

Transcript of the speeches delivered at the closing sitting, Friday, 3 October 2025

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Closing statements

Mr Guido Domenico Ricci Muadi, Chairperson of the Employers' group

ILO Director-General, Regional Director of ILO for the Americas, Your Excellency, Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic, distinguished ministers of labour from the region, Your Excellencies, ambassadors, national authorities, government representatives, workers representatives, employers' representatives, dear colleagues, delegates, today we conclude the 20th American Regional Meeting of the ILO in Punta Cana. Months of intense discussions have gone into this debate, which culminated yesterday with a fruitful dialogue on the Declaration of Punta Cana. And this reflected not only differences, but also the magnitude of the challenges that we face and the need to find collective solutions to them. Our region continues to be marked by institutional fragility, democracies that are facing growing tensions, and high levels of informality. Practically half of the working population is in the informal sector, and that informality limits productivity, restricts innovation, and reduces the competitiveness of our economies, affecting the ability of companies to grow and to generate sustainable opportunities. Over these past three days, we have reaffirmed the sustainable enterprises are the genuine engine of social development and decent work. That is where companies are created and grow, and that is where we create quality employment and can expand social protection and strengthen social cohesion. But for companies to be sustainable, we need to have productive ecosystems that support innovation, investment, training, the integration of MSMEs in dynamic value chains. It also requires a sustained effort for skills development, investing in vocational training, in digital skills, in upskilling that help people to make the most of technological transitions. New technologies can be a real catalytic support for productiveness, for innovation and employment. Not a factor of exclusion. But we need to have coherent regulatory frameworks, suitable incentives and cooperation, close cooperation between governments, enterprises, and workers. We also need to draw attention to the central importance of freedom of association. This isn't just a right on the part of workers, but it's a fundamental right of employers' organisations too. The freedom of association protects the very existence of our enterprises, guarantees that its members can act with independence, and it makes a social dialogue legitimate as a democratic forum. Without free and independent employers' organisations, there cannot be genuine tripartism. Regrettably, we must also point out the very serious situations that we saw in this conference with delegations where representatives were accredited with real interference in the work of employers' organisations. Regrettably, we were left with a bitter taste in our mouths after this meeting because of the incoherence that we see in this region. We not only hear speeches defending authoritarian regimes, but we see countries who flagrantly violate the fundamental principles and rights at work. While this meeting was going on, what's incredible is that employer leaders were baselessly accused, governments continued to undermine the independence of employers' organisations, governmental authorities continue to encourage attacks against employers' offices, and leaders of the sector continue to be threatened even though they are simply exercising their legitimate right to representation. That cannot be considered normal and it cannot be silenced, Chairman. The conclusions of this meeting and the Declaration of Punta Cana mean that we must work in the right direction. We must generate stable institutional environments, overcome the barriers that are faced by enterprises, regulatory, financial, technological barriers, promote policies that accelerate the transition from informality to formality, and strengthen confidence in

social dialogue. The risk we face is that social dialogue is reduced to an exercise of rhetoric, while in the reality, the situation becomes worse and worse in the region outside of these rooms. And we cannot let that happen. We need genuine social dialogue with full freedom of association and representative delegations supporting productivity, inclusion, and making decent work an achievable aim rather than an empty slogan. As we conclude this meeting, we must be clear that our commitment doesn't end here. What we need to do now is to translate what has been agreed into policies and actions that strengthen enterprises, that support innovation, develop skills, and reduce informality to ensure that economic growth becomes a reality of social wellbeing. The ILO continues to be the best multilateral forum for that type of discussion, but the real challenge begins now ensuring that our societies find, in sustainable enterprises, innovation and productivity, a shared pathway towards greater democracy, social cohesion, and decent work. In that context, the employers of the Americas request the ILO to reiterate its commitment to an agenda that strengthens the skills of employers' organisations and their ability to play their role as key actors in economic and social development, and the guarantors of democratic institutions. It's vital to consolidate and expand the programme of strengthening institutional capacities with a view to ensuring their right to be autonomous, technologically sound, and economically sound, and to strengthen their capacity to effectively influence social and labour policies, legitimately representing the rights of their sector in an increasingly complex and challenging, changing environment. It's vital to move forward towards a comprehensive programme, to promote productive ecosystems that contribute to a virtuous cycle of productivity and growth. And which aren't limited to designing public policies, but which reach the very heart of enterprises. In particular, MSMEs promoting innovation, the strategic use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the office must underscore the development of formal education systems and vocational training systems aligned to the real needs of the labour market and of companies. All of that must be supported by full and effective participation of employers' organisations in social dialogue processes as a guarantee of inclusive, sustainable policies designed to promote the growth of quality productive employment. Finally, allow me to express my sincere thanks to the government and people of the Dominican Republic for their hospitality. Thanks go too to the Director-General and the ILO regional director, the regional office for the Americas, for the excellent organisation of our work, to the officials who have supported us, worked so hard, in particular, Ana Virginia Moreira and Fabio Bertranou, ACT/EMP for its constant support, and all of the employer delegates from all over the region. And the team of the OIE and their work and hard work have ensured that the employers' voice has come across very clearly in this forum. And with that, Chair, we support adoption of the Declaration of Punta Cana. Thank you very much.

Ms Marta Pujadas, Chairperson of the Workers' group

Thank you very much indeed, Chair, and a very good day to all of you. And I speak on behalf of the Workers' group and a spokesperson in the drafting committee. And at the outset I'd like to expend our warm thanks to the Dominican Republic, to yourself, to your government, and to the employers and workers of this country who have hosted this Americas Regional Meeting. I also wish to pay tribute to the ILO Director-General who is here with us, and everyone who has supported us over the past three days. We are in the final straight now of this 20th American Regional Meeting, and we can be pleased with the fact that we have succeeded in our task, but a very tough one of pursuing social dialogue, however difficult it might have seemed. We've demonstrated

once again that when you reach agreements, we can have powerful results. A tripartite dialogue isn't simply a slogan, it's a path, and it's sometimes a very difficult path. Sometimes it can be extremely difficult because we have different interests and perspectives. We are facing multiple crises as we read about in the Director-General's report, interconnected crises influencing employment, income, social protection, democracies, peace, nature, and the productive future of our region. These are simultaneous crises as our trade union confederation has pointed out. And negotiation isn't just routine, it's an act of historic responsibility. And when we overcome differences and find consensus, we agree on more than just a text, but on a clear signal for millions of workers across our region. I wish to express thanks to the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas who gave me this responsibility to be spokesperson. In particular, thanks to the Secretary General for the constant support, to all of the trade union movement to the Americas who has honoured us with the confidence, the trust that you have placed in me. And particularly the Argentinian union movement, all of you who have helped to support me in these discussions and given me your trust. I'd like to thank all of those who worked with me in the drafting committee, Marcello, Kylie, Enrique, Fabio, Gina, Tony, and Manuel, with all of you, we've learned from each other and we've found the words to express what we wanted to express. ACTRAV as well I'd like to thank, Amanda Villatoro, in particular, Maria Helena. Mayte Llanes from the ITUC for your support and technical expertise. I'd like to expend my thanks to the Employers' group as well through their spokesperson, Lourdes and Guido. And the government group, in particular, Leonardo Batalla for the very professional way in which you negotiated in sometimes very difficult but frank discussion in representing the governments. We have listened to each other without renouncing our principles, but with mutual respect. I'd also like to thank the ILO regional office and all of their technical staff. They show great commitment and they made the discussions possible. And sometimes we managed to reach consensus on the most difficult paragraphs. We've shared something essential. ILO is a unique institution. It's mandate to promote social justice and decent work isn't, or doesn't belong in a museum, it's vital to the current challenging time. We are facing such challenges today that defending ILO, its mandate, and its role isn't looking to the past, it's to look after the tool that will help us to look to the future, to find greater dignity, to propose public policies that are human centred, that guarantee fundamental rights. The freedom of association, collective bargaining, the right to strike, encouraging formalisation, and ensuring just transitions, and expanding social protection without leaving anyone behind. We came to this meeting with many commitments, firstly, to ensure that tripartism was a living force. We know that there weren't ease in solutions, but when you have dialogue, frank, honest dialogue, when evidence is met with the experience of those who work, employers, workers, and governments, when the union's voice comes across, sometimes we can make strides forward towards social justice. We also celebrated another commitment. Next December we're refining a virtual meeting to celebrate the MNE Declaration, and that is a clear undertaking, and we hope that the GB will approve that. Finally, we worked with a firm conviction. A conviction that we believe in the importance of these regional meetings at ILO as a specific tool to continue to build the future. And we hope to see each other again in five years, in 2030, in someplace in our continent to ensure that the agreements that we've reached have been implemented and to review progress, and to pursue our slogan, democracy, strengthening democracy, peace. We are a continent of peace, social dialogue, decent work, uniting the Americas for a future with sustainable development and social justice. For all of that, I wish to thank all of the participants at this regional meeting and the Workers' group supports adoption of the Declaration of Punta Cana. Thank you very much.

Mr Jorge Arturo Ríos Badillo, Government (Mexico)

Thank you, Chairman. I speak as chair of the Governments' group. Distinguished delegates, the governments of the region wish to express our sincere thanks to the government and people of the Dominican Republic for their generous hospitality and the excellent organisation of this 20th American Regional Meeting. Over the past few days, we have shown a very constructive spirit in dealing with the major issues that we face in the present and the future for work in the Americas. The creation of formal employment, social protection, and sustainable development, the strengthening of democratic institutions and social dialogue, the fair transition towards resilient societies, resilient to climate change and technological transformation. And upskilling and vocational training is the basis for inclusive development. We are meeting in very complex and challenging times for multilateralism and for international cooperation. These challenges make it even more important to have forums like this meeting and it will be vital to continue with this practice. We have also seen that there are continued difficulties with dealing with the important issues for the agenda of ILO. In that respect, we wish to underscore that the normative process on decent work and digital platforms, initiated by the ILC in 2025 that will continue in 2026, constitutes one of the most important discussions of recent years. Platform work is disruptive for traditional normative frameworks, but it also represents a historic opportunity to bring into the formal sector millions of workers in a region affected by informality and inequality. We cannot allow this opportunity to escape us. It's vital that the positions of the tripartite constituents don't become restrictions for discussing or incorporating such important issues for the international community and for our peoples. Social dialogue must always be the pathway to resolve our differences. The governments reiterate our willingness to build bridges, and to do so we will need good faith on the part of all parties in order to reach effective consensus. We wish to thank the Employers' and Workers' groups for the flexibility shown to make it possible to agree a tripartite regional declaration. We recognise that the text doesn't fully satisfy all the views of governments, workers, and employers. Nevertheless, in general terms, it does express our common concerns. We'll continue to work to bridge our differences in spite of the complexity of the issues at stake. We also recognise the essential role of the ILO and the regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean, whose work has been vital in the success of this meeting. Chairman, we reiterate our full commitment to ensure that our region is a region of peace and can attain social justice and decent work as the engine for sustainable inclusive development in our region. Only through tripartite social dialogue will we manage to build an American continent when no one is left behind. And the Government group also fully supports adoption of this declaration. Thank you.

Ms Lourdes Desiree Cardona, Employer (Honduras)

Chairperson, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates. On behalf of the employers, I would like to express our support for the Punta Cana Declaration. This comes at a crucial time for the Americas region and sends out a clear policy message. We are willing to build a future based on democracy, social dialogue, and sustainable development. The employer sector values the fact that we not only look at principles, but we recognise clearly the major structural challenges that face our region. Persistent informality in deeper inequalities, and technological progress, which is rapid. Recognising this is the first step in working to the future. In the document, we have a clear regional roadmap, and to strengthen democratic institutions to drive productivity and innovation, and to ensure that the ecological and digital transformation is fair and

inclusive. These are subjects that are essential and that all employers take on because that helps to improve the competitiveness of companies and the creation of quality jobs. It's also just as important that we have a tripartite approach, and this is part of the whole declaration. This will guarantee freedom of association, which is not a mere technical detail. It is a policy which allows us to achieve consensus and come up with good progress. Without tripartism, we cannot have sustainable development. The employer sector supports the declaration and that we move now from the declaration to action. We must translate it into specific results in policies, programmes, and commitments that are credible. And that's why we particularly value the proposal to draw up a regional implementation plan with clear goals and follow up mechanisms so that we ensure it does not remain just on paper, but we have tangible results in the territories and the labour markets. The Punta Cana Declaration is an opportunity in strategy to build trust in social factors, strengthen the region, and have a tripartite voice, which speaks out solidly. We would reaffirm our support for this declaration and we are convinced that its adoption is a firm step towards a more democratic productive region with decent work for all. Thank you, Chairperson.

Mr Over Dorado Cardona, Worker (Colombia)

Good day to everyone. And in particular to the Director-General of the ILO, the government of the Dominican Republic, and the employers, and to all delegates of governments, and our colleagues from the trade union movement. There are necessary questions and there are responses needed. How do we define the crisis in the world? The global crisis is multidimensional and it shows the limits of the imperialist, capitalist, and colonial system. And this characterises the current moment in relation to systems of domination, a reorganisation of these systems with a struggle between the dominant classes and the others. This is a process which is a transition towards a new world order. What trends are we seeing in production and accumulation of capital? A reorganisation where the primacy of speculative financial capital will go to productive industrial capital. And this, in other words, also means that there's a dispute and confrontation in world and how it is dominated. We, within our country as a workers' centre, the CUT, we continue to support and defend the democratic progressive and popular government of Gustavo Petro, who has experienced difficulties with the opposition within the country and fascism with success and changes. We've managed through this government to make real the continuation of the progressive changes of the left in our country. We call once more on the employer sector and enterprises in our country, ANDI, Finaku, ACOPI and ASAP to be part of the deepening of democracy in Colombia and to contribute to the round table for employment, to work towards decent work and for the economic and social development of our country. And with this group, we assert that one of the main issues in this country is that workers in Colombia who are organised and associated in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the world, are opposed to the imposition of fascism. We want to fight for democracy that is progressive and we want the trade union movement and trade unions to continue being a valid form of organisation to help the organisations we represent and the workers we represent. But we need to bring about the changes that we have to have in our countries, in Latin America, the Caribbean, and throughout the world. So, we call on all the actors today at this 20th Americas Regional Meeting to ensure that we do not allow fascism to be imposed throughout the world, and in particular in the work of the ILO and everything that comes out of this Americas Regional Meeting. Thank you.

Mr Jesus Otamendiz Campos, Government (Cuba)

Good day to everyone. Chairperson of the 20th Regional Meeting, Director-General of the International Labor Organization, representatives of governments of employers and workers, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the government of the Republic of Cuba, we'd like to express our most sincere gratitude to the government and people of the Dominican Republic for their welcome and the organisation of this regional meeting and the results achieved. We also recognise the ILO for having made available this dialogue and agreement space. After three intense days of work, we have reaffirmed the essential value of tripartite dialogue as a pillar for the construction of consensus and the search for solutions. The discussions on the creation of decent work, universal social protection, the strengthening of the democratic institutions, and the guarantee of fundamental rights at work have been particularly enriching. Cuba has followed closely the debates on the just transition and resilient societies and strategies for skills development, which are aligned with our national priorities. We recognise the importance of the information spaces that have helped us to learn more about the eradication of child labour, formalisation, and safety and health at work, which is essential for international cooperation. The conclusions that we adopt today are a valuable roadmap. For Cuba, they represent a renewed commitment to the principles of social justice, solidarity, and equality, which guides our revolution and the work of our state and government. We would like to reaffirm our firm commitment to advancing a permanent improvement of living conditions and working conditions of our people within the framework of a permanent social dialogue. Our country continues to work to update the economic model so that we can promote productivity, investment, and innovation without giving up on equity and social protection for all our citizens. And that is why we are updating our labour code to ensure that the drafter bill represents all of the groups of workers and employers, be they state or non-state actors. The draft law consolidates and improves the protection of the rights and the meeting of the duties and obligations which come from the legal labour laws which have been established to ensure the security and safety of our region. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to continue working with the ILO to ensure that we meet our work. Thank you.

Mr José Arroyo, OIE

Thank you, Chairperson. Good day to everyone. It's an honour to speak to you as a representative of the Employers of the United States of America speaking at this opportunity for the OIE. We welcome the Declaration of the Regional American Meeting, which recognises progress, opportunities, as well as the challenges that we face, and we support its adoption. I'd like to stress the positive aspects and consider that transitions are important. Digitalisation, the green transition, and demographic change can be motors for investment, innovation and formal employment if they're managed correctly. Our companies, including those in the United States, need public policy, which leads to investment, the facilitation of business in the region, legal, security, and regulatory frameworks that do not impede investment in the Americas. We call on public policy makers to drive to and build a suitable environment for sustainable enterprises. And so, it's essential that public policy takes place within the framework of solid social dialogue, in particular listening effectively to the needs of businesses in the region. I would also like to highlight the essential role of businesses in the innovation and in promotion of new technologies, particularly companies in my country, the United States. The World Trade Organisation suggests that artificial intelligence could increase GDP globally by 12 to 13% by 2040. And to ensure the region can have access and benefit from this, we need to ensure that there are educational programmes at all levels, in particular

technical and vocational education. And I would like to finish by thanking the organisers in the Dominican Republic for having hosted us this week, the of ILO for their support, and my colleagues, fellow employers, the representatives of workers. And in particular, I would like to greet my colleagues, fellow employers, and in particular the Vice Chair Laura Pena, Guido Ricci of Guatemala, and Laura Jiménez from Argentina. I would like to congratulate everyone. Thank you very much.

Mr Marcello Di Stefano, Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA)

Thank you, Chairperson. I speak on behalf of the International Trade Union Organisation at this closing session of the 20th American Regional Meeting with one certitude. There's no lasting peace without democracy and there's no full democracy without social dialogue and freedom of association that's effective. Freedom of association has three inseparable dimensions. The right to organise, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to strike. When these are guaranteed, conflict can be channelled and tensions find institutional areas and peace stops being a fragile promise, but a shared project. We share this with the authority of our history and with the honesty of looking towards and forwards at the deficits that still persist in our region. Today, we have trade union leaders who are imprisoned for defending human rights at work. Brothers and sisters who for supporting the standards of the ILO are forced to go into exile. And we drag behind us a tragic history of leaders who have been killed and disappeared. This memory does not bring us to a halt, it commits us. As we sing in our demonstrations, despite our dead, we have not been defeated. We continue our fight in the factories, in the streets, in every square, with the same responsibility within the multilateral, regional, and global sectors, and in this room. That's why we defend, with full conviction, tripartite social dialogue. It's not just mere words, it's a technology for democratic peace. This is how we build rules, we recognise rights and we prevent abuses. When social dialogue works, we have productivity that goes hand in hand with rights, investment happens and we have transition, digital, ecological, and demographic, which is done fairly. Where we silence trade unions, we see precarity emerge and violence arise. I'd like to thank most sincerely the regional office of the ILO and all its technical office for their professionalism and dedication throughout these days. The drafting committee for their rigor and patience in ensuring that we polished every word. And a particular mention to the leadership of Marta Pujadas who dealt calmly and firmly with the debates and finding consensus. I'd also like to thank ACTRAV for their help, and I'd also like to thank the groups for employers and governments for their hard work, which was at the level of our challenges. And of course, the people of the Dominican Republic. But I'd like to say something very clearly, and with the same strength that we defend the working class, we defend the ILO, it's mandate, and its role. It is a civilizing power, not just something involved in trade wars or geopolitical wars. We will not accept that its standards and procedures are used as an exchange in terms of trade union freedoms. Tripartism requires loyalty from the three constituents, and the first loyalty is that which brought us here. We call for integrated policies against anti-trade union violence, effective protection for those who defend labour rights, and international corporations to ensure that no country in our region is left without minimum guarantees. We are fully aware of the complexity of the context. We are living in a time of multiple connected crises, fiscal pressures, and changes in productive methods. And that's why we have to ensure that social justice, decent work and democracy are at the centre. Without these pillars, any growth will be fragile and exclusive. With them, societies are more stable, companies more sustainable, and policy is more credible. Those who support this work, delegations, technical teams, trade

unions, business representatives, and government representatives, we'd like to thank you for your commitment and seriousness. We'd also like to thank all of those who have helped us to make this meeting possible through the reporting and the translation. I would like to close with one conviction. Social peace cannot be decreed, it is built. And in homage to Jose Pepe Mujica, let us remember his inspiring message. Development cannot go against happiness. It has to be in favour of human happiness. Thank you very much.

Mr Pablo Chacón, Government (Chile)

Director-General of the ILO, Regional Director, delegates, representatives of government, employers and workers. This regional meeting of the Americas is coming to an end. It has been three days of fruitful discussions, which have helped to once more celebrate the role of the ILO, the most legitimate forum for tripartism in the world of work. We have an inclusive and visionary leadership for this time when multilateralism is attacked on many fronts. That's why we are calling for our America to be kept as a region of peace, rejecting all threats to the regional stability. The way towards social justice needs regional work on a national and regional level. We need an ILO, which is reinforced, renewed, and which remains looking in the right directions. Our continent and its responses to the challenges such as the rapid technological change, threats to democracy, climate change, and fighting inequality are all essential. The response is an inclusive tripartite dialogue. Chile would like to reaffirm its commitment along with all those who stand by this declaration where we have a people centred support for work and sustainable development. We need coordinated public policy, which promotes decent work, the reduction of discrimination and equality gaps, in particular gender gaps, and we must not forget this. We need to continue protecting those who work remotely in platforms in digital work. And we need to defend the rights of all at work. Defending human rights is fighting for a world where social protection, decent working conditions, access to training are essential. Let us not forget that when we see work as a source of value, we have a society that's productive. We not only have growth, but we have to involve this in all national societies and policies in the face of demographic change. We must achieve a virtuous balance between growth, creation of jobs, and economic and social wellbeing. Work is essential, but we must respect freedom of association and defend non-discrimination in any form. We must not forget this. However, we have a shared goal. Building solid democratic institutions, working to achieve universal social protection, and having effective social dialogue. Along with the ILO governments, workers and employers, we can move forward to a fairer future. And it's important that we defend multilateralism as a key tool for development. Thank you.

Sr. Pablo Bobic, Employer (Chile)

Thank you very much for giving me the floor, and I would like to extend our greetings to all present here and the representatives of the Dominican Republic for having hosted us so well and allowed us to exchange here. And they have made sure we've done so in the best possible conditions, both in the thematic sittings and also in the coffee sessions, as well as the plenary. This has helped us to build on the relationships we have between our countries on the work that has been carried out. We, of course welcome and recognise the efforts made, and I'd like to raise a few points. The ILO is now more than 100 years old, and one of the greatest challenges it faces is accelerated demographic change, migration, and this subject along with digital transformation is all linked to a need for continuous professional training and skills enhancement within our labour policies. We have to look closely and carefully at all the

changes, employment, work, enterprises are changing and we have to tackle this in accordance with the new realities. This is extremely important and we must remember this. Another point is that we must respect, in a crosscutting way and without any nuances, that in no country should this be the freedom of association of workers and of employers, which is covered in Convention 87 of the ILO, this is essential. It's not only relevant to workers, but also to employers, be it government on the left or the right. We must ensure this is promoted now, labour law and meeting the rules and laws that are enforced. Latin America has to change informality. We have informality of around 50% and we have to do this. It's not just a case of giving benefits to those who are in one sector to another. Otherwise, we'll all be changing sectors. And another point is that to facilitate regional dialogue, we have to have tripartism. We all have subjects to discuss and to comment on, and that are of interest. We've seen this at the Geneva Conference, we see subjects that are of importance, but putting them here in our regional meeting may not make that much sense. Sometimes we should look at regional matters. International matters are very important. If here we become the same forum, we're going to have to defend different causes and different flags. We have to look at the traditional rules of employment and look at our region. And we must permanently protect and implement social dialogue with respect, with the aim of contributing to agreements. It's not just speaking for speaking sake. We have to work towards a consensus. We cannot discuss everything. Sometimes subjects can be left on one side. This is not about dialogue. It's just recognising the timing for everything. The financial crisis that the United Nations and the ILO is facing mean that it's important that the ILO should concentrate on its core, the subjects that are most important to labour. There are other subjects that are covered in other fora in the United Nations, but these are subjects that may be more involved in other sectors and so we should all respect our spaces. The ILO should remain in the world of work and in the promotion of decent work. And I would like to end by thanking the Dominican Republic, the people, and government for their wonderful hosting of this meeting. And I would like to thank everyone.

Ms Viveca Dolores Amorós Kohn, Employer (Peru)

Thank you very much indeed, Chairman. And at the outset allow me to say that this Americas Regional Meeting is particularly valuable because we've been able to address directly the shared challenges that we have as a region, including informality, challenges with social dialogue, institutional tensions that are part of all our common experience. And this has been a unique opportunity because we've brought together our different experiences and solutions and shared them. And therefore, the solutions can be more applicable and can reflect similar challenges that we face in all of our countries. As we've discussed over the past three days, we've been working forward in implementing the conclusions of this meeting and the Punta Cana Declaration, and we'll need for that strong democratic institutions and social dialogue, building trust and effective dialogue. I believe that the three sectors agree that the transition from informal to formal economy is one of the key challenges we face in reducing poverty and inequality. But what we need to remember is that we can't just do that overnight. We need to build formalisation and the key is economic development pushed forward by employment. And for that we need legal certainty, institutional stability, clear regulatory frameworks, access to financing, and support for enterprises' productivity, so that enterprises of all sizes, and in particular MSMEs, can grow and get access to markets and incorporate value chains that can provide stable and formal employment. In order to generate trust, we need stability in all areas of government. In particular, so that investment continues

to allow economic growth and the creation of decent jobs. It's vital to guarantee a favourable environment for the development of the private sector because it's the private sector through sustainable enterprises, that is the engine of social development and decent work. Similarly, it's vital to strengthen effective social dialogue which can build consensus and be reflected in viable public policies that are both measurable and sustainable and channelled through legitimate bodies that are as representative as possible and reflect the realities of each country. In spite of the fact that 83% of countries in the region have national social dialogue institutions, it's been clear that we need to strengthen them. And the challenge is to identify the political and institutional conditions that continue to be lacking to ensure that tripartism plays its consultative role and becomes a space for generating effective public policies that have a real impact on reducing informality, creating decent work, and sustainable social protection. Finally, from the employer sector, we will rise to the challenge of building bridges of trust and cooperation. We are convinced that through social dialogue and sustainable enterprises, we will reach a more prosperous and equitable and sustainable future for all. Thank you.

Ms Ivonne Nuñez, Government (Ecuador)

Director-General of the ILO, my country, Ecuador, supports the declaration adopted at the 20th American Regional Meeting, and we agree with the prior preamble aligned with the ILO strategic plan 2026, 2029, and with the centenary Declaration of the ILO, and the declaration on the fundamental principles and rights at work. The declaration adopted here in Punta Canna urges the adoption of a regional agenda to promote decent work and social justice, guaranteeing fundamental rights at work, the elimination of child labour or forms of discrimination in occupation and the workplace, and reducing informality, which is a challenge for most countries in the region. It recommends how we should align labour legislation and national practices with international labour standards. In the framework of the transition to artificial intelligence, we need to overcome the challenging digital divide and adopt new productive models, opening up new opportunities for decent work, which will benefit workers and enterprises and help drive forward the economic development of our nations, ensuring universal social protection and introducing public policies. To achieve that, will help to convert informal jobs into formal employment in accordance with recommendation 204 and the strategy for the formalisation in Latin America and the Caribbean FORLAC 2.0. The creation of safe workplaces and the concern for occupational safety in health is beneficial for the wellbeing of workers, and that will be consolidated through a preventive culture through tripartite dialogue. We need to see vocational training reflect the realities of the labour market in order to reduce unemployment, particularly for young people when they finish their training. It agrees as a cross-cutting thrust for national labour policies that gender equality should be pursued in order to eliminate inequality. Recognising the regional initiative, Latin American and the Caribbean free of child labour as an example of cooperation, leading efforts towards a region free of child labour, ensuring that the region is once and for all free of that scourge. We also have looked at the need for the prevention, eradication of violence and harassment in the workplace. We've looked to encourage free and equitable labour migration without discrimination in the Americas region. The Punta Canna Declaration reiterates the slogan of this meeting, the practice of the principle of social justice, the best way of overcoming inequality, in particular in the workplace, and the constant search for lasting peace forever. Thank you.

Mr Florencio Marin, Government (Belize)

Morning everyone, Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished delegates. Firstly, please allow me to thank the people and government of the República Dominicana for this wonderful session that is being hosted right now. And also today, ILO staff. Thank you very much. On behalf of the government of Belize, I am honoured to address this gathering of distinguished representatives of government, labour, and employers. I wish from the outset to confirm that the Director-General's report highlights a truth, Belize firmly believes lasting peace cannot exist without social justice, and social justice cannot exist without decent work grounded in rights. For a small developing country like ours, the link between growth, jobs and rights is undeniable. While the Americas region has made progress, including reductions in youth employment, unemployment, stronger social dialogue, and ratification of fundamental ILO conventions, this progress is fragile. In our country, while unemployment nationally has fallen to 2.1% in April 2025, the lowest ever recorded, nearly 37.5% of our workers remain in the informal economy, and women continue to have a lower participation rate. Belize is committed to strengthening the growth, employment rights, connection outlined in the report. Our Decent Work country programme 2024, 2029 is already being translated into action through concrete initiatives. One such initiative is the Prosper Project in Toledo and Stann Creek districts, which support local economic development by embedding decent work at the community level. At the same time, BELTRAIDE, a unit in our government, is helping informal businesses move into the formal economy in several ways. Through its digital innovation programme, it gives micro and small enterprise training and grant support so they can use digital tools to grow and formalise. BELTRAIDE works directly with informal businesses by providing coaching, training, and help in getting registered legally. For the month of October, our government is carrying out an MSME tax amnesty programme, which reduces penalties so small firms can formalise more easily beyond this. We are undertaking a comprehensive review of our Labour Act, which was originally enacted in the 1960s, to modernise our legal framework in alignment with international labour standards. Simultaneously, we are finalising the occupational safety and health bill 2025, which will extend protections across all workers and sectors. To transform our labour market, we are implementing an IDB finance labour force and employability programme that modernises public employment services, expand training in high demand sectors, digitises our services, and introduces a labour intermediation platform. This programme works hand in hand with the decent work agenda and supports stronger labour market institutions. We are also conscious of regional dynamics. A major advancement is CARICOM full free movement in which Belize, along with Barbados, Dominica, and St Vincent and the Grenadines came into effect on October 1st. Under this arrangement, nationals of those states may enter, reside and work indefinitely in any of these countries. We urge increased technical cooperation and financing for small and vulnerable economies so that commitments are matched by capacity, strengthened the regional collaboration on migration governance, digital labour intermediation, and protection for workers in informal employment, continued ILO leadership to ensure that international labour standards remain for compass, for fairness and dignity in the world of work. In conclusion, Belize supports the Declaration of Punta Cana and reaffirms that decent work grounded in rights is not only a policy goal, but the foundation for peace, prosperity, and dignity for all. Thank you very much.

Ms Kaira Reece Bernal, ITUC

Thank you very much, Chairman. Greetings to representatives of the various sectors of the ILO at the top table. And greetings to all of my colleagues who participated

in the drafting group. I wish to underscore at the outset the importance of carrying out this 20th Americas Regional Meeting. A process that picks up what we left off at the 19th Regional Meeting that took place in my country, Panama, in October 2018, when we adopted the Panama Declaration for the centenary of the ILO, the future of work in the Americas. From the Americas Trade Union Movement, we recognise the efforts of all of the social partners, and in particular the government of the Dominican Republic who hosted all of our organisations here at this event. We understand that the renewal of Americas regional meetings can make an important contribution to the enjoyment of social dialogue and for the development of other regional meetings on other continents. We welcome the fact that we managed to adopt a tripartite regional declaration at this meeting, expressing the willingness of the parties to continue to discuss and to take action in relation to the major challenges that we identified in the course of our discussions. It's important that the challenges and agreements are reflected in a roadmap and can ensure that this guides our action in the region in future. The important issues we've addressed here at this meeting have updated the context and challenges that we all must face with regard to job creation, social protection, and sustainable development in the region. We've spoken of strengthening democratic institutions, of respect for fundamental rights, of institutionalised social dialogue, which we've all referred to on numerous occasions. And to the just transition, to resilient societies through the strategic design of public policies, focusing on improving the skills of workers in the framework of decent work for Americas trade unions, the thematic settings, also reflect issues that we've discussed internally, and that we've been building in the platform for the development of the Americas. And in the discussions of our women's and youth committees, in our working groups, and in alliances that we've built with other social movements, and in the resolution of our 5th Congress that took place in May of this year, also in the Dominican Republic. Our agendas would also incorporate the fight for integrated care systems, the eradication of child labour, strategies for labour formalisation, and with a focus on ensuring the enjoyment of the rights of migrant workers and that they're fully incorporated into the world of work and trade unions. With regard to democracy, our region and the world, today more than ever, need us to protect and consolidate democracy. And trade unions reiterate that the freedom of association, collective bargaining, and strong trade unions are vital preconditions for building democracy, for global governance, and for full respect for fundamental rights at work. With regard to the issues and agreements reached for future action emerging from this conference and from the tripartite declaration, we urge the strengthening of the participation of women and the consideration of intersectionality, women, migrants, young women, women from rural areas or from the informal sector or of African descent who have a different view of how we live and face the challenges we face in our continent. Ensure that all tripartite action strengthen the gender perspective and policies for equality, equity and inclusion is a challenge that we need to continue to rise to, particularly with regard to the cross-cutting gender issues throughout this revised agenda. We reiterate that having successfully conducted this 20th regional meeting and achieved a tripartite declaration is a positive outcome of mature social dialogue. Guaranteeing minimum agreements for the coordination of action over the next few years, particularly in a context where we face major changes for democracy in terms of informality, the development of technology and AI, the growth of platforms, the increasing migration, the need to generate better and more jobs with a particular focus on women and youth. Changes that are having an impact on all workers and with differentiated impacts on women, people of diverse backgrounds and youth. And finally, the trade union movement wishes to advocate for the role of ILO, which facilitates tripartism, and we undertake to contribute our experiences and come

up with concrete proposals, alternatives, solutions to the major challenges of the world of work today, and to keep social dialogue moving. And we support this tripartite regional declaration, and we recognise and thank all sectors for their contribution.

Ms Johanna Carolina Santeliz, Government (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Thank you, Chairman. Warm greetings on behalf of the Constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros. The Minister of People for Labour, Eduardo Piniettis. And my own greetings, particularly to the authorities of the Dominican Republic, to the ILO Director-General, to the delegations of governments, employers, workers, Ladies and Gentlemen, we wish to underscore the importance of this event. We have a strong conviction that we need to continue to discuss and to move forward in the face of the uncertainty and complex challenges we face in the world of work throughout the region. We have listened very carefully to the Director-General's report on the structural challenges we face. While progress has been made, we've also seen backsliding in some areas. What's important is to identify these challenges and to see how we deal with them. We're convinced that social justice is a fundamental pillar for sustainable development, for peace, and for stability in the countries throughout the region. Simón Bolívar, in the speech on the 15th of February 1819, said the most perfect government is a government that provides as much happiness as possible and as much social security, and as much political stability as possible. And in the same speech he said, "My view is that the fundamental principle of our system depends exclusively on the equality that we achieve in Venezuela." That is the basis of our national project, and that's why we need to deal with these economic, ethnic, and gender challenges that we continue to face in the region. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and the loss of equitable access to basic services like health and education continue to generate cycles of poverty and exclusion, which undermine our social fabric, and which limit the potential of our peoples. Working to support social justice, employment, decent work, universal social protection is a commitment on the part of all social partners in all of our countries, and it's a moral imperative. We need to do this in order to build more inclusive, resilient, and fair and prosperous societies in our Americas region. Achieving those objectives is difficult, and we face many challenges. We need to overcome the existing structural challenges in the world of work, but also we need to deal with new threats, such as the recent migration policies of powerful nations with mass deportation of migrants, unfair trade policies with tariffs all over the world, and the illegal imposition of coercive measures. Or even more serious, the military threat by the government of the United States of America against our country. Military movements in the Caribbean are a threat to peace and security in the Americas. Ignoring that, even though this is outside of the world of work, it undermines international law and the charter of the UN, and will have clearly an impact on the economy and societies of our countries. We need to have social dialogue that can deal with the inequalities in the region, and that's why we believe that we shouldn't just ignore political, economic, and social realities. We need to have a frank, direct and respectful social dialogue guaranteeing peace, stability, democracy, and development for the region under the principle of multilateralism and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the non-interference with the internal affairs of each of our states. And the inalienable right of peoples to the right to self-determination. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela gives its commitment to continue to work to support social justice in the region, supporting universally recognised principles, respecting multilateralism, sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of states. Finally, we call on the region to be aware of efforts to undermine peace and stability in the region, which will clearly have a direct impact on the world of

work in all of our countries. It's a problem for everybody, which is why we need to promote peaceful solutions to our problems and strengthen regional cooperation for the benefit of all. And finally, we urge countries in the region to continue to speak out and to call for the end to the genocide of the Palestinian people. Venezuela isn't a threat. Venezuela represents hope, so long live our people and our nation. Thank you.

Mr Martin Ford, Worker (Uruguay)

Thank you very much. Good day, Director-General, representatives of governments, representatives of the employers, and brothers and sisters. From the Uruguayan Trade Union movement, we deeply value this 20th American Regional Meeting. We're at a time where we need to listen to the tripartite voice, which expresses the specific nature of this region. We are facing a time of accelerated change, the technological revolution, the impact of climate change, tensions on democracy, and the persistent inequalities in our region. These challenges need a response, a joint response, which is responsible. We welcome this tripartite declaration, which express the shared path, defence of democracy, peace, decent work, social dialogue. These are principles that cannot just remain words. They have to be made into specific policies that improve the life of our societies and our peoples. For trade unionism, decent work means employment with rights, fair wages, social protection, and respect of freedom of association. In 2025, my country is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the end of the oppressive dictatorship, and in our region in the southern cone, four decades of democracy. And these are spaces that we have to fight for and ensure they continue. We'd like to highlight the importance of the ally as the unique tripartite space in the world, which guarantees an equal voice for workers, equal to governments and employers. For trade unionism, this space must be defended and re-vindicated at every level. So, the Uruguayan Trade Union Movement would like to reaffirm its commitment to these values, to social dialogue as a tool to progress to a future of work which is fairer, more inclusive, and more sustainable for the whole region. We demand in this space a respect of freedom of association in all our countries throughout our region. We call for peace and decent life solidarity to the workers of our neighbouring countries, Panama, Ecuador, and Haiti, and the whole region. And we'd like to say clearly here in this space, enough of the genocide in Palestine, enough of war. We want a world of peace. Thank you, Chair.

Mr Lorenzo de Jesús Roel Hernández, Employer (Mexico)

Thank you, Chair. This 20th American Regional Meeting of the ILO concludes with the Punta Cana Declaration, which as we have heard from our spokesperson, reflects a multitude of challenges and the urgent need to find joint responses. And so, I would like to reaffirm what we already heard from our representative. I recognise the people and government of the Dominican Republic, and in particular his excellency, the Minister for Labour, for their warmth and hospitality we thank them. The Director-General of the ILO for being present, participating and supporting our region of the Americas. I also thank the Regional Director of the ILO, as well as the Regional Office for the Americas for the flawless organisation of our work. And the office and ACT/EMP, and in particular the IOE, and all the Employers' delegates from our region for their time and commitment. As a region, we need to join to defend representative and effective tripartite dialogue, work to reduce the high levels of informality that are difficulties for workers, employers, and governments, and limit our productivity, restrict innovation, and reduce our competitiveness. Another challenge in our region is achieving a favourable environment with legal certainty in the rule of law that will allow for the continuity and development

of businesses. In particular, meeting the needs of SMEs and drawing investment so that we can create new sources of employment, which are productive and sustainable and can lead to better and more jobs. We trust that the Americas region, with the support of the ILO, will be able to guarantee and encourage in the same way that we have tripartite social dialogue, that we will encourage representation of all, guaranteeing and recognising the right and freedom of association with commitment from all sectors. We also call for adequate social policy, which will help be a motor of development. It's important, as we have heard in the work of this meeting, that sustainable enterprises be seen as the motor for development and decent work because they help to grow and create better jobs. So, we call that sustainable enterprises in being productive can innovate and contribute to development. And in this way, add to the value chain. As we hear in the Punta Cana declaration, we need to work for stable institutions and a reduction of barriers for employers, and to accelerate the movement from informality to formality, as well as maintaining the rule of law and social dialogue. As we heard from our spokesperson, dialogue encouraged by the work of the ILO will help us to create sustainable companies with innovation and increased professional and vocational training so that we can strengthen productivity and generate economic and social wellbeing. We have to recognise this declaration as the outcome of the tripartite dialogue that we held here at our regional meeting, and this reflects the ILO. And so, we commit to supporting this work to reduce informality and to support the agreements in the declaration to support the creation of jobs as sustainable development, and the support of democratic institutions, as well as strengthening true institutional social dialogue. And to ensure we have a fair transition, and draw up strategies for new public policy. Thank you.

Mr Juan Castillo, Government (Uruguay)

Thank you very much, Chair, Participants at the 20th American Regional Meeting, the officials of the ILO, and all those who have been working alongside us over these days, to all our colleagues with whom we have shared three days of work that are now drawing to a close. I'd like to say that we have been participants in a very good meeting with the value we give to our discussions where we all come to draw up strategies and to tackle the issues and the needs of our constituents following the work of the ILO and also our peoples. So independently of the resolutions, and knowing that no one goes away with 100% of what they wanted, we must not forget that this is part of the work that we have all done. We welcome in particular the work that we must not leave ignored. We're coming to the conclusions in a moment, we will be hearing the report of the declaration, which we are going to be recognising and adopting as the declaration of our meeting. It is due to a small group of our colleagues and officials who have been working over recent months and for many hours now, and until very recent hours, to produce this work. We need to value the work of that group. And essentially, I also want to join in what we have heard from colleagues who have spoken before me by thanking the Dominican Republic for their work on this regional meeting, the warmth and welcome. And despite the fact that we haven't yet been able to fully enjoy the beauty that we can see surrounding us on this wonderful island, and we certainly want to thank the people. We also welcome the policy side, what we have been capable of, and what we indicate. Only the ILO, which is the space that organises the world of work internationally, only the ILO can put a 72-hour agenda with debate and discussion by all representatives, the call to debate for democracy, for peace, for decent work, for social dialogue, for sustainable development, and social justice. We can't play guessing games. No one, no international body could put this for debate and build consensus in the same

way, because it could otherwise be a pointless dialogue where everyone just sets out their point of view and then leaves without an agreement. But this shows the role of tripartism, which we see constantly. We are not just coming here to say it at our regional body of the ILO. We're not just coming to say it here. We practice it in our countries. And this is part of what we have represented as the workers and the employers. Representatives have also said. You have been able to see that they, themselves call for their needs to be met by governments. But we also believe in having a strong value in building consensus, having tripartite fora, and building above all respect so that ideas can be validated and contribute to consensus. This International Labor Organization is the only multilateral body which is tripartite in nature, and we have to fight for this. Wherever people are, we have to fight for this type of forum. If the world today had more tripartite spaces, more multilateral bodies with this mechanism, we would no doubt have fewer wars, fewer invasions, and fewer blockages, and we'd be thinking of the interests of humanity. And that is why for us, Chairperson, Director-General, defending the ILO is a defence of labour rights and defending consensus and the building of policies and strategies that are unconditional. Workers, employers and governments cannot be taught lessons on what we need to build together. We fully support the Punta Cana Declaration and we will work to ensure it is made real. Thank you.

Mr Colin Jordan, Government Vice-Chairperson

Thank you very much, Chair. Director-General, colleagues, all distinguished delegates, good afternoon. I first would wish to thank the government and all the organisers from the host country, our host country, the Dominican Republic, for your excellent hospitality during this meeting. Barbados is grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as government vice chairperson of this 20th American Regional Meeting. A sincere thank you to the Government group for the nomination and to the broader house who agreed to allow one of the smaller states at the meeting to serve in this role. We have had a productive, very productive 20th regional meeting. This is the first regional meeting in this new format, and we appreciate the opportunity to be able to provide feedback, as we heard just now from Luis. In this meeting, we discussed the report of the Director-General, and many perspectives were shared. We recognise the connection between growth, jobs, and rights within the context of the critical and foundational role of social justice and the relationship to peace. I repeat here the need for our region to be seen by all of our countries as a zone of peace. We must work to ensure it is actually a zone of peace. Instability will have an impact on our societies and will impact our workers and our enterprises. The thematic sessions were rich in their substance and discussion. The subjects chosen by the planning team touch on the real issues that confront us as a region. They included job creation, social protection, and sustainable development, the need to strengthen our democratic institutions, and the ability to do so through respecting fundamental rights and engaging in social dialogue. We also discussed creating sustainable societies by way of environmental, demographic, and technological transitions that are just. And we spoke as well to creating public policies in order to improve skills and vocational training. What was interesting, but not surprising, is that a consistent theme in the discussions across the four thematic sittings was the necessity for effective social dialogue. Social dialogue is necessary for progress in any area that is of concern to governments, employers, or workers in our region. We must engage with each other intentionally, sincerely, and transparently if we are to realise the goals of our organisations and the legitimate aspirations of the people of our countries. I will state here that in my view, legislating social dialogue is not necessarily

the same as institutionalising social dialogue. We must be diligent to ensure that social dialogue becomes or remains a way of life, that it becomes or remains the way governing is done in our countries, and that it becomes or remains the way of doing things that every resident of our countries expects. Negotiations around the declaration have reflected the strong views held by governments and the social partners. It has been a long and difficult journey. We were able, however, in true ILO style, to reach consensus without doing violence to our core principles and the values we hold dear. It was testament to the power of sharing, discussing, and compromising as we seek to deliver for the workers of our region. The declaration speaks to rights, responsibilities, and duties. I use the term protection and production, and we have been able to address this matter with regard to the need for sustainable enterprises and economic growth at the national level. We have been able to commit to protecting fundamental rights at work while recognising that strong employer and worker organisations are essential for effective social dialogue. Many of the key areas that affect our region have been included. Areas such as informality, gender equality, the alignment of legislation with international labour standards, labour migration, technology, care work, and of course just transitions, and protecting those that are most affected by natural disasters. What was clear from our interactions, and from all of the interactions we have had over the last three days, is that our region needs the multilateral system now more than ever. Our presence and involvement here speaks to the fact that we need each other and that we are stronger together. This unique organisation that is the ILO is not just any organisation. It is an organisation of value, because it develops standards and best practices based on deep analysis and robust discussion among the governments, employers and workers. And coming out of those discussions, agreements on what best practices should be. In the atmosphere all around us is the challenge being faced by the multilateral system. Specifically, we are all concerned about the resources available to the ILO and the possible reduction in those resources. This is a time, distinguished delegates, to be sensible and pragmatic while not losing the ethos of the organisation or violating the principles that underpin it, and that are the essence of the organisation. We need to support the leadership of the organisation at this critical time. We need to be sensitive to the concerns of ILO staff during this uncertain and likely scary period for them. Whether we like it or not, we must also be considerate of the views that we do not agree with, however extreme we think those views are. In this era of challenge and possible resource reductions, now is the time to commit or recommit to the Global Coalition for Social Justice. This is the instrument through which many of the goals of the ILO can be achieved through leveraging relationships with other organisations. This instrument will help in ensuring policy coherence as we ensure human-centred development based on social justice and adherence to fundamental principles and rights at work. Let us use this opportunity, developed by the United Nations under the UN 80 rubric, to create a more effective and efficient organisation that delivers even more for workers, employers, and the countries of the world. At this critical juncture in its existence, the ILO must stay true to the Declaration of Philadelphia and to its centenary declaration. It, or maybe I should say we, must stay focused on our mandate to deliver for the workers of the world, those whose labour are the foundation of the development of our nations. Thank you very much, Chair.

Ms Laura Peña Izquierdo, Employer Vice-Chairperson

Honourable Olivares, Chairman and Minister of Labour of the Dominican Republic, Director-General, ministers of labour of the Americas, vice chairs, representatives of workers and governments, distinguished national and international authorities,

distinguished delegations, colleagues, representatives of workers, dear friends, I'm honoured to address this meeting on behalf of the Americas Employers' group at this closing session of the 20th Americas Regional Meeting. Which has been a forum for frank dialogue and constructive dialogue that has led to very valuable conclusions and certainty that tripartism continues to be the life force of the International Labor Organization. I'd like to thank the Director-General for his report, which reminded us that social justice isn't an abstract idea, but an indispensable precondition for peace, democracy, and sustainable development. And in our region, social justice will only be possible if we reduce informality, and if we enhance productivity, and if we increase opportunities for all. We also welcome the opening statements that we heard from various countries, from governments, unions, and employers. And we'd like to thank them all for their positive contributions. Over the past three days we had four thematic sittings, which enabled us to address the major challenges facing our region from different angles. In the first sitting, employment, social protection, and sustainable development, we noted that informality continues to be a major barrier. 47.6% on average of workers in Latin America and the Caribbean remain in the informal sector. And in the Dominican Republic, that is 55%. We cannot finance solid social protection systems if most are excluded from them. And employers have always insisted that formalisation must be a priority, and that needs a favourable environment for entrepreneurs and MSMEs. Sitting two, democratic institutions, fundamental rights and social dialogue, we reiterated that tripartism isn't simply an institutional characteristic, but it's a clear method for achieving sustainable consensus. Only through social dialogue can we promote gender equality, the elimination of child labour and forced labour, and occupational safety and health. Respect for these fundamental rights is the very basis of confidence in our labour institutions. Sitting three addressed climatic, technological and migration transformations, and we recognise unprecedented transformation. Climate change is threatening whole sectors of employment, particularly in the Caribbean region where more than 40% of jobs depend on tourism. Digitisation and artificial intelligence are reconfiguring production and services. Between 26 and 38% of workers in the region are, to a certain degree, exposed to automation. And for that, we need regulatory frameworks which provide greater certainty, support innovation, and promote investment. Sitting four addressed vocational training and skills, and we agree that the future of work needs us to invest more in the future of people and their skills. 13.3% of youth are unemployed, and that's almost three times the rate of adults, and many work in the informal sector. Only 36% of women participate in STEM sectors, and the figure that stands at 64% for men. So those figures require us to work with urgency. We need lifelong training systems, certification of skills, and effective alliances between education and enterprises. Throughout the discussions, the employers reiterate a very clear message, and that is that there can be no decent work without sustainable enterprises. Enterprises generate employment, innovation and productivity. And that's why we support policies that promote investment, the adoption of new technologies, legal certainty, and competitiveness, particularly for MSMEs so that formalisation represents an opportunity rather than a burden. On behalf of the Employers' group, I wish to thank the government of the Dominican Republic for its hospitality and for reiterating its commitment to multilateralism and tripartite dialogue. I wish to extend those thanks to the Director-General and to the regional office for having facilitated such high level and important discussions for the region. Dear colleagues, the pathway to social justice and decent work is a very complex one, but it brings us great hope. This regional meeting has set forth a roadmap for formalisation, social protection, and democratic institutions that are robust, just transitions, and skills for the future. And confirms that the ILO is a unique

forum where governments, employers, and workers sit down as equals to build consensus. Finally, and no less important, we wish to thank the organising team for this event, both on the part of the Dominican Republic and at the ILO. On behalf of the Employers of the Americas, we reiterate our commitment to continue to work hand in hand with workers and with governments to ensure that the future of work in our region is a future of social justice, opportunity, innovation, and sustainable enterprises. Thank you very much.

Mr Gabriel Del Rio Doña, Worker Vice-Chairperson

A very good day, Ladies and Gentlemen. And at the outset allow me to thank God for this wonderful opportunity that we've had to enjoy this meeting over the past three days. Honourable Director-General, Minister of Labour, and friends at the top table, government representatives, distinguished employers' delegates, dear brothers and sisters from the Workers' bench, dear friends, I am honoured to address this August Assembly as Vice Chairperson elected by the Workers' group for the closure of this 20th Americas Regional Meeting of ILO, and that we have been lucky enough to host in our country, the Dominican Republic. At the outset, on behalf of the workers of my country and of the region, I wish to extend sincere thanks to the ILO for having enabled my country to host this very important meeting. And I wish to thank the government of the Dominican Republic, which took on this role with great responsibility, and all of the tripartite constituents who showed a very constructive approach in making the success of this meeting possible. And allow me to extend a congratulations in particular to the ILO Director-General for his report. It was a report that enabled us to have a very in-depth discussion of the most important themes for workers and for the world of work. And his vision helped us see the situation more clearly and understand better the challenges that we face in a path to a more sustainable development and a more sustainable world. And during the meeting, we addressed four main issues, or themes in the discussion. Employment, social protection, and sustainable development. Where we reaffirmed that it's not enough to generate jobs, but we need decent jobs, and the enjoyment of rights, security and inclusion for all. Secondly, we heard about the strengthening of institutions and fundamental rights, and we all agreed that without solid institutions and a clear respect for the freedom of association, collective bargaining and equality, we will not see real progress. Third, the just transition towards resilient societies. We must rise to the challenge of climate change, to digitisation, and global crises. Just transitions mean that no one can be left behind in this process of adapting to new realities. Fourth, training and vocational training. Skills, the future of work requires renewed skills, opportunities and lifelong learning, giving particular focus to youth, women, and the most vulnerable categories of workers. These themes are all interconnected, and we have discussed them with the conviction that only a comprehensive approach can provide sustainable solutions. And I'd like to underscore the success of the drafting committee and pay tribute to their work. They showed real tripartite commitment and managed to agree on the Declaration of Panama and now the Declaration of Punta Cana, which provides us with a roadmap for the future in the Americas. I'm convinced that the declaration will provide an inclusive transformative agenda, which will serve as a guide for social and labour policies in the region, and a reference for social dialogue over the next few years. As a host country, Dominican Republic, country of Eduardo Sanchez Meia, we live up to our commitment, we give our undertaking to proceed along that road. And we must also see this meeting as the starting point of strengthening our institutions, promoting formalisation, extending social protection, and improving the skills of our workers. I also wish to thank the

Employers bench for their very productive and constructive participation. I'd like to thank governments for their efforts in mediating and in listening. And all of my brothers and sisters from the Union movement showing their customary, patience and passion to defend the fundamental rights of workers. Dear friends, in this meeting, we believe that we have set in motion new bases for social dialogue, which is the basis for constructing a fairer and more inclusive and more resilient society. And I believe will give us peace as the outcome of social justice. So, I wish to conclude by reiterating my gratitude to the ILO Director-General, to the host government, to the technicians and interpreters, and each and every delegate that has ensured that this meeting has been the place of genuine discussion. We have adopted here conclusions but also commitments, undertakings, specific commitments that we can follow up. The Declaration of Panama should inspire us to translate words into action, move forward confidently towards human dignity, social justice, and decent work. Thank you to all and may God continue to bless us. We'll see each other again soon. Thank you.

Mr Eddy Olivares Ortega, Chairperson of the Regional Meeting

With your indulgence, I also wished to make some closing remarks. Distinguished Ministers, Your Excellencies, Secretary General of the Regional Meeting, Director-General Gilbert Houngbo, distinguished delegates, vice chairs, Secretary Luca Bormioli, dear friends from the press, ladies and gentlemen, we have reached the end of the 20th American Regional Meeting of the ILO. An event that has put the Dominican Republic at the very heart of social dialogue in the Americas region, under the theme, democracy, peace, decent work and social dialogue, uniting the Americas for a future with sustainable development and social justice. This meeting constitutes a milestone that sets out a consolidated roadmap for the future of the region. Our discussions have addressed the structural challenges facing the Americas. Persistent informality, inequality, and exclusion. A roadmap focused on people, inclusion and sustainability has been drawn up, promoting productive growth, anchored in social justice. Tripartite consensus has been essential to the success of this meeting, and it's focused on three key pillars of action. Firstly, the transition to formality, the need to promote the transition from the informal to the formal economy, pursuing a comprehensive approach based on ILO Recommendation 204 of the ILO to combat a regional informality rate of around 47.6%. Secondly, universal social protection. Designing comprehensive social protection systems based on universality and solidarity to bridge the gaps that particularly affect informal workers and women. Third, institutional strengthening. The urgent need to strengthen democratic institutions as a fundamental guarantee of institutionalised social dialogue. We have agreed on the central importance of gender equality, labour migration, and youth as strategic vectors for boosting labour markets. Addressing the gaps faced by women, young people, and migrants is key to achieving systemic productivity in support of decent work. Tripartite social dialogue, governments, employers and workers, isn't just a method, it's the cornerstone and driving force for change in building the necessary consensus, and especially to manage just transitions in the face of demographic changes. One of the most notable achievements of this regional meeting has been the ability of the working groups to draft and to agree on the Punta Cana Declaration. This document, thanks to the effort and dedication of all delegations, sets out regional commitments and priorities, focusing on the effective application of international labour standards, and strengthening the virtuous link between economic growth, employment, and labour rights. The declaration constitutes a tangible manifestation of the mandate contained in the ILO Declaration on Social Justice and the centenary declaration. It's a call to action

to build inclusive and effective labour governance, ensuring that economic growth translates into more and better jobs and guaranteeing respect for labour rights throughout the region. As host and chair of this meeting, I wish to express my deep gratitude to all the teams that made this 23 regional meeting possible. Their efforts have been crucial to the success of the new regional meeting format, which has proven to be dynamic, inclusive, and highly effective. I'd like to highlight the tireless efforts of the General Secretary of the Regional Meeting, the Office of the Director-General, Gilbert Houngbo, whose report served as an essential reference for the debate. Each and every delegate whose commitment to social dialogue has been an example for all of us. The technical and logistical teams whose quiet but effective work has ensured the smooth running of all of the sessions. The political will, trust, and leadership demonstrated by every delegation has been the driving force behind the success of this new format, the fluidity of the discussions, the depth of the analysis in the four thematic sittings, and the adoption of the Punta Cana Declaration reaffirm the vitality of Tripartism in the Americas. So let us return to our countries with a conviction that only through tripartite social dialogue will we achieve a future where peace, democracy, and decent work are genuine realities for all. The real work of implementing the Punta Cana Declaration begins now and we will do it together. Let's continue to enjoy the rest of your time here in my country, and I wish you a very safe journey back to your countries, which are our countries because we are all brothers and sisters. Long live the ILO. Many thanks. Thank you very much. Before we close our meeting, I have the pleasure of asking my Secretary General of the meeting, the Director-General of the ILO, Mr Gilbert Houngbo to present his closing speech. You have the floor, sir.

Mr Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General of the ILO

Thank you so much, Mr President, Honourable Minister Ortega, Honourable ministers, Head of Delegation, social partners, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'll try to be brief because I know you all are waiting for this moment of closing. But as we conclude this 20th ILO Regional Meeting for the Americas, I want to thank each one of you for your active participation, your thoughtful contributions, and above all, the spirit of dialogue and the spirit of collaboration that has shaped our work over these past few days. We have come together around the values that unite us, a shared commitment for social justice, a shared commitment for productive employment, decent work, and democracy. Those are fundamental pillars of sustainable development in the Americas, and quite frankly, beyond the region. We have heard powerful examples of progress, from government implementing inclusive policies to employers and workers' organisations driving innovation and building resilience on the ground. Countries like the Dominican Republic have shown that when employment and rights are placed at the centre of public policy transformation is not only possible, but it is real. And yet we leave with a clear and shared understanding our work is far from over. In that spirit, I want to highlight a few points from the Punta Cana Declaration, which we have just adopted. This declaration will serve as a roadmap for the region in the years ahead, it sets out clear priorities for advancing productive employment, decent work, and social justice. It identifies future lines of actions, and it's called on the ILO office and the Director-General to support, follow up, and implementation. And this is timely, as in a few months the office will start its process of preparing our programme and budget for '28, '29. It is a substantive document, and I want to warmly congratulate all of those who worked long hours and late hours to negotiate it and come to a consensus. We stand in the office ready to walk alongside you to transform this declaration into reality through evidence-based action and inclusive social dialogue. Dear colleagues, in a time of deep

uncertainty, we have shown over the past three days, and under the new modalities for regional meetings, we have shown that the tripartite constituents of the Americas can come together, engage seriously with complex challenges, and build consensus. This is not a small achievement, and it must not be underestimated. Mr President, let me now express my sincere appreciation to all those who made this meeting a success. First, my thanks to the three vice presidents at the podium, Minister Jordan, representing the government, Ms Pena Izquierdo, representing the employers, and Mr Del Rio representing the workers. You have formed a highly effective and collaborative team, and I'm so grateful for your leadership. To my colleagues from the Secretariat, for both those based here in the Americas region, and those that travelled or connected from Geneva to support this meeting, thank you all. Thank you for your dedication and your professionalism. And above all, I want to thank the people of Dominican Republic who made this meeting possible. Honourable Minister Olivares Ortega, we were honoured by the presence of the President of the Republic, President Abinader, and we have benefited greatly from your leadership as chair, and we really want to thank you for this. But just as importantly, we have felt the hospitality of the Dominican people. We have truly felt at home in Punta Cana. So, thank you very much. Let this meeting not be an end, but a beginning of a renewed commitment to build a region where work is a source of dignity and an opportunity for all.