is not confined by borders. As I conclude, we commit ourselves to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, to grow and to feel free from exploitation.

We urge to stop the war that expend billions and invest money in education and eradicating poverty programmes.

We appreciate that the Government of Sri Lanka remains committed to upholding the principles of ILO and working to eliminate child labour in all its forms.

**Government member, Pakistan** – Pakistan appreciates that Sri Lanka is constructively engaged with the ILO on the implementation of the Convention. We acknowledge that the legislative and policy measures undertaken by Sri Lanka including the recent amendments, raising the minimum employment age and expansion of the hazardous occupations list. We commend the national efforts to reduce child labour through school reintegration, community level engagement and strengthened labour inspection mechanisms.

Pakistan welcomes the Committee of Experts' positive observations and encourages continued international cooperation to support Sri Lanka's progress in protecting children from labour exploitation to ensure full protection and decent work conditions for all children in line with international standards. We are confident that continued cooperation between Sri Lanka and the ILO will further support the goal of eliminating child labour in line with international standards.

**Membre travailleuse, Belgique** – Nous prenons note avec la commission d'experts que, suite aux commentaires précédents, la loi n° 47 de 1956 sur l'emploi des femmes, des jeunes et des enfants a été modifiée par la loi n° 2 de 2021 afin de relever de 14 à 16 ans l'âge minimum d'admission au travail ou à l'emploi, conformément à la convention. Ainsi, l'âge minimum d'admission à l'emploi ou au travail à Sri Lanka est désormais aligné sur l'âge de fin de la scolarité obligatoire qui est de 16 ans.

De même, le règlement n° 01 de 2021 sur les professions dangereuses a complété la liste des travaux dangereux interdits aux enfants de moins de 18 ans. Cette liste inclut notamment le travail domestique, la pêche commerciale ou les opérations de pêche en eaux profondes, le travail dans les mines, sur les sites de construction, comme guide touristique, etc.

Quoique la législation sur l'âge minimum soit harmonisée, sa mise en œuvre doit encore être poursuivie et renforcée dans la pratique.

Certes, selon les informations données par le gouvernement, différentes initiatives ont été prises en ce sens, notamment à travers des campagnes de sensibilisation grand public ou vers des publics spécifiques, ou encore via des programmes de formation.

Cependant, comme le soulignait le Rapporteur spécial des Nations Unies sur les formes contemporaines d'esclavage en novembre 2021, le travail des enfants continue d'exister à Sri Lanka. Il est particulièrement visible dans les secteurs domestique et hôtelier, ainsi que dans les secteurs des services de nettoyage et des services en général. Les enfants des zones rurales sont encore contraints d'abandonner l'école pour subvenir aux besoins de leur famille. Le travail des enfants est également important parmi les minorités ethniques tamoules dans les plantations de thé et de caoutchouc. Or le droit à l'éducation doit être garanti pour tous les enfants, y compris ceux qui vivent dans la pauvreté et indépendamment de leur origine ethnique.

Le rapport de 2024 du département du Travail américain, qui couvre l'année 2023, rapporte également que «les enfants de Sri Lanka sont soumis aux pires formes de travail des enfants, y compris l'exploitation sexuelle à des fins commerciales, parfois dans le cadre de la traite des êtres humains, et le travail domestique forcé».

Le 30 juillet 2024, Save the Children signalait également sur son site que la traite des êtres humains à Sri Lanka avait augmenté de façon alarmante.

Il faut souligner aussi que, en dépit de l'interdiction légale, des enfants continuent d'être recrutés dans des métiers dangereux comme dans les mines, la construction et la pêche en haute mer, au détriment de leur santé et de leur sécurité. Ainsi, il est urgent que des mesures adaptées continuent d'être prises afin que l'âge minimum de 16 ans et l'interdiction du travail dangereux avant l'âge 18 ans soient pleinement respectés en pratique.

À cet égard, un volet important consiste en la poursuite des infractions et la condamnation des auteurs à des sanctions appropriées et dissuasives. Le rapport précité du département du Travail américain soulignait qu'on ne sait pas si le gouvernement a engagé des poursuites ou condamné des auteurs de crimes liés aux pires formes de travail des enfants.

Or il est indispensable de dégager des moyens pour mener des enquêtes efficaces et engager des poursuites contre les auteurs, tout en assurant la protection des victimes.

Ainsi, nous soutenons la demande de la commission d'experts que l'État sri lankais recueille et mette à disposition des informations sur le nombre de poursuites engagées, sur la nature des infractions détectées, sur les condamnations et sur les sanctions imposées dans les cas d'emploi des enfants et des jeunes.

*Interpretation from Chinese:* **Government member, China** – For decades, Sri Lanka has continuously implemented and improved the laws and the policies to eliminate child labour. It has established an interdepartmental coordination mechanism to address child labour, built a nationwide network of regional inspection offices and created a robust legal framework and administrative system to effectively protect the children's rights.

Sri Lanka has also focused on advancing social economic development to the tackle root causes of child labour such as poverty, inequality and discrimination. It ensures the effective implementation of the Compulsory Education Regulations through supportive oversight policies, thereby raising children's educational attainment.

Extensive awareness campaigns have been conducted to boost social consciousness about eliminating child labour across all sectors. These efforts have yielded notable results, substantially reducing child labour in the country. China commends these achievements.

The Sri Lankan Government earnestly fulfils its Convention obligations, values the opinions of the ILO and relevant committees and enhances international cooperation through mechanisms like the National Steering Committee on Child Labour.

Following the 2021 amendments to the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act, Sri Lanka recently passed further legislative amendments, raising the minimum working age to 16. This has been acknowledged and commended by the Committee of Experts.

We support the ILO secretariat and its standard supervisory system in maintaining constructive communication and cooperation with the Sri Lankan Government, providing necessary technical support to further promote the country's economic and social development, thus continuously helping to enhance its compliance capacity.

**Worker member, Japan** – I would like to begin by acknowledging the Sri Lankan Government's continued commitment to combating child labour. We take note of its ratification of the Convention and the accompanying steps taken toward its implementation. Yet, we must also be clear-eyed: significant challenges remain.

According to the 2023 data, approximately 0.8 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 in Sri Lanka are still engaged in some form of work. While this may appear numerically small, it translates into over 28,000 children. Each of these children represent a life disrupted, an education interrupted, a future compromised. Many of these children are involved in

unregulated and often dangerous sectors: agriculture, fishing, street vending, domestic work, construction and small-scale manufacturing. These are areas frequently beyond the reach of labour inspections and where violations of children's rights go unnoticed or unreported.

What is more troubling is that official statistics may vastly under-represent the actual scale of child labour. Children working as unpaid helpers in family farms, particularly those aged 5 to 11 working less than 15 hours a week or 12 to 14 working under 25 hours, are excluded from the formal definition of child labour.

A particularly pressing concern is child domestic labour. Hidden behind closed doors and shielded from public view, child domestic workers often endure long hours, isolation and even abuse. Many have no access to education, and no legal safety net. Sri Lanka's legal framework currently does not classify domestic work as hazardous despite the clear and documented risks involved. This legal omission must be addressed urgently. No child should be invisible in the eyes of the law.

In line with the principle of the Convention, we respectfully urge the Government of Sri Lanka to take the following concrete actions:

1. Close all legal loopholes that allow child labour to persist. This means explicitly including domestic work and informal family labour and hazardous or prohibited forms of child labour and aligning the national definition with the ILO standards without exceptions or ambiguities.
2. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. Laws on paper mean little without effective implementation. Labour inspectors must be properly trained, funded and empowered to reach all sectors, especially those that are informal, rural or hidden.
3. Invest in inclusive quality education, especially in rural, estate and impoverished communities. When families see a visible path through schooling, they are less likely to send their children to work. Education is both a shield against exploitation and a pathway to dignity.

We urge the Sri Lankan Government to take bold, decisive action to eliminate child labour in all its forms.

**Government member, Bangladesh** – Bangladesh notes with appreciation the efforts made by Sri Lanka to improve their child labour situation. The efforts include introducing amendments to the law to raise the minimum age for admission to work or employment from 14 to 16 years old and expanding the list of hazardous jobs from 51 to 71 to protect children.

Bangladesh welcomes the satisfactory comments on Sri Lanka's recent legal amendment.

We further note that Sri Lanka's free education system benefits all children while the measures taken to protect the rights of children at the community level and the country's National Policy on Elimination of Child Labour in 2018, are commendable.

We welcome the comprehensive network and training of labour inspections of Sri Lanka to identify and address child labour issues in the informal sector. The progressive impact of all these measures has been borne out by the declining trend as evidence by data in the use of child labour in Sri Lanka over the last several years. Bangladesh commends Sri Lanka for the progress achieved so far, it supports Sri Lanka's efforts towards the elimination of child labour. Bangladesh urges the ILO to enhance technical support to Sri Lanka to further strengthen its labour governments.

**Worker member, Republic of Korea** –Article 3 of the Convention stipulates that the minimum age for hazardous work should not be less than 18 years old. Sri Lanka has demonstrated its commitment to protect young persons under 18 years old from hazardous work by ratifying Convention No. 138 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Subsequently, Sri Lanka revised the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act of 1956 to raise the minimum employment age from 14 to 16 while hazardous work remains prohibited until 18.

A significant change occurred in 2021 with the Hazardous Occupations Regulation No. 1 expanding prohibited hazardous occupations from 51 to 71 sectors including domestic work, spa services, psychologically harmful electronic device operations and high voltage electrical work.

However, despite these revisions, a substantial gap persists between legal framework and practical application. Empirical evidence demonstrated that considerable numbers of young persons under 18 remain engaged in hazardous occupations explicitly prohibited by law. These challenges have been severely exacerbated by Sri Lanka's current economic crisis, compelling vulnerable households to resort to adverse coping mechanisms including child labour in hazardous sectors.

Let me give some examples:

- Forced domestic work continues despite explicit prohibition under 2021 regulations. Children predominantly from rural areas face systematic trafficking into urban households. These children endure working hours extending beyond 12 hours a day, physically and psychologically abused, complete denial of remuneration, and severe restrictions on movement and communication. They are largely invisible to monitoring mechanisms as they are concealed in private households. But some documented cases reveal that children as young as 12 years are performing household duties under slavery-like conditions.
- Mining operations persist in employing children despite hazardous classification. In the quarrying and gem mining areas, children face exposure to silica dust, mercury contamination and unstable excavation sites. Medical reports indicate respiratory ailments, skin conditions and developmental impairment among child workers. The clandestine nature of many mining operations further complicates the protections and enforcement efforts.
- Construction sector employment continues across both formal and informal building projects. Young persons performing tasks including heavy lifting, working at dangerous heights without safety harness and operating machines without proper training. Hospital records show regular admissions for children injured on construction sites with fractures, cuts, and head injuries, being common.
- Hazardous agricultural practices extended beyond deep sea fishing to encompass pesticide application, heavy machinery operation and work during extreme weather conditions. On tea plantations, children below 16 years work picking tea during harvest seasons, carrying loads too heavy for them, while exposed to harmful chemicals. They employ children for 14 to 16 hours a shift in dangerous sea conditions with cases of children falling overboard or being severely injured by fishing equipment.

Therefore, the Government should be able to provide information on the implementation of the Hazardous Occupational Regulation No. 1/2021, including the number and nature of violations detected regarding young persons engaged in hazardous work. Enhanced data

collection and transparency regarding violations, particularly, in newly-regulated sectors, will enable the Government to take targeted actions and implement accountability measures. Furthermore, comprehensive implementation planning with proper resources allocation is essential to tackle the socio-economic causes driving children into hazardous work. This requires strengthening the labour inspectorate, expanding social protection programmes, improving education access, and ensuring effective inter-agency coordination.

**Membre gouvernemental, Suisse** – La Suisse a pris note avec intérêt des observations de la commission d'experts ainsi que des informations écrites fournies par Sri Lanka, en date du 19 mai 2025. À l'instar de la commission d'experts, la Suisse note avec satisfaction les évolutions législatives positives intervenues au cours des dernières années, notamment le relèvement de l'âge minimum d'admission au travail ou à l'emploi de 14 à 16 ans. Ce faisant, l'âge minimum pour travailler est désormais aligné avec l'âge de fin de la scolarité obligatoire, favorisant ainsi le nombre d'enfants achevant leur parcours scolaire.

La Suisse salue également les différentes initiatives prises par le gouvernement sri lankais pour prévenir et éliminer le travail des enfants dans le pays, notamment:

- l'organisation de vastes campagnes de sensibilisation;
- la mise en place de plateformes favorisant des discussions tripartites sur le thème du travail des enfants;
- et la formation et le renforcement des capacités des inspecteurs du travail et des fonctionnaires de police en matière d'identification et de traitement des cas de travail des enfants.

Nous restons toutefois préoccupés par la persistance du travail des enfants, en particulier dans les secteurs informel et domestique, ainsi que dans les zones rurales et les destinations touristiques. Nous appelons donc le gouvernement sri lankais à poursuivre et intensifier ses efforts en matière de prévention et de lutte contre le travail des enfants. Faisant écho aux observations de la commission d'experts sur la convention n° 182, nous appelons également les autorités sri lankaises à prendre les mesures nécessaires pour favoriser la réadaptation et la réintégration sociale des enfants ayant été soustraits aux pires formes de travail des enfants. Enfin, la Suisse invite le gouvernement sri lankais à continuer son étroite coopération avec le BIT, afin d'atteindre l'objectif de l'éradication totale du travail des enfants dans le pays.

**Observer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)** – We note and appreciate the Sri Lankan Government's stated commitment to upholding its international obligations under the Convention. We acknowledge that institutional frameworks and mechanisms for reporting and investigation are in place. However, we must express our serious concern that the actual implementation and enforcement of these mechanisms remain significantly inadequate.

Despite the legal prohibitions on child labour, the persistently low number of identified and confirmed cases raises troubling questions about the effectiveness of labour inspection. Particularly in the informal economy, which constitutes a substantial portion of Sri Lanka's labour market and where child labour is most likely to occur.

The inspection and monitoring system, in this current form, lacks the reach, capacity, and resources necessary to identify and respond to violations effectively. The limitations of the labour inspectorate are especially visible in rural areas, among economically marginalized communities, and high-risk sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, fisheries and small-scale manufacturing. The situation is further compounded by the persistence of the worst form

of child labour, including child trafficking, hazardous work, and commercial sexual exploitation, notably in the tourism zones.

The protection of children from exploitative labour cannot remain a theoretical goal. It requires proactive, sustained, and well-resourced enforcement on the ground. Legislative instruments alone are not sufficient. Their implementation must be matched with political will and institutional strength.

We, therefore, call on the Government of Sri Lanka to take immediate and concrete steps to:

1. Strengthen the institutional capacity, training, and operational reach of the labour inspectorate, including increased budgetary allocations and specialized training on child labour, gender-sensitive approaches, and community engagement;
2. Extend the mandate and regularity of inspections to the informal and regular rural economies, where the majority of vulnerable children are employed in hidden or unregulated conditions;
3. Establish sector-specific inspection protocols for high-risk areas and ensure coordinated action between labour inspectors, child protection services, and local authorities;
4. Lastly, ensure thorough and timely follow-up on complaints and inspection findings, including the application and appropriate sanctions for non-compliance and the provision of protection, rehabilitation, and education services for children removed from exploitative work.

The true test of the Convention lies not in the ratification, but in its full, practical realization. The eradication of child labour is not only a matter of compliance with international law; it is a moral obligation and a measure of our shared humanity.

Every child deserves the right to a safe, dignified, and healthy childhood free from economic exploitation. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to raise this responsibility with urgency and commitment.

**Government member, Sri Lanka** – Sri Lanka considers the observation made by the trade unions, employers and Members States regarding the implementation of the Convention. We value the constructive dialogue and recommendations expressed in this forum, even though we have concerns on selecting Sri Lanka to the individual cases at the Committee.

As mentioned earlier, child labour cases in Sri Lanka are limited to certain pockets. Even though the number of cases is comparatively small, as a Government we are highly concerned about this issue. The last Child Activity Survey was conducted in 2016, and all arrangements have been made to do the next Child Activity Survey in 2025. We are consulting the ILO for technical support in carrying out an updated national survey in 2025 to identify the number of children involved in different economic activities, their locations, and the type of work they engage in. This survey data will bring more analytical views while enabling us to target our interventions more effectively.

As the Government, we apply the awareness as the key strategy in eliminating child labour. We are using digital technology and platforms along with traditional communication methods to reach different communities and stakeholders across the country. The continuous support of the ILO in raising awareness and maintaining activities to eradicate child labour in Sri Lanka is highly recognized.

Enhancing the skills and capacities of labour inspectors and other relevant government offices has been recognized as an essential need in this national policy. In line with that, a special programme was initiated in collaboration with the Community Police Division in Sri Lanka in 2024, and we are expecting to continue it. Accordingly, four divisional officers in charge of police stations and community police officers in charge of each police station in the Colombo District were given a special training, including 587 community leaders, and 244 government officers who participated in those programmes. A training-of-trainers programme for 63 labour inspectors was conducted in March of this year to create a pool of trainers island-wide to promote social dialogue to eliminate child labour.

Our commitment to protect children and ensure that every child enjoys the right to education is a key concern of our Government. Our national education system is rooted in free education, free technical education and free university education, irrespective of the geographical, ethnic or gender differences.

Further, Sri Lanka has a well-established grassroots-level mechanism to address child-related issues, including child labour. This system functions effectively both at the regional and national levels. The Government is currently reviewing how this coordination mechanism can be further strengthened to ensure that each child is protected and remains in school education until the compulsory age of schooling.

Although a vocational training system already exists, it needs to be further strengthened and be made more attractive for students.

School education reforms are in progress by expanding vocational and skill-based training targeting school dropouts and those who are willing to move on the path of vocational education. The Government is strengthening the vocational education system by enhancing different skill development pathways for school leavers island-wide opening new, attractive and demanding courses that fit with new employment demands. This will provide a meaningful alternative for children at risk of dropping out and help integrate them into vocational education and skill employment.

Further, the Government is planning to amend the Women, Young Persons and Children's Act to increase penalties for violators. These amendments are being discussed under the proposed new Employment Act. The Government is also strengthening its sectoral approach in addressing child labour. In addition to this, in the fisheries sector, the Government will extend the related project towards the plantation and hospitality sectors. Plans are underway to enhance awareness, conduct focus group discussions, and implement targeted intervention within these sectors.

With the inclusion of "domestic work" to the hazardous forms of work list in 2021, no person under the age of 18 can be employed in domestic work under the prevailing laws in Sri Lanka now. In line with the ILO Conventions, there are exceptions for light work in family-run economic activities and technical education as long as it does not disturb school attendance.

Sri Lanka has banned using children under the age of 12 in advertising food items, effective from 1 January 2025. This regulation has been established under the Food Act No. 26 of 1980, which helps to protect children from potentially harmful advertising practices and ensures that they are not targeted with marketing materials without parental approval.

Finally, let us assure that Sri Lanka will continue to uphold the principles of the Convention and work diligently to ensure that no child is left behind. Last but not least, on behalf of the Government, a special thanks goes to our employers, our trade unions in Sri Lanka and the ILO for working collectively to ensure the zero tolerance of child labour in our country.

**Worker members** – As we close our discussion, the Worker members wish to thank all the members of the Committee for the constructive and serious consideration given to this case.

We reiterate our recognition of the legislative changes made by the Government of Sri Lanka, particularly the alignment of the minimum age for admission to employment with the age of completion of compulsory schooling. This step reflects a firm commitment to the Convention and to the protection of children's rights.

We also acknowledge the effort undertaken to raise awareness, build institutional capacity, and engage local communities in addressing child labour. The awareness campaigns, training initiatives, and Child Labour Free Zone Programme are all examples of positive engagement. However, our discussions have also confirmed that significant challenges remain in practice.

The persistence of child labour in the informal economy, the rural sector, and in hazardous and exploitative conditions, particularly in the worst forms of child labour underscores the urgent need for effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement. Low detection rates, limited inspections, and the absence of reliable data on penalties imposed are issues of real concern. These gaps weaken the overall impact of the legislative framework and delay the fulfilment of the Convention's objectives. The need to strengthen the labour inspectorate in both resources and reach is therefore a central recommendation from the Worker members. More work needs to be done to fully comply with the Convention.

As a Pathfinder Country under Alliance 8.7, Sri Lanka has committed to accelerating progress in eliminating child labour. This international platform provides not only technical support but also a space for demonstrating leadership. We encourage the Government to honour this role by pursuing implementation with determination and openness, guided by social dialogue and grounded in strong enforcement.

In conclusion, the Worker members call on the Government of Sri Lanka: to take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Compulsory Attendance of Children at School Regulation; to continue its efforts to ensure the progressive elimination of child labour in the country, with a focus on the informal economy and children living in rural areas; and to take measures to strengthen the capacity and expand the reach of the labour inspectorate, especially in the informal sector and rural areas. We further request that the Government provide information: on the school enrolment and completion rates of children below the age of 16 years; on the measures taken to ensure the progressive elimination of child labour in the country and the results achieved in this regard; and the number and nature of violations detected and penalties applied with regard to the employment of children and young persons.

**Employer members** – In their concluding remarks in this case, the Employer members would like to again thank the Government of Sri Lanka for the additional information submitted to the Committee. We find this information to be promising, and we welcome the strong commitment expressed by the Government's representative towards ensuring that every child is protected from the risk of child labour. We also thank all delegates for their participation and insight.

Considering the complexity of the situation and the persistence of certain forms of child labour on the ground, we reiterate our concern regarding this case. We welcome the significant legislative steps taken by Sri Lanka, specifically the amendments that successfully raised the minimum age for admission to work and employment from 14 to 16 years, and we

also commend the Government for aligning this minimum age with the age of completion of compulsory education. This alignment is critical for ensuring that children remain in school. However, despite these positive developments and the Government's extensive efforts, we must address the persisting gaps and areas requiring reinforced action. The Employer members highlight that we cannot turn a blind eye to any form of child labour, even more so if children are deprived of their right to education.

In the light of the debate, the Employer members would like to recommend to the Government of Sri Lanka to intensify its efforts in order to continue to eliminate child labour, with a strong focus on the informal economy and children living in rural areas. We encourage the Government to: continue providing information on the measures taken and the results achieved in this regard, including within the framework of a Child Labour Free Zone Programme; ensure that thorough investigations and robust prosecutions are carried out and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions are imposed in practice to deter adults from employing and abusing children. To this end, we request the Government to gather comprehensive information on the number of children identified engaged in child labour, as well as the number and nature of violations detected and penalties applied with regard to the employment of children and young persons.

We would also like to suggest the Government to: ensure that the definition of child labour used in the national child labour survey to calculate child labour statistics aligns with international standards so that the estimated population of children in child labour in the survey is correct; strengthen the capacity and expand the reach of the labour inspection rate in addressing child labour particularly in the informal sector; take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the compulsory attendance of children at school regulation and to continue reporting on the school enrolment and completion rates of children below the age of 16. We encourage the Government to institute programmes to address vulnerabilities to child labour, particularly for ethnic minorities and areas identified as having the highest risk of child labour. Finally, to strengthen policies regarding prevention, removal, rehabilitation, and social integration of children, and to continue to inform on the measures taken and the number of children benefited from these policies. We encourage the Government to intensify its efforts to increase capacity upon tripartite constituents and to seek further assistance from the ILO and other international development partners to develop and implement multidimensional sustainable strategies to eradicate child labour, in particular to address the root causes, risk factors, and socio-economic circumstances that either lead to or result in the exploitation of children. All of these build upon timely and effective consultation with the social partners.

The Employer members hope that the Government's commitment will continue to develop in terms of concrete measures to ensure the protection of the significant number of boys and girls who remain vulnerable to being engaged in child labour, particularly in the informal sector and rural areas, and that we will continue to witness progress regarding the state of affairs described.

## Conclusions of the Committee

**The Committee took note of the oral and written information provided by the Government and the discussion that followed.**

**The Committee welcomed the Government's use of ILO technical assistance and its impact made, and encouraged it to continue its efforts in this regard.**

Taking the discussion into account, the Committee recommended the Government, in consultation with the social partners, to:

- continue its efforts to eliminate child labour, with a strong focus on the informal economy and children living in rural areas;
- provide information on the measures taken and the results achieved in this regard, including within the framework of the Child Labour Free Zone Programme;
- ensure that thorough investigations and robust prosecutions are carried out, and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions are imposed in practice, to deter adults from employing and abusing children;
- provide comprehensive information as soon as possible on the number of children identified as being engaged in child labour, as well as the number and nature of violations detected, and penalties applied with regard to the employment of children and young persons;
- strengthen the capacity and expand the reach of the labour inspectorate in addressing child labour, particularly in the informal sector;
- take the necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation of the Compulsory Attendance of Children at School Regulation and continue to report on the school enrolment and completion rates of children below the age of 16 years;
- strengthen policies and legislative texts regarding the prevention, removal, rehabilitation, and social integration of children, and to put an end to the described practices and continue to inform on the measures taken, and the number of children who have benefited from the policies.

The Committee requested the Government to provide detailed and complete information on measures taken and progress made on all the above issues and to transmit all relevant legislative texts to the Committee of Experts by 1 September 2025.

**Government representative** – On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to speak before the Committee again.

The recommendations made by the Committee will be considered by the Government and necessary action will be taken in consultation with stakeholders.

Further, some of the statements made by respected speakers in the last week are not evidence-based and in this regard, we have requested the assistance of the ILO to conduct a “child activity survey”. We are hopeful that this survey will provide an accurate picture of the situation of child labour in the country, enabling the Government to take targeted action in identified areas. In addition, some respected speakers also raised concerns regarding labour inspections. While we acknowledge that resources are always limited, we use them effectively.

The Department of Labour, with 78 offices and 500 labour offices, carry out 80,000 inspections per year, including a significant number of group inspections. In every inspection, child labour is one of the key items checked. The Government is also considering increasing the number of labour offices. Additionally, we request the ILO to provide more technical assistance in empowering labour offices to identify potential situations of child labour and to effectively handle such cases.

Further, as mentioned earlier, school dropouts are being closely monitored, and we are planning to work more closely with the Department of Education to ensure the reintegration of school dropouts into the educational system. We already have a highly effective coordination mechanism at both national and peripheral levels, and we intend to integrate the Ministry of Education into the system as well.

We would like to emphasize that recent data related to child labour suggests a declining trend in child labour, and we have submitted details. We are gradually moving in the right direction towards our goal of eliminating child labour. Sri Lanka firmly believes that child labour has no place in modern society and cannot be justified under any circumstances.