



Governing Body

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Policy Development Section

POL

Minutes of the Policy Development Section

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Employment and Social Protection Segment

1. Possible initiatives that complement the body of international labour standards to ensure decent work in supply chains (GB.356/POL/1)

1. The Governing Body had before it an amendment to subparagraph (a) of the draft decision, which had been proposed by the Employers' group and circulated by the Office, which read:
 - (a) requested the Office to take the following ~~normative option(s) [xx]~~ and/or non normative options ~~2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 [xx]~~ forward, including through the preparation of relevant proposals based on the guidance that it provided during the discussion;
2. **The Employer spokesperson** recalled that the discussion took place at a crucial time for the Organization and its constituents, in the context of the ongoing reprioritization process. At the November session of the Governing Body, Governments had called for the ILO to focus on capacity-building and support for the implementation of ratified international labour standards, rather than on the development of new standards. The discussion also took place at a time of significant disruptions affecting global trade routes and national economies and introducing new standards would be counterproductive in that context. To achieve lasting impact and sustainable change, the ILO should focus on options that had proven to deliver positive results on the ground and on addressing the root causes and structural obstacles underlying decent work deficits.
3. There was no normative gap in relation to supply chains. The 2021 *Gap analysis of ILO normative and non-normative measures to ensure decent work in supply chains* (2021 gap analysis)¹ had confirmed that the existing body of international labour standards already addressed decent work deficits in supply chains when ratified, implemented and effectively enforced. The appropriate response was therefore not to develop new standards but to support Member States in ensuring effective implementation.
4. The ILO should focus on supporting implementation and enforcement of fundamental principles and rights at work, ratified international labour standards and measures to tackle informality through technical assistance at country level. The vast majority of decent work deficits were not linked to supply chains and the Employers' group did not support the proposed normative options 1, 8, 10 and 12, in line with its position in the discussion under document GB.356/INS/2/1. Those options were duplicative, contradictory and lacked evidence-based justification. The Office document indicated challenges in avoiding duplication in the development of such standards. Option 12 was vague, lacked serious assessment and acknowledged that the problem lay in failures of ratification, implementation and enforcement of existing standards.
5. The focus should be on capacity-building and on supporting constituents in strengthening implementation of international labour standards and national laws, which was particularly important since most supply chains were domestic. If the objective was to create a level playing field for all companies and ensure equal protection and rights for all workers, the approach adopted needed to encompass all enterprises and workers within a given jurisdiction and respect national sovereignty, which required strengthening national institutions and ensuring effective implementation of national laws.

¹ ILO, *Gap analysis of ILO normative and non-normative measures to ensure decent work in supply chains*, WGDWS/2021, 2021.

6. The Office should work in a structured and coherent manner. The “One ILO” approach was critical to working more strategically, coherently and systematically together. The Employers’ group supported a combination of the non-normative options 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 as a mutually reinforcing package. Those elements should form core components of the future supply chain strategy and inform the discussion on that strategy at the 359th Session (March 2027) of the Governing Body. A combination of those elements would strengthen existing initiatives and tools and could deliver tangible results. The current ILO supply chain strategy had achieved positive results. To promote sustainable economic growth and job creation in supply chains, the Organization should build on that strategy, which enjoys tripartite support and is delivering positive results locally, rather than reopen a divisive normative debate.
7. He introduced the amendment proposed by the Employers’ group and said that the outcome of the discussion should be to take forward the non-normative options, in order to provide clarity and avoid misunderstandings.
8. **The Worker spokesperson** underlined the structural nature of decent work deficits in global supply chains, which affected a significant proportion of the global workforce in agriculture, garment manufacturing, electronics, mining and other occupations. Persistent violations of fundamental labour rights, including forced labour, child labour and restrictions on freedom of association were not incidental failures of supplier compliance but were structurally generated. Research indicated that buyers’ purchasing practices were a root cause of poor working conditions and that, when buyers demanded low prices and short lead times, suppliers faced irreconcilable pressures that were routinely resolved at the expense of workers.
9. Decades of voluntary initiatives had not produced material improvement. The *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, while an important touchstone, did not create enforceable obligations on corporations, and a 2021 review by the United Nations Working Group on business and human rights had found implementation of the responsibility to respect pillar uneven and insufficient. Multi-stakeholder initiatives had also failed. Research showed that sustained compliance had not been achieved even in factories subjected to repeated auditing. The architecture of global supply chains created profound barriers to access to justice and legal remedy. The outcome of the ILO Tripartite Technical Meeting on Access to Labour Justice for All,² as well as the Office mapping and options paper,³ clearly identified access to remedy as a major decent work gap linked to supply chains. The prevalence of fundamental labour rights violations in global supply chains was not a governance gap that voluntary frameworks or technical assistance alone were capable of closing. The non-normative initiatives on which the Office had worked for many years had confirmed that point.
10. The problem was a predictable outcome of structural commercial power asymmetries, which could only be addressed through regulatory initiatives complementing non-regulatory ones. While strengthening labour inspection and administration was important, the problem could not be solved through domestic labour governance alone as decent work deficits in supply chains were not solely the result of State capacity constraints but also of structural features of the global supply chain business model.

² GB.355/INS/16/1.

³ ILO, *A mapping and analysis of the impact and effectiveness of global, regional and national regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives addressing decent work deficits in supply chains (revised version)*, 2025.

11. Normative action by the ILO in that area would improve job quality in producing countries, increase wages and income security and strengthen worker representation, thereby supporting social and economic development. It would also enable a greater share of the value created in global supply chains to remain in host or producing countries, supporting the development of resilient, demand-driven local economies rather than perpetuating extractive models.
12. At a time when the Organization was reflecting on its added value among international institutions, the Office paper showed that the ILO was uniquely placed, as a normative organization, to lead and guide a globally relevant approach on decent work in supply chains. The insights contained in the Office paper supported that conclusion: voluntary frameworks had been tried and found wanting, and normative action was necessary to change the structural incentives generating violations. The cross-border architecture of supply chains meant that labour governance structures were often confined to specific worker–employer relationships and restricted to the national jurisdiction where the work took place. The normative gap was not merely one of ratification and national action, but a structural gap resulting from the inability of existing instruments to reach across commercial relationships and jurisdictional boundaries to hold firms accountable for violations that they commercially caused or contributed to.
13. Option 12 – a possible standard to provide guidance and identify commitments to achieve decent work in supply chains – most directly and comprehensively addressed the structural deficits identified by the document and its insights. This option integrated, rather than disaggregated, the three dimensions of reform indispensable to meaningful supply chain governance. The Workers’ group was open to hearing other groups’ views on the normative options. Further, the speaker indicated that a smart mix of complementary and interconnected initiatives, encompassing different approaches and objectives, could be impactful and effective. The Workers’ group could therefore endorse a complementary package of non-normative measures, including measures suggested by the Employers’ group, provided that they were designed to support and strengthen normative standards rather than a substitute for them, and in particular options 2, 3, 6 and 11.
14. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Malawi recalled the findings of the 2021 gap analysis, which indicated that existing international labour standards addressed most decent work deficits in supply chains when effectively implemented. Priority should be given to ratification and national implementation of existing standards, particularly the fundamental and governance Conventions. The Africa group did not support the proposed normative options (options 1, 8, 10 and 12), as existing standards already addressed the relevant issues, including labour governance and access to justice.
15. The speaker expressed support for the non-normative options 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11. With respect to option 5, strengthening the capacity of labour inspection systems in his region was a priority, and regarding option 6, tackling root causes of decent work deficits in supply chains was important, as outlined in paragraph 27 of the document. Regarding option 7, the speaker sought further clarity on how the “One ILO” approach would relate to Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). He expressed support for the Employers’ group amendment.
16. **Speaking on behalf of the Asia and Pacific group (ASPAG)**, a Government representative of Bangladesh reaffirmed commitment to the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains and emphasized the importance of strengthening its implementation. The 2021 gap analysis had found that the body of standards addressed most of the decent work deficits in supply chains, provided that these were ratified and fully implemented. Challenges existed in relation to

non-ratification and lack of implementation, but also due to the cross-border nature of supply chains and involvement of distinct employers with varying economic contexts. Addressing decent work in such a complex setting requires interconnected initiatives, including support for ratification and implementation of fundamental Conventions and greater use of existing frameworks such as the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022 (MNE Declaration) and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

17. He welcomed the 12 options presented in the document, in particular those relating to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), business networks, the ILO Helpdesk for Business on international labour standards and technical assistance. It was important to assess progress under the current strategy in 2027 before considering any new normative initiatives.
18. **Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus said that the following countries aligned themselves with the statement: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Norway. He welcomed the proposed options and the inclusive consultation process, and expressed support for the ILO's strategic approach to promoting decent work through a combination of normative and non-normative measures.
19. Human rights due diligence was a transformative tool for addressing decent work deficits in supply chains. The EU corporate sustainability due diligence directive reflected a commitment to embedding due diligence obligations into corporate governance, ensuring that businesses identify, prevent, and address human rights and environmental risks and impacts across their value chains. The effectiveness of due diligence and the reduction of decent work deficits in supply chains depended on the implementation of clear, harmonized, and proportionate rules and guidance that avoided fragmentation and ensured a level playing field for all businesses, regardless of their size or geographic location.
20. The EU and its Member States continued to be open to a standard-setting discussion on decent work in global supply chains, based on due diligence. Due diligence was most effective when proportionate, risk-based, and accompanied by coordinated measures to create an enabling environment. An ILO standard could build on those principles, while also addressing the transnational dimensions of supply chains where gaps in governance, conflicting jurisdictions, and weak enforcement undermined decent work and were not covered by existing instruments. Such a standard could harmonize expectations and promote policy coherence between trade, investment, and labour policies.
21. The EU and its Member States also supported non-normative options, including to further consolidate and scale up the ILO's business networks, by providing tools, data collection and information for all constituents. The guidance provided by the conclusions of the Meeting on Experts on wage policies, including living wages should be further leveraged to stimulate due diligence, create a level playing field and clarify other related concepts such as living income. Any normative action must be grounded in tripartite engagement. Social dialogue – both at the national and transnational levels – and technical assistance of the ILO were essential to tailor due diligence requirements to diverse contexts. He indicated that the EU and its Member States would support a normative option for due diligence under options 1 and 12, and did not support the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.
22. **Speaking on behalf of the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)**, a Government representative of Oman reaffirmed the importance of protecting workers' rights in supply chains. The current ILO normative framework is comprehensive and already covers most aspects of decent work deficits and supply chains. The main challenge lay

in implementation of the existing framework and capacity-building to enforce national legislation rather than in the development of new standards.

23. At this stage, the most effective approach would be greater investment in existing tools. The package of non-normative options presented by the Employers' group was strategic, in particular option 7, which offered a practical framework for providing technical assistance. Given the current financial challenges of the organization and the ongoing reform and reprioritization process, directing resources towards national capacity-building and technical assistance was the most sustainable investment rather than new standard-setting.
24. **Speaking on behalf of a group of countries,**⁴ a Government representative of Japan said that if the existing body of international labour standards were effectively ratified, implemented and enforced, they would, in principle, be sufficient to address all decent work deficits, including those in supply chains. The primary challenge were the gaps in implementation, which existed because supply chains operated across borders and involved multiple actors, while labour regulation remained national and based on employment relationships. Governance constraints, including limited capacity, weak enforcement and informality at different links in the chain, hindered the consistent application of existing labour standards.
25. The ILO had an important role to play in relation to decent work in supply chains because of its unique mandate, tripartite constituency and extensive expertise. The speaker expressed support for the continued implementation of the supply chain strategy focusing on the ILO's core mandate, but not the development of a supply chain standard, which would be highly divisive given the lack of consensus for standard-setting on the topic. The proposals for new standards would duplicate the content and goals of existing standards. In particular, options 8 and 12 explicitly referred to promoting ratification of existing standards. In addition, there should not be more than one standard-setting discussion at the same session of the International Labour Conference. Resources would be better used on practical action to strengthen existing effective initiatives addressing decent work deficits in supply chains. The speaker expressed support for options 2, 4, 5 and 6, while bearing in mind resource constraints and the need to remain focused on the ILO's core mandate, as well as the promotion of good practices to enhance respect for labour rights through trade and investment agreements and promotion of the fundamental principles and rights at work. Action should not lead to overregulation but should instead reinforce innovation, job creation and decent work in supply chains. He confirmed support for the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.
26. **Speaking on behalf of Norway and Canada,** a Government representative of Canada expressed support for both the normative and non-normative proposals, noting that they reflected a reasonable and practical approach to addressing decent work in supply chains. Both countries could support the proposals in principle, and the Office should take a leadership role in the area. Strengthening national labour governance and enforcement capacity, particularly in relation to labour administration and inspection, was essential to addressing decent work deficits in complex supply chain contexts. Improving policy coherence and reducing fragmentation across the growing number of initiatives addressing supply chain risks at national, regional and international levels was a priority, as improved alignment and consistency would facilitate effective implementation. Barriers to justice faced by vulnerable workers should be addressed by enhancing the effectiveness of prevention mechanisms, dispute resolution and access to timely and meaningful redress. Existing ILO standards had not been systematically designed to address business relationships, responsible business

⁴ Japan, Switzerland and the United States of America.

conduct, or Member States' obligations to uphold fundamental principles and rights at work in transnational supply chains. She expressed support for the smart mix of normative and non-normative initiatives that added value and momentum to ensuring decent work in supply chains, particularly options 1, 3, 6, 8, 11 and 12.

27. **A Government representative of India** stated that existing standards already addressed most decent work deficits in supply chains and that the main challenge lay in ratification, implementation and enforcement rather than gaps in the normative framework. New normative measures had significant resource, reporting and legislative implications, and the focus should be on implementation through a smart mix prioritizing impactful non-normative options. He expressed support for options on strengthening the capacity of constituents to promote responsible business conduct (option 2), strengthening the ILO Helpdesk for Business on international labour standards (option 4), strengthening compliance and good governance (option 6), leveraging multinational enterprises to support MSMEs and the transition to formality (option 9), and strengthening national labour justice mechanisms rather than creating parallel transnational structures. The Office should further develop non-normative proposals, with defined costs. He did not support the four proposed standard-setting options and expressed support for the Employers' group amendment.
28. **A Government representative of China** said that, while globalization increased the cross-border nature and complexity of supply chains and posed challenges to labour governance, existing international labour standards already addressed most decent work deficits in supply chains. Such deficits stemmed primarily from shortcomings in implementation, and new standard-setting could divert limited resources and weaken overall effectiveness. The Office should prioritize all the non-normative measures, particularly options 6 and 7. Technical cooperation should improve labour governance and address root causes by strengthening capacity-building for tripartite constituents in developing countries, especially in labour administration, inspection and dispute resolution. Supply chain dynamics and decent work deficits varied across countries and sectors, and measures should respect national sovereignty, levels of development and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Flexible and inclusive guidance would enable Member States to design and implement measures in line with national circumstances. She expressed support for the continued implementation of the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains (2023–27) and the amendment proposed by the Employers' group.
29. **A Government representative of Australia** recalled the substantial work already undertaken through the current decent work in supply chains strategy, noting that the initiatives identified built on that strategy and reflected the ILO's long-standing engagement in this area. Deficits persisted and the ILO had a leadership role in driving decent work in supply chains, supported by its tripartite structure. She expressed support for a smart mix of normative and non-normative measures to maximize impact and indicated an openness to standard-setting, including option 12, particularly to establish a comprehensive framework and reduce fragmentation. She did not support the Employers' group amendment. She emphasized the value of scaling up existing tools and mechanisms and called for further clarification from the Office on the proposals, including their scope, resource implications and expected outcomes.
30. **A Government representative of Japan** reaffirmed support for achieving decent work for all, including in supply chains. Numerous initiatives were already under way at national, regional and international levels and developing new international labour standards would not add value, as such measures could increase complexity and fragmentation. New normative measures could impose excessive burdens, particularly on SMEs, and potentially reduce employment opportunities, including through the withdrawal of companies from high-risk

countries. It was important to ensure that enterprises comply with national laws. The ILO must prioritize providing technical assistance to Member States for effective implementation of existing instruments, including through the MNE Declaration. Strengthening governance at the national level would be effective, through developing supplementary tools and guidelines, capacity-building of tripartite constituents, social dialogue, and supporting SMEs. Due consideration of budgetary constraints was needed. He expressed support for the non-normative options and the Employers' group amendment.

31. **A Government representative of Brazil** expressed strong support for the statement by the Workers' group and emphasized that persistent structural decent work deficits in global supply chains, affecting hundreds of millions of workers, required a decisive normative response. Asymmetries could not be resolved solely through domestic labour governance, due to challenges such as unfair purchasing practices, impunity arising from corporate separateness, and barriers to access to justice. She expressed support for option 12 and the development of a comprehensive normative standard, addressing coordination, good governance, and access to remedy, including provisions on liability to close accountability gaps. She also welcomed complementary non-normative measures, particularly options 2, 3, 6 and 11, provided they reinforced rather than replaced binding obligations. The ILO's unique mandate and tripartite structure positioned it to lead work in this domain, and it was necessary to move forward with ambition and urgency. She did not support the Employers' group amendment.
32. **A Government representative of Senegal** reaffirmed commitment to advancing decent work in supply chains. There was a need for initiatives that would: facilitate the integration of workers into the formal economy and make standards more accessible; help attract foreign investment, instead of normative measures that could create protectionist barriers or undermine competitiveness; and harness the role of social dialogue in addressing supply chain challenges. Technical assistance and strengthening capacity-building for labour inspection was important. He expressed support for pragmatic and inclusive non-normative approaches, which balanced economic growth with social progress through partnership.
33. **A Government representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** welcomed the comprehensive analysis and the constructive consultations that informed the document. Global supply chains were vital for economic growth, employment and business activity, and it was imperative to uphold labour standards and address persistent challenges, particularly those arising from inconsistent enforcement and lack of access to remedy. The domestic legal framework included protections for human rights and labour standards and measures promoting transparency and responsible business conduct in supply chains, including ongoing efforts regarding global supply chains. She expressed support in principle for both normative and non-normative options, emphasizing the importance of coherence across initiatives, access to remedy and the role of existing instruments such as the ILO MNE Declaration. There was value in strengthening technical assistance, guidance and national-level governance reforms, including support for MSMEs. She indicated a preference for option 12 and the development of an evidence-based and impactful strategy.
34. **A Government representative of Barbados** highlighted the importance of the ILO's leadership in achieving decent work in supply chains and noted his country's engagement with the issue, including the first global supply chain conference held in Barbados in May 2024. Many existing normative instruments already addressed decent work deficits, but the main challenge lay in insufficient ratification and implementation. It was necessary to focus on: strengthening policy coherence across trade, investment, labour and environmental frameworks, particularly through the Global Coalition for Social Justice; enhancing the role of the MNE Declaration as a practical tool for responsible business conduct; expanding technical

assistance and capacity-building in relation to labour provisions in trade agreements; and supporting formalization. Access to remedy and labour justice was critical, particularly for small island developing States engaging with multinational enterprises. Supply chain initiatives should support just transitions for workers. He expressed support for all non-normative measures and option 10.

35. **A Government representative of Uruguay** welcomed the initiative to establish measures supplementing international labour standards. Enterprise activities in global supply chains impact human rights, and a smart mix of measures as detailed in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights was important. Initiatives of this scale should be led by the ILO with the clear objective of guaranteeing social justice and peace. Diverse supply chain structures provided opportunities for countries to benefit from economic growth and employment; however, the flexible and transitory nature of supply chain links could limit the effectiveness of national legislation in ensuring rights and access to justice. He indicated that a combination of options 1, 8, 10 and 12 would best reflect the ILO's constitutional objectives.
36. **A Government representative of Colombia** noted that binding instruments were required to ensure effective application. Supply chain challenges, particularly labour rights infringements, required an integrated approach identifying the responsibility of multinational enterprises within a normative framework. As voluntary standards had been insufficient in preventing serious violations, there was a need to develop an international standard that supplements existing tools and strengthens decent work guarantees. He detailed the importance of a balanced approach combining promotion, technical cooperation and coordination with the creation of a binding instrument, similar to the principles under negotiation for the platform economy instrument. He indicated preference for option 12, did not support the Employers' group amendment, and thanked the Workers' group for their statement.
37. **A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** stated that the 2021 gap analysis confirmed that existing standards already address many challenges and stated that priority should remain on ratification and effective implementation to secure decent work and fair labour protection. There was a need for a balanced and pragmatic approach to global supply chains, referencing a smart mix of measures that reinforce and build upon existing standards rather than creating new normative instruments. He expressed strong support for option 9, emphasizing national priorities relating to MSMEs and the transition from informal to formal economies. He expressed support for all other non-normative options, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11, noting their role in enhancing labour inspection, promoting policy coherence and improving access to labour justice. The elements of the normative options should be addressed through effective implementation of existing standards.
38. **A Government representative of Nepal** stated that despite the potential of supply chains to promote development, job creation and transition to formality, decent work deficits persist. These deficits, along with evolving informalities, were a major barrier to achieving equality in the world of work. As the 2021 ILO gap analysis had identified gaps in the implementation of normative measures to ensure decent work, future ILO strategies on decent work in supply chains should reflect these findings and guidance. He expressed support for the non-normative options.
39. **A Government representative of Mexico** reaffirmed the importance of a smart mix of normative and non-normative initiatives, which were pragmatic, cost-effective and based on an evidence-based approach. The priority should be implementing existing instruments, aligning tools and ensuring policy coherence to avoid duplication. He proposed a phased approach, prioritizing an initial package of options 2, 4, 6, and 11 for the 2026–27 biennium,

followed by options 3, 7, and 9 in a subsequent phase. This would comprise short-term priorities including ILO support for enterprises (option 4), a governance initiative (option 6), access to redress (option 11), and better use of the MNE Declaration (option 2), followed by medium-term priorities including technical assistance on labour clauses (option 3), “One ILO” (option 7), and MSMEs and informality (option 9). The remaining normative options – 1, 8, 10, and 12 – should be considered later based on lessons learned from the initial package.

40. **A Government representative of Honduras** noted the strategic importance of decent work in supply chains for economic development, job creation and poverty reduction. Challenges included informality, decent work deficit and limited institutional capacity, and a balanced, results-oriented approach was necessary. There was a need to strengthen implementation of existing standards, build institutional capacity, enhance labour inspection and administration, and promote social dialogue, while maximizing existing resources and strengthening cooperation mechanisms. MSMEs needed to be provided with technical support, capacity-building, and access to financing to facilitate formalization and compliance. He welcomed non-normative measures and indicated that any discussions on standard-setting should be approached with prudence and in the spirit of consensus, taking into account their social and economic implications.
41. **A Government representative of Uzbekistan** emphasized the relevance of decent work in supply chains amid global transformations and the growing importance of responsible business conduct. Existing international labour standards provided a comprehensive foundation, and there was a need to prioritize implementation, practical guidance and support for Member States. She expressed support for a gradual and balanced approach focused on implementation, while continuing discussions on potential future standard-setting and indicated support for options 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11.
42. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Priority Action Programme on Decent Work Outcomes in Supply Chains) clarified the relationship between the “One ILO” approach (option 7) and DWCPs. The “One ILO” approach brings together different means of action to address the root causes of decent work deficits in supply chains. This approach is fully aligned with national priorities expressed in DWCPs and is not an alternative to them.
43. **The Worker spokesperson** said that while a number of governments had highlighted that the issue mainly concerned ratification and implementation of existing standards, the document highlighted the challenges arising from the transnational nature of supply chains and the resulting governance gaps. Existing standards did not address responsible business conduct. He observed a diversity of views among Member States: several countries, including the EU and its Member States, Canada, Norway, Australia, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Colombia, supported immediate normative action, with Barbados referring to standard-setting on access to labour justice. Other countries, such as Mexico and Uzbekistan, indicated openness to normative measures as a second phase following non-normative initiatives. A large number of countries recognized the existence of a normative gap, which would not be addressed through resorting to national measures. He reiterated the Workers’ group’s support for the non-normative options, provided they were linked to normative action. Option 12 provided the framework for a standard reflecting the indivisibility of the reforms required: coordination without access to justice was meaningless for workers who could not enforce their rights, access to justice without strength in governance would leave workers dependent on insufficient institutions and good governance without coherent international rules allowed lead firms to continue to exploit regulatory arbitrage across supply chain tiers.

44. **The Employer spokesperson** said that the majority of Government members did not support normative action, including the Africa group, ASPAG, GCC countries, the United States of America, Switzerland, Uzbekistan and Mexico, and favoured prioritizing non-normative measures in the upcoming 2028–31 strategy. In 2031, for the next strategy, discussions would reopen on whether normative or non-normative options should be adopted. Based on the majority support for non-normative action in the present discussion, the Office should continue its work on the supply chain strategy and should present only non-normative options for discussions on the 2028–31 strategy. While some countries, like the EU and its Member States, had expressed interest in due diligence legislation, regional approaches should not be automatically applied at the international level. After ten years of discussion, the clear preference of the majority was non-normative action. He expressed hope for agreement to proceed on that basis.
45. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Malawi reiterated that they would prefer to continue with non-normative action until the subsequent strategy expired in 2031, at which point, following an evaluation of the strategy, a discussion could be held about other types of action.
46. **A Government representative of the Niger** referenced the discussions on setting the agenda for future sessions of the Conference, particularly regarding the timeline for upcoming normative action. Any discussion of potential normative action should be delayed until 2031. The present discussion was reminiscent of the difficult discussions on the platform economy and efforts should be undertaken to reach consensus.
47. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, International Labour Standards Department) clarified that all items for the agenda of the Conference sessions for 2028 and 2029 had not yet been confirmed. While a standard-setting item on protection against chemical hazards was included in the agenda of the 2028 session, no standard-setting item had been placed on the agenda of the 2029 session.
48. **A Government representative of Canada** noted that, as there was value in considering normative options for the 2028–31 strategy, she could not support the Employers' group amendment.
49. **The Worker spokesperson** suggested a subamendment to the amendment proposed by the Employers' group, inserting at the end of the draft decision in paragraph 47(b): “, and consider at that moment future normative action in the next strategy”.
50. **The Employer spokesperson** noted that the language of the subamendment had not reflected the majority opinion expressed during the discussion. Language could possibly be added stating that the decision did not preclude any consideration of standard-setting after the strategy ends in 2031.
51. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh expressed interest in examining a progress report on the strategy in 2027.
52. **Government representatives of Japan and India** expressed that they would not be in a position to revisit the issue in 2027.
53. **The Employer spokesperson** suggested another subamendment to add a new subparagraph (c) that would read: “acknowledged that this decision does not preclude consideration of evidence-based options, including normative options, upon conclusion and evaluation of the 2028–31 ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains in 2031”.

(The Governing Body resumed its discussion of the item at a later sitting.)

54. **The Worker spokesperson** suggested a subamendment to the subamendment proposed by the Employers' group to read:
- (c) acknowledged that this decision does not preclude consideration of ~~any other evidence-based options~~, including normative options, when discussing the development of the future upon conclusion and evaluation of the 2028–31 ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains in 2031.
55. **The Employer spokesperson** noted that as the discussion of the future strategy was scheduled for March 2027, the language of the Workers' group subamendment was not in line with the views expressed during the discussion.
56. A number of countries expressed support for the Workers' group subamendment,⁵ while others expressed support for the Employers' group amendment and subamendment, but not for the Workers' group subamendment.⁶
57. **Speaking on behalf of the EU Member States**, a Government representative of Cyprus proposed a further subamendment to replace all the text after "including normative options" by "following a mid-term review of the Strategy in March 2030". He clarified that the review concerned the 2028–31 strategy and the Employer spokesperson suggested inserting the years so that the text would read:
- (c) acknowledged that this decision does not preclude consideration of any other options, including normative options, following a review of the 2028–31 Strategy in March 2030.
58. **A Government representative of Canada** sought confirmation that elements related to normative action or options would not be completely excluded from the strategy for 2028–31. With respect to the subamendment proposed by the EU Member States, she asked if there would be sufficient information and data from the mid-term review of that strategy to inform consideration of future normative options.
59. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Priority Action Programme on Decent Work Outcomes in Supply Chains) stated that the preparation for normative discussion depended on careful research, consultation with constituents and also learning from field operations and research, among other things. He indicated that in practical terms, the subamendment to the draft decision meant that future strategy would include a mid-term review in 2030, and prepare for normative and non-normative discussions at that time, taking into account the learnings from its implementation.
60. **The Employer spokesperson** stated that, if the strategy adopted in 2027 was non-normative, there could still be lessons from that strategy that could be used in 2030 to assess any potential gaps. That would not be excluded in a non-normative strategy.
61. **The Worker spokesperson** stated that his group could support the subamendment by the EU Member States.
62. **A Government representative of Canada** indicated that based on the explanation from the Employer spokesperson, she could support the text as subamended.
63. **A Government representative of the United States** welcomed the consensus and reiterated that, in his view, there was no need for further discussion of normative options.

⁵ EU and its Member States, Australia, Brazil, Barbados, Canada, Colombia, United Kingdom.

⁶ Africa group, Bangladesh, China, Honduras, Japan, United States.

Decision

64. **Reaffirming the goal of the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains to position the Organization to play a leading role in promoting decent work in supply chains by providing guidance and support to Member States and tripartite constituents, the Governing Body:**
- (a) requested the Office to take the non-normative options 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11 forward, including through the preparation of relevant proposals based on the guidance that it provided during the discussion;
 - (b) requested the Director-General to continue to take the ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains (2023–27) and the guidance provided during the Governing Body's discussion into account in the context of the ongoing Office reform, the preparation of future programme and budget proposals, the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources and the development of the future ILO strategy on decent work in supply chains to be submitted in March 2027;
 - (c) acknowledged that this decision did not preclude consideration of any other options, including normative options, following a mid-term review of the 2028–31 strategy in March 2030.

(GB.356/POL/1, paragraph 47, as amended by the Governing Body)

Social Dialogue Segment

2. Outcomes of sectoral meetings held in the second half of 2025 and other sectoral activities (GB.356/POL/2)

65. **The Worker spokesperson** reiterated the importance of the ILO's sectoral work in addressing challenges across sectors and responding to the concerns of employers and workers. If the ILO was committed to enhancing its effectiveness and efficiency, it had to take all necessary measures to strengthen its sectoral work.
66. He referred to the ongoing crisis affecting seafarers stranded in conflict zones, noting that such situations demonstrate that sectoral work is not a luxury but a necessity. The risks faced by transport workers had broader implications for global economic stability and reaffirmed that strengthening sectoral engagement was essential. He welcomed the recognition in the Governing Body paper "The ILO in a changing multilateral environment: Towards better effectiveness and efficiency" (GB.356/INS/7) that sectoral approaches would remain a core feature of the ILO's mandate and stressed that this commitment had to be clearly reflected in the prioritization of the Office's work.
67. His group also welcomed the adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector, highlighting that the discussions addressed critical issues such as occupational safety and health, exposure to multiple hazards, violence and harassment, solitary work, and fatigue. He emphasized the importance of ensuring fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining, in addressing these challenges. The Office had to ensure effective follow-up to these conclusions, including the possible convening of a meeting of experts to develop guidelines on the social dimensions of cross-border and regional interoperability in the railway sector.

68. The outcomes of the Meeting of Experts on Guidelines for Fair Labour Market Services for Migrant Fishers were also endorsed, noting that they are firmly grounded in relevant international labour standards. He highlighted key priorities identified in the guidelines, including the principle that recruitment should be free of charge for workers, the need to regulate and supervise recruitment agencies, and the importance of combating debt bondage. He further stressed the importance of ensuring representation, access to remedies and the right to collective bargaining.
69. Sectoral work had consistently demonstrated its value for ILO constituents and remains central to the Organization's mandate. He cautioned that any efforts to integrate or reform sectoral activities should build on existing capacities and not lead to their dilution. While expressing openness to exploring ways to enhance effectiveness, he firmly opposed any reduction in the number of global sectoral meetings. He also noted the ongoing informal consultations on revising meeting modalities and emphasized that any concrete proposals should be submitted to the Governing Body before implementation. He supported the draft decision.
70. **The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for the preparation of the document and the draft decision. He noted the outcomes of the sectoral meetings held in the second half of 2025, including the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector and the Meeting of Experts on Guidelines for Fair Labour Market Services for Migrant Fishers.
71. He acknowledged that the railway sector remained a cornerstone of economic and social development and a driver of economic transformation, job creation, competitiveness and social inclusion. It also supported sustainable value chains and regional connectivity. The sector was highly capital-intensive and varied significantly across regions, particularly in terms of ownership and management, which in many countries remained largely governmental. Public-private partnerships and an enabling environment for long-term investment were therefore essential to maintain and modernize infrastructure and ensure the delivery of safe, productive and sustainable services. These considerations should be reflected in future work.
72. He noted the adoption of the Guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers and their objective of supporting fair recruitment practices; and emphasized the importance of continued social dialogue and alignment among relevant States and stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the sector.
73. With regard to the revision of the modalities of sectoral meetings, he pointed out that, while his group appreciated the work undertaken by the Office, the increasingly overloaded calendar highlighted challenges in the proposed approaches. He noted that a recent meeting had demonstrated the limited scope for alternative formats given the complexity of discussions and the length of documentation, and therefore considered that improving efficiency and effectiveness would require a reduction in the number of sectoral meetings. He expressed his group's support for the decision point.
74. **Speaking on behalf of the group of industrialized market economy countries (IMEC)**, a Government representative of Spain welcomed the continued work of the Sectoral Policies Department in advancing decent work across key economic sectors. Sectoral meetings continued to be a key instrument for the ILO to address and anticipate sector-specific labour challenges through informed and practical dialogue among constituents. Noting the proposal to reduce the number of sectoral meetings, IMEC encouraged the Office to focus efforts on enhancing meeting efficiency and cost effectiveness while safeguarding the tripartite nature and strategic value of such meetings. Sectoral meetings should be well-targeted and produce implementable outcomes in line with the ILO's core mandate that could guide the future work of the Office and support constituents at national level.

75. With regard to the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector, which was a major employer in many economies, IMEC welcomed the focus on occupational safety and health, skills development, equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, and the role of labour inspection and social dialogue in addressing technological changes. IMEC noted the newly adopted Guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers and appreciated the emphasis on improved data collection and monitoring for informed policymaking. The group believed that the Guidelines could serve as a reference for strengthening governance frameworks and ensuring fair labour market services in the fishing industry, while supporting employers in recruiting and retaining skilled crews.
76. IMEC welcomed the consultations with constituents about a possible revision of sectoral meeting modalities and encouraged these be continued to ensure that any adjustments, such as hybrid formats or reductions in the length of meetings, would safeguard meaningful participation from capitals and headquarters and the well-informed and high quality of sectoral dialogue. IMEC looked forward to continued engagement with the Office and other constituents to ensure that the sectoral work of the ILO would remain relevant, efficient and impactful.
77. **A Government representative of Malawi** thanked the Office for the background paper and had taken note of the sectoral meetings held in the second half of 2025. He recognized the importance of sectoral meetings in shaping and improving legislative and policy frameworks at the national level.
78. He expressed concern regarding the length of the background documents and draft conclusions prepared by the Office, which formed the basis for discussions, and observed that these documents could be more concise while retaining essential information. He expressed support for the decision point and said that his Government looked forward to the outcomes of the consultations and the revised modalities.
79. **A Government representative of Brazil** commended the Office and all staff for their high-quality technical work which continued to strengthen social dialogue and tripartism in difficult times. Prior to reducing the number of sectoral meetings, Brazil would strongly support the development of more cost-effective and efficient procedures for these meetings. The introduction of hybrid modalities and the possibility of holding meetings outside of Geneva were positive steps toward increasing participation while maintaining fiscal responsibility. She welcomed the outcomes of the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector, which was a strategic engine for sustainable economic growth, job creation and social inclusion, and she fully endorsed the Guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers, which provided a vital framework for ensuring fair recruitment and protecting the fundamental rights of those working in fishing activities. The right to a safe work environment was a non-negotiable right which Brazil extended to all workers within its borders, regardless of their migratory status, along with other labour and social rights.
80. **A Government representative of the United States** indicated his delegation's alignment with the IMEC statement. Sectoral meetings must be targeted, efficient and advance the ILO's core mandate. The United States was open to reducing the number of sectoral meetings hosted in a year in line with broader ILO reform efforts.
81. It was important not to convene meetings for which resources were not available to follow up on the conclusions. With regard to the conclusions, recommendations and guidelines of sectoral meetings, he stated that these should be drafted in a manner that was grounded, objective and did not push ideology with divisive language. He noted that the United States interpreted the term "gender" to refer to a person's biological sex as a man or a woman.

References to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration were not relevant or useful. The US administration was of the view that the SDGs advanced a programme of soft global governance that impinged on state sovereignty. The United States was also of the view that the Global Compact conflicted with the duty to curtail, rather than to facilitate, the inherently destabilizing phenomenon of mass migration. While the United States supported the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin and genetic information, using diversity, equity and inclusion (or DEI) concepts and terminology at the expense of recognizing hard work, excellence and individual achievement and upholding the equal dignity and rights of every person was discriminatory and a disservice to achieving decent work. Finally, he wished to recognize the contributions of the expert participants and Office staff who worked very hard to prepare sectoral meetings.

82. **The Employer spokesperson** stated that his group did not consider it necessary to follow up the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector with another meeting but that it was important to give time for the implementation of the conclusions which had been adopted. The decision on more meetings should go through the sectoral advisory bodies in order to give a level playing field analysis of meetings in other sectors. This further needed to be aligned with the discussion on the ILO reform. His group aligned with the United States' position that resources should be used to implement the conclusions of sectoral meetings rather than convene more meetings.
83. **The Worker spokesperson** underlined that with regard to the possible convening of a meeting of experts to develop guidelines on the social dimensions of cross-border and regional interoperability in the railway sector, the conclusions of the technical meeting called for such a meeting to be convened. For his group, sectoral meetings were key and a priority. Effectiveness and efficiency needed to be agreed on. Statistics showed that sectoral meetings had produced good results in due time when there was a shared sense of determination and a time frame that was clearly respected.
84. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Sectoral Policies) thanked the speakers for their support of the sectoral policies work and stated that the Office had taken note of all the discussion and would duly consider it in future work.

Decision

85. **The Governing Body:**
 - (a) **approved the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Technical Meeting on Decent Work in the Railways Sector, and authorized the Director-General to publish them and the related record of proceedings;**
 - (b) **requested the Director-General to bear in mind the above conclusions and recommendations when drawing up proposals for future work;**
 - (c) **approved the Guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers and authorized the Director-General to publish them and the related record of the proceedings of the Meeting of Experts;**
 - (d) **requested the Director-General to take into consideration the Guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers for future work of the Office in this area.**

(GB.356/POL/2, paragraph 17)

3. Proposed programme of ILO official meetings for 2026–27 (GB.356/POL/3)

86. **The Worker spokesperson**, welcoming the effort made to reschedule deferred meetings and to ensure the continuity of the ILO's sectoral and technical work despite the current financial constraints, voiced his group's support for the proposals set out in the document, including the meeting arrangements. His group particularly welcomed the maintaining of a balanced, coherent programme that allowed the Organization to continue addressing key labour matters.
87. He highlighted the strategic importance of the Meeting of Experts on ergonomic hazards and human factors, which would establish a technical basis for future normative discussions in the light of the Governing Body's requests for the modernization of the Maximum Weight Convention (No. 127) and Recommendation (No. 128), 1967. The deferring of the Meeting of Experts on paternity and parental protection and other care leave did not mean that the matter was no longer urgent; it continued to be a priority for his group.
88. He hoped that the three sectoral meetings already approved by the Governing Body for the second half of 2027 – on ports and docks, fast food and private security – would take place as agreed. The meeting on ports and docks was particularly relevant given the recommendations of the Standards Review Mechanism Tripartite Working Group on instruments relating to port work and their link to the future normative work on ergonomics and manual handling. While his group was open to discussing ways of increasing sectoral meetings' effectiveness and efficiency, it firmly opposed any reduction in the number of such meetings, particularly those already approved by the Governing Body.
89. **The Employer spokesperson** thanked the Office for its understanding and flexibility in rescheduling meetings to ensure adequate intervals between them and major ILO events.
90. **A Government representative of the United States** expressed concern that the document contained references to "sustainable development" and "climate change" in its description of the Technical meeting on advancing decent work and sustainable development in the water and sanitation sector. His Government opposed broad references to "climate change" in the framing of that Technical meeting. The ILO should avoid generic framing and language linked to "climate change", focusing instead on specific developments and responses relating to skills, occupational safety and health, and employment policy to assist workers and employers in adapting to specific environmental threats. He urged the Office to revise the proposed purpose and framing of that meeting before it took place. That said, he did not oppose the draft decision.
91. **A representative of the Director-General** (Director, Official Relations, Meetings and Language Services Department) said that points raised would be taken into account in the organization of the meetings concerned.
92. **The Worker spokesperson** recalled that "climate change" was a scientific matter that sometimes affected the world of work.

Decision

93. **The Governing Body, subject to the availability of funds and further decision-making:**
 - (a) **approved the new dates of the Meeting of Experts on challenges to the implementation and ratification of the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention**

(Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185) and the Meeting of Experts on paternity and parental protection and other care leave;

(b) approved the arrangements for the following meetings:

- (i) Meeting of Experts on ergonomic hazards and human factors;
- (ii) Technical meeting on the future of employment and perspectives for decent work in the tobacco growing and manufacturing sector;
- (iii) Technical meeting on advancing decent work and sustainable development in the water and sanitation sector;

(c) took note of the programme of meetings contained in Part III of document GB.356/POL/3.

(GB.356/POL/3, paragraph 14)

Development Cooperation Segment

4. The ILO's Development Cooperation Strategy for 2026–29 (GB.356/POL/4)

94. **The Employer spokesperson** welcomed the Strategy and thanked the Office for the consultations conducted during its preparation, noting that several of the Employers' group's priorities had been incorporated and that it represented an improvement over the preceding Strategy. However, a significant gap remained between its ambitions and its operational implications, which the group expected could be closed by the implementation plan and results matrix. She requested that employers' organizations be consulted during the finalization of the implementation plan, as constituent ownership was essential to the Strategy.
95. The context was serious with official development assistance having fallen by at least 9 per cent in 2025, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and earmarked extrabudgetary resources available to the ILO had declined from US\$944 million in 2022–23 to an estimated US\$767 million in 2024–25. That downward trend was structural, not temporary, and was likely to continue in light of the growing defence spending in major donor countries, which made it unquestionable that the ILO's delivery and funding model required review. The ILO could not continue doing everything it had done in the past at the same scale with the fewer resources. The Strategy called for fewer but better results and a concentration of voluntary funding on the core mandate, and the implementation plan must provide clear answers on what should be prioritized and what scaled back, which was a concern raised by the Employers' group during the consultations that had not been resolved.
96. As the tone of the Strategy remained strongly normative, it risked being perceived as too closely linked to supervision rather than to capacity-building and institutional strengthening. Paragraph 12 framed development cooperation as grounded in international labour standards and paragraph 46 added that greater emphasis would be placed on standards in project design. Development cooperation seen primarily as a vehicle for standards enforcement would not generate the constituent ownership required by the Strategy. All development cooperation projects should strengthen the capacity of tripartite partners as a precondition for design and must address the concrete needs of all constituents. The implementation plan must explicitly explain how normative action, policy support and capacity-building would be balanced in practice.

97. A related gap was the lack of demand-driven approach. The group welcomed the commitment to anchor development cooperation in DWCPs, which should be done systematically, but noted the absence of any explanation of how competing or excess demand would be arbitrated. The implementation plan must specify how priorities would be set and choices made transparently, especially for large or multi-country initiatives.
98. The programmatic approach tackled a concern expressed at multiple previous Governing Body sessions. The proliferation of small projects absorbing significant resources without commensurate impact was a structural problem that previous strategies failed to resolve. The new Strategy committed to a more programmatic approach concentrated on larger scale multi-year interventions. However, no explicit criteria or minimum project thresholds defining what qualified as programmatic had been established, which would make it difficult to hold portfolio discipline.
99. Moreover, the emphasis on diversifying partnerships was welcome. Private sector partnerships must be built on co-creation. The International Organisation of Employers and its national affiliates working with the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) must be systematically engaged as entry points in mobilizing the private sector, not consulted after decisions have been made. The Employers' group saw particular potential in South-South and triangular cooperation for enterprise development, skills transfer and formalization of informal economies. The implementation plan should specify how employers' organizations in emerging economies would be engaged as designers of those arrangements, not simply as beneficiaries.
100. The spokesperson stressed that the ILO's technical expertise had real value beyond what it could deliver directly through funded projects and requested that employers' organizations be partners in those areas. The decentralization foreseen in the Strategy gave regional offices and decent work country teams an enhanced role in engaging partners and managing project delivery. Her group supported greater national ownership in principle.
101. She recalled that in March 2019, the Governing Body had adopted an ILO-wide Strategy for institutional capacity development, which placed institutional capacity as a precondition for impact, not a downstream result. Its implementation had never been completed. The proposed Development Cooperation Strategy risked repeating that pattern if the implementation plan did not explicitly address how field capacity was to be built before transferring responsibility. The implementation plan must specify how field capacity would be reinforced before accountability for results was transferred. Decentralizing responsibility without decentralizing capacity would relocate the risk, not reform. Meaningful consultation with those set to be benefited through the projects was the only reliable safeguard against that fragmentation. The implementation plan must include a results framework that holds development cooperation staff accountable for outcomes, not only for activity completion. The Employers' group would assess progress at the 2028 mid-term review on the basis of concrete data.
102. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the focus of the Strategy on the ILO's vision and values, its commitment to social dialogue, its technical expertise and its alignment with the broader United Nations system reform through the UN80 Initiative, while emphasizing that such alignment should not occur to the detriment of the ILO's mandate. The three strategic objectives of the Strategy constructively reflected the recommendations of the high-level independent evaluation of the previous strategy.
103. The Workers' group cautioned against treating the reduction in development cooperation assistance as a natural development, noting that it represented a political choice whereby funds were being redirected from the common good and development towards defence and

war expenditure. The spokesperson highlighted the vulnerability of the Organization owing to its excessive dependence on voluntary contributions to carry out its constitutional mandate. In 2023, the Governing Body had adopted the integrated strategy for promoting and implementing the right to collective bargaining, yet by 2025, a project under that strategy had been suspended following the withdrawal of a major donor, compromising a central element of the core mandate.

104. The Workers' group supported strengthening and diversifying partnerships as essential to ensuring the ILO's continued impact as traditional donors retreated, including through South-South cooperation and investment in initiatives such as the Global Labour University. However, diversification must remain in line with the constitutional mandate, the normative function and the tripartite character of the Organization. Two areas required particular care. First, partnerships with international financial institutions should clearly take into account the Decent Work Agenda and international labour standards, and ensure measurable progress with significant participation of social partners – ensuring coherence on key terms such as social protection, decent work, as well as on measurable progress with the participation of social partners. Second, on partnerships with the private sector, the group called for prudence given the impact on decent work, and insisted that businesses wishing to collaborate with the ILO must go beyond self-assessment and demonstrate compliance with ILO standards.
105. In that context, the group proposed the creation of a dedicated Philadelphia Fund, using the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) as its foundation, which would allow for more flexible funding for constitutional mandate activities that were currently underfunded – such as collective bargaining – anchored in the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the ILO (1944) (Declaration of Philadelphia) and shielding the Organization's universality from the volatility of project-linked voluntary contributions. The group welcomed the focus on a more coherent and programmatic approach while cautioning that that should not underestimate the value of South-South cooperation projects which, though requiring less funding, reflected strong commitment to the ILO. Three guarantees were important: DWCPs must be complete, operational and firmly anchored in nationally determined priorities, not donor-driven; tripartite representation must be strengthened and programmes must yield not only visibility but tangible normative progress; and the Strategy must address forced labour, child labour and informality as integral components.
106. The group regretted that the Strategy contained no mention of gender or sexual harassment and did not provide gender-disaggregated data. Moreover, digital tools and artificial intelligence could improve learning and planning but must be human-centred and not substitute for tripartite consultation. Projects must be based on DWCPs.
107. **Speaking on behalf of the Africa group**, a Government representative of Libya highlighted that the document clearly showed extrabudgetary development cooperation resources had declined, reflecting the scale of challenges facing the Organization and underscoring the need for innovative and flexible solutions. The Africa group viewed the new Strategy as an opportunity to reposition the Organization within the multilateral system by diversifying partners, deepening South-South and triangular cooperation and expanding partnerships with the African private sector and philanthropic actors, thereby promoting social justice and responding to the priorities of tripartite constituents.
108. Africa was facing an unprecedented decline in international development financing: official development assistance had fallen by 9 per cent in 2024, with an additional decline between 9 and 17 per cent projected for 2025. Estimates indicated that sub-Saharan Africa could lose between 16 and 28 per cent of funding, while least developed countries could face reductions

between 13 and 25 per cent, and some vital sectors such as health could see decreases of up to 60 per cent compared to their 2022 peak. Those figures translated into reduced social protection programmes, fewer employment opportunities for youth and women, and stalled vital development projects across the continent. The group called for vigorous efforts to diversify funding sources, including through South–South and triangular cooperation and the African private sector, as well as for strengthening relationships with existing partners and enhancing partnerships with international financial institutions while ensuring that resources are directed towards national priorities.

109. She called for the Strategy to ensure national ownership of programmes, a strengthened field presence in Africa rather than a reduction, and to pay particular attention to the most vulnerable groups including informal workers, women, youth and communities affected by conflict, and for improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
110. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of China welcomed the Strategy's vision of more effective, innovative and agile development cooperation. ASPAG supported the Strategy as critical for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals prior to 2030, improving global governance and promoting common development. ASPAG supported the Strategy to realize the ILO's strategic plan for 2026–29 and the outcomes of biannual programmes and budgets for the next four years. ASPAG requested the Office to fully utilize the Strategy to meet Member States' decent work needs, taking into account national circumstances. The group underlined that ongoing reform and efficiency efforts within the Organization should contribute to improving the accessibility and quality of development cooperation for developing least developed and small island developing States.
111. ASPAG emphasized the strategic importance of strengthening South–South and triangular cooperation, domestic trust funds, public–private partnerships and partnerships with international financial institutions as key modalities intended to complement, not substitute, traditional forms of development financing, while fostering mutual learning, ownership and solidarity among countries of the Global South. Adequate and predictable funding was crucial, and the Office was requested to step up its resource mobilization efforts and encouraged the Office to ensure that development cooperation remains demand driven and responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of the respective constituents, taking into account diverse national contexts through appropriately tailored approaches. The group requested the Office to expand its funding partnerships by advancing different dimensions to the next level, while introducing innovative ways to support the constituents through strategic cooperation with relevant funding and non-funding partners with a result-oriented approach.
112. ASPAG expressed appreciation for strengthened knowledge partnerships to support policy coherence and commended the enhanced programmatic approach for greater impact and sustainable results. It encouraged the Office to review the priority action programmes focusing on impact and storytelling priority themes.
113. The group recognized the importance of comprehensive action for resource mobilization and collaborations with international financial institutions. The Strategy should necessarily form a critical component of the ILO's overarching strategic framework in the coming years and emphasized the principle of benefits for all. The Strategy should be accompanied by concrete details on how it would be operationalized and articulate the tangible outcomes it had been designed to achieve. ASPAG requested the Office to ensure that lessons and good practices identified through past reviews informed revised processes and specifically requested a mid-term implementation report in 2027 and a final report in 2029.

- 114. Speaking on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC),**⁷ a Government representative of Brazil emphasized the importance the region attached to development cooperation as a fundamental pillar for developing technical and institutional capacities and supporting policies to meet the challenges of the world of work and advance social justice. The group underlined the experience and potential offered by the region in the area of South–South and triangular cooperation and valued the importance of knowledge and experience-sharing between peers as an effective tool providing solutions adapted to national contexts. It was fundamental that the Strategy be focused on priorities defined by constituents and take into account that while the region was composed mostly of middle- and high-income countries, the persisting significant challenges in terms of inequality and informality justified continued development cooperation.
- 115.** In line with the Punta Cana Declaration, regional priorities should be approached in an integrated manner and include the formalization of employment, youth employment, labour migration and the strengthening of social protection systems, integrated with fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue, gender equality and just transition. The group welcomed the diversification of financing sources, provided there were clear accountability safeguards preserving the ILO's principles and mandate. It also expressed concern regarding the proposed significant reduction – up to 80 per cent – of the regular budget for technical cooperation (RBTC) account, as outlined in documents GB.356/INS/7 and GB.356/PFA/4 and requested clarification on the potential impact on the implementation of the Strategy, particularly with regard to South–South and triangular cooperation.
- 116.** It was essential to strengthen the framework for outcomes with clearly defined measurable indicators reflecting not only activities undertaken, but specific outputs and impact, and to improve the visibility and quality of data to contribute to identifying development outcomes from the Global South. On triangular cooperation, safeguards must ensure the interests of developing countries, their full participation in developing initiatives, and clarity on the transfer of resources and implementation benefits. GRULAC reaffirmed its commitment to more effective, inclusive, results-oriented development cooperation.
- 117. Speaking on behalf of IMEC,** a Government representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands supported the three overarching objectives, stressing that development cooperation must be anchored in the ILO's constitutional mandate and that the Office should prioritize activities leveraging the ILO's comparative advantage – its normative mandate, tripartite structure and technical expertise – while avoiding duplication with other UN entities. A clear results focus and strengthening monitoring and evaluation was paramount as well. IMEC welcomed the recognition that the ILO's comparative advantage stemmed from those elements and called for a sharper and more explicit focus on the ILO's core mandate, including on fundamental principles and rights at work throughout the Strategy. The group welcomed the alignment of the document with the ILO's reform efforts and the UN80 Initiative.
- 118.** IMEC underscored the importance of the implementation plan and results matrix in strengthening the Strategy's objectives. Those documents should set out concrete development outcomes anchored in accountability to beneficiaries and donors, with clearly outlined results to be delivered by 2029 and key performance indicators to track progress. The group welcomed the inclusion of a mid-term review in 2028 and supported the use of lessons learned from the review of priority programmes in shaping revised processes.

⁷ Argentina dissociates itself from the part of this statement concerning the concept of “gender”.

- 119.** IMEC supported the strategic approach to strengthen longstanding and new forms of partnerships, including improving systemic cooperation with other multilateral partners, international financial institutions, knowledge partners and through alignment with the UN joint and pooled funding, and requested the Office to focus on the core mandate when pursuing those partnerships. The group endorsed the aim to expand partnerships with private sector and philanthropic actors, provided that relevant criteria for accepting private sector funding were applied as part of the ILO's due diligence process. The group highlighted the importance of meaningful stakeholder engagement to ensure alignment with local needs, encouraged greater use of local staff over expatriate experts to strengthen national ownership, called for alignment with UN country programmes and the resident coordinator system, and welcomed the focus on enhancing alignment between headquarters and regions. IMEC supported the programmatic approach as an opportunity to improve efficiency and sustainability.
- 120. Speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States,** a Government representative of Cyprus stated that the following countries aligned themselves with the statement: Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. He expressed alignment with the IMEC statement and supported the ILO's vision for more effective, innovative and agile development cooperation anchored in the ILO's constitutional mandate.
- 121. A Government representative of the Dominican Republic** considered the Strategy timely and realistic, welcoming its emphasis on South-South and triangular cooperation. He reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening decent work, social dialogue and innovative labour strategies. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the active participation of governments, employers and workers throughout the development cooperation cycle.
- 122. A Government representative of India** commended the Office for presenting a forward-looking framework seeking to make development cooperation more effective, innovative and responsive to the evolving needs of constituents. He welcomed the Strategy's emphasis on diversified partnerships and strengthened cooperation modalities as timely. India appreciated the focus on deepening South-South and triangular cooperation to facilitate knowledge exchange, peer learning and the sharing of innovative development solutions among countries of the Global South, as well as the emphasis on strengthening collaboration with the UN system, international financial institutions and other stakeholders. He welcomed the programmatic and results-oriented approach and underscored the importance of capacity-building of constituents to enable effective participation in the design, implementation and oversight of development cooperation initiatives. He supported the strengthening of monitoring and impact assessment mechanisms and stated that robust monitoring, periodic review and evidence-based evaluation were paramount.
- 123. A Government representative of the Republic of Korea** welcomed the three objectives of the Strategy, while emphasizing that development cooperation must always be guided by the ILO's constitutional mandate, its standard-setting role, tripartism and technical expertise. As one of the leading donors to the Global Accelerator and a major contributor to ILO development cooperation projects, the Republic of Korea attached great importance to effectiveness. Strengthening programme management and ensuring accountability for results were key to enhancing tangible outcomes. It was crucial to systematically identify the needs of recipient countries and incorporate them into project design and implementation processes. He noted with appreciation the Strategy's emphasis on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, expanding impact assessment and enhancing results-based

management, which he expected would contribute to improving tangible outcomes. He said that the Republic of Korea would enhance its collaboration with the ILO to actively contribute to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of development cooperation projects.

- 124. A Government representative of Sudan** expressed appreciation for the efforts made in preparing the document while noting the highly complex international circumstances, including the increased economic, humanitarian, and political challenges and their direct implications for the tripartite constituents (governments, workers and employers). The targeting of the tripartite constituents in Sudan by insurgent militias is a case in point of the impact that conflicts inflict on the productive sectors and the labour market. Sudan called for flexible and exceptional conditions to respond to the needs of countries in or emerging from conflict. The war in Sudan had led to the displacement of over 12 million people and caused disastrous impacts on livelihoods and employment, particularly among young people and women, which has affected workers in various sectors. Sudan reaffirmed the importance of support programmes for workers affected by natural disasters and conflicts, including short-term projects with rapid results, and of strengthened technical capacities, and the roles of social partners and workers' and employers' organizations in policy development. He emphasized the importance of coordination between international partners and called for more flexible and sustainable funding.
- 125. A Government representative of Japan** aligning with the statements made on behalf of IMEC and ASPAG, supported the three overall objectives of the Strategy and expressed appreciation for the additional clarification that the programmatic approach was not limited solely to large-scale programmes. Japan attached great importance to small-scale and short-term projects, such as the Social Safety Net (SSN) projects and urgent measures, and welcomed the streamlining of approval procedures for such projects. He also welcomed the reference to strengthening recruitment and selection procedures for development cooperation staff and reiterated his expectation that decentralization in line with ILO reform would lead to a substantial reduction in the time required for recruitment procedures. Japan looked forward to the development of an implementation plan and key performance indicators upon consensus among the constituents.
- 126. A Government representative of China** expressed readiness to work with all parties to implement the Global Development Initiative put forward by President Xi Jinping and to continue advancing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The delegation offered specific comments: development cooperation projects should not focus only on the ratification and implementation of international labour standards but must also place greater emphasis and allocate increased resources to core policy areas such as employment promotion, skills development and social protection; project design should effectively align with donor priority areas while fully taking into account the specific national conditions of recipient countries; funding sources should be further diversified, including through South-South and triangular cooperation and stronger linkages with the UN Development Assistance System and development agencies, with streamlined approval procedures for public-private partnership projects. The quality and efficiency of development cooperation should be improved by reducing administrative and personnel costs and shortening project approval timelines; the visibility of projects, particularly under South-South cooperation, should be improved by showcasing them through digital and social media platforms, ILO knowledge products and forums such as the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body.
- 127. A Government representative of Colombia** stressed that tripartite cooperation and technical assistance should remain firmly anchored in the priorities defined by Member States and in DWCPs, and that national involvement of tripartite constituents was essential to guarantee the

relevance, sustainability and impact of actions. He underlined the importance of maintaining effective country-level presence for ongoing support of national processes and institutional capacity-building. Financing sources must be diversified to reinforce, not substitute, existing areas of cooperation, particularly with the United Nations system. He emphasized the importance of building robust follow-up, evaluation and accountability mechanisms and noted that in prioritizing the attribution of funds, preference should be given to countries that had demonstrated proven results, including those with a high ratification rate, particularly of more modern Conventions.

- 128. A Government representative of Cuba** stated that the Strategy clearly reflected the mandate of the ILO and aligned itself with the principles defended by Cuba including those recently reaffirmed in Seville, such as the need for international financial architecture which is fairer placing human beings at the centre of capital and the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation as a development pillar for multilateralism. She welcomed the elements reaffirming the ILO's standard-setting mandate, tripartism and social justice as key parts of cooperation, and the explicit recognition of South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategic modality, noting that the Global South should not only be a receiver of solutions but a generator of solutions, knowledge and capacity. Cuba was concerned about the proposed reduction of up to 80 per cent of regular budget contributions for technical cooperation set out in documents GB.356/INS/7 and GB.356/PFA/4. She welcomed a more pragmatic, coherent, results-oriented approach, but cautioned against tendencies to demand national financing which could limit access for countries with severe financial restrictions, stressing that fresh, additional and forecastable resources were needed rather than mechanisms that reproduced inequalities. Extending partnerships with the private sector required clear transparency mechanisms, as cooperation could not be subordinated to corporate interests; any alliance or partnership must contribute to decent work and respect the fundamental principles of the Organization.
- 129. A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** wished to speak on behalf of the workers and employers of Iran whose workforce was skilled, resilient and committed to the principles of decent work, yet had for decades borne the consequences of unilateral coercive measures imposed in violation of international law. These measures constituted, in practical terms, an economic war whose primary victims were not governments but workers: inflation and currency collapse had destroyed real wages; small and medium-sized enterprises were cut off from international markets, finance and technology; and social protection systems were strained beyond capacity. Iranian workers could not access the fair participation in the global economy that workers in other developing countries took for granted. He called on the ILO and the Governing Body to take three concrete steps: formally recognize unilateral coercive measures as a structural driver of decent work deficits and reflect this recognition in the Strategy's monitoring framework; ensure that ILO partnerships with international financial institutions did not passively exclude countries under sanctions and expand South-South cooperation channels accessible to Iranian workers, employers and institutions; and commission a dedicated study on the impact of unilateral coercive measures on labour markets and social protection in affected countries, so that the suffering of Iranian workers was documented, visible and part of international conversation.
- 130. A Government representative of Tunisia** welcomed efforts aimed at improving the efficiency of cooperation, mobilizing additional resources and diversifying partners, and highlighted the importance of further promoting South-South and triangular cooperation as key for sharing experience and expertise, strengthening capacities and ensuring that innovative solutions from the South were disseminated. She invited the Office to strengthen its collaboration with

other UN agencies for both implementation and best-practice exchange and for joint resource mobilization. She welcomed the Organization's commitment to strengthening collaboration with international financial institutions and private sector stakeholders, calling for more concrete and quantifiable objectives for private sector engagement. Development cooperation should be part of the overall mandate of the ILO, not just of its normative mandate. The success of development projects must be based on national ownership, the involvement of beneficiaries, full alignment with national priorities and adaptation to national realities, including institutional capacities. She stressed that it is important to have inclusive and balanced partnerships supporting local stakeholders as well as small and medium-sized enterprises.

131. **A Government representative of Mexico** valued the ILO's standard-setting and tripartite mandate and supported the adoption of digital and programmatic tools designed for maximum impact, while noting that larger-scale programmes such as Better Work, Alliance 8.7, PROSPECTS and PAGE needed to adapt to regional and national contexts to avoid rigid standardized approaches; flexibility was key to addressing issues such as labour migration, the platform economy, remote work, climate change adaptation and sustainable supply chains. She emphasized the importance of middle-income countries as co-creators of solutions in South-South and triangular cooperation, and called for decentralization with adequate resources and technical capacities for field offices. It was important that the office for Mexico and Cuba had adequate resources, technical capacities and staff to respond to the increasing demand for technical cooperation. The delegate underscored the need for clear, measurable indicators, follow-up tools and robust indicators and accountability, and flagged the risks identified by the Strategy in relation to institutional reform and possible tensions between demand for cooperation and available resources.
132. **A Government representative of Uzbekistan** welcomed the Strategy's focus on more strategic, impactful and partnership-based approaches to advancing decent work, noting that cooperation with the ILO had been instrumental in supporting Uzbekistan's labour market reforms in employment, labour rights, formalization, social protection and skills development. The emphasis on transformative partnerships was particularly relevant to move towards systemic and sustainable reforms with strong national ownership. She highlighted that in practice cooperation with international financial institutions did not always fully leverage the ILO's expertise, as some financing arrangements prioritized external consultants or parallel mechanisms without sufficient ILO involvement even in areas directly related to labour standards; a stronger and more central role for the ILO in such partnerships would enhance both effectiveness and policy coherence. Lengthy procedural and administrative processes limited timely delivery at country level, and further streamlining to enable more agile responses was welcomed. While long-term policy development was important, countries often required practical and immediate solutions, therefore, balancing normative work with timely implementation support remained key.
133. **A Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania** supported the strategic direction of the Strategy and emphasized that development cooperation must remain country-driven, demand-responsive and aligned with national development priorities, viewing the Strategy as an opportunity to strengthen partnerships through South-South and triangular cooperation and to expand engagement with the private sector to enhance sustainability and impact. The United Republic of Tanzania remained committed to advancing key principles reflected in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). She

underscored the importance of diversifying financing sources, strengthening labour administration systems including labour inspection and dispute resolution mechanisms, and expanding social protection systems, particularly for workers in the informal economy. The delegate highlighted the need for strengthened monitoring and evaluation frameworks with clear measurable indicators and active tripartite participation.

- 134. A representative of the Director-General** (Assistant Director-General for External and Corporate Relations) thanked the Governing Body for the broad support expressed for the three objectives of the Strategy. She reassured members that a key priority was to focus development cooperation initiatives on the core mandate, taking full account of reprioritization efforts and the comparative advantage of the ILO within the UN system. Resource mobilization would be anchored in DWCPs where they existed, in constituent priorities, and the Office would work better with the UN system to incorporate those priorities within UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. The support for diversification of potential partners, including through South–South and triangular cooperation, had been well received. On partnerships with the private sector, she noted that clear guiding principles for public–private partnership procedures were in place and would be applied to ensure coherence with the core mandate. Regarding partnerships with international financial institutions, good examples of collaboration in some areas existed, particularly in the use of the ILO principles and standards on the safeguards frameworks.
- 135.** On the implementation plan and results framework, she confirmed that the comments received would be taken into account and that both documents would be developed in consultation with constituents, incorporating all guidance expressed; a complete version would be ready by November 2026, better connected to the ongoing review and new organizational structure. Regarding the concern expressed by several speakers over the reduction to the RBTC, she clarified that this matter fell outside the scope of the Development Cooperation Strategy and would be addressed in the responses to documents GB.356/INS/7 and GB.356/PFA/4. She also corrected the figure cited by some speakers, noting that document GB.356/PFA/4 referred to a 50 per cent, not an 80 per cent reduction. Regarding the proposed Philadelphia Fund raised by the Workers' group, she noted that this matter would likewise be addressed under the relevant budget discussions.
- 136. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the Office's responses and considered that the group's questions and comments had been addressed. He reiterated that the issue of collective bargaining should be included in the overall assessment of the implementation of the Strategy.

Decision

- 137. The Governing Body endorsed the ILO's Development Cooperation Strategy for 2026–29 as proposed in document GB.356/POL/4 and requested the Director-General to consider its guidance in implementing the Strategy.**

(GB.356/POL/4, paragraph 63)

Multinational Enterprises Segment

5. Promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and responsible business conduct (GB.356/POL/5)

138. **The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the opportunity to recognize the valuable impact of promoting and implementing the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022 (MNE Declaration), especially when approaching its 50th anniversary. He noted with satisfaction the promotion of consultations among governments, employers and workers on various topics including access to justice, social dialogue, and transition to the formal economy. He highlighted especially the Marrakesh Framework for Action that explicitly acknowledged the importance of implementing the MNE Declaration in the fight against child labour. That framework, together with the upcoming ILO regional meeting in Africa and the 50th anniversary of the MNE Declaration, constituted a clear mandate to intensify efforts to promote responsible business conduct.
139. He regretted the unfortunate situation of budget cuts, which had led to the cancellation of the tripartite webinar scheduled to present the report on the promotion and implementation of the MNE Declaration in the Americas and urged the Office to redouble its efforts to ensure that the meeting would take place. The Workers' group firmly opposed any reduction in the activities to promote the MNE Declaration, as suggested in document GB.356/INS/7.
140. The Workers' group also noted the increased use of the ILO Helpdesk for Business, a tool that also contributed to the promotion of the ILO supervisory system and encouraged responsible business conduct and due diligence. He commended the increase in the number of national focal points appointed in a tripartite manner, which clearly demonstrated the relevance of the MNE Declaration and the need to continue to use its practical tools as part of guidance to promote responsible business conduct. The MNE Declaration addressed not only enterprises but all tripartite constituents and was therefore an important governance instrument.
141. Human rights due diligence needed to properly consider the important role of freedom of association, collective bargaining and social dialogue. In connection with the 50th anniversary of the MNE Declaration, the Workers' group proposed organizing during next year's 2027 session of the Conference a high-level event that would bring together tripartite representatives and include the 23 national focal points so that they could share their experiences.
142. In relation to the draft decision, his group considered that the Governing Body should discuss the promotion of the MNE Declaration at least once every biennium, although they would prefer to do it once a year.
143. **The Employer spokesperson** reaffirmed support for the continued promotion of the principles contained in the MNE Declaration, noting it serves as a voluntary and practical tripartite framework that helped constituents translate agreed principles into practical action at national and enterprise level. He thanked the Office for responding to observations his group had made in the past and welcomed the more visible Office-wide approach to applying the MNE Declaration across policy areas, development cooperation and operational activities. Increased reference to the MNE Declaration in responsible business conduct, human rights due diligence, sustainable finance, trade, investment, supply chains and cooperation with other international organizations created useful opportunities but it must remain clear that the MNE Declaration provided the reference framework from which the Office engaged on

responsible business conduct. Cooperation should not lead to the perception that the ILO was endorsing policy developments that had not been agreed upon by its constituents. The promotion of the MNE Declaration must remain firmly anchored in the ILO's mandate and its tripartite structure. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights had to remain the framework by which the Office understood the respective duties and responsibilities of States and enterprises.

144. The MNE Declaration was a practical framework guiding the Office's work in support of constituents and enterprises in development cooperation projects, on transitions to formality, supply chains, MSME programmes and productivity ecosystem approaches, as well as operational initiatives. Institutional capacity-building should remain the end goal. He reiterated the central importance of the ILO Helpdesk for Business. Based on the increased number of users, especially multinational enterprises (MNEs), it was clear that companies relied on the Helpdesk for practical and operational questions related to the application of international labour standards and the MNE Declaration. His group therefore encouraged the Office to preserve and further strengthen it as a non-normative tool that delivered impact.
145. He noted that the Office document was mainly an update on activities, and stressed that the MNE Declaration should be discussed in the Governing Body only when guidance was genuinely required, especially in times of need for more effective use of resources. Regarding the way forward, his group stressed that the priority for the Office should remain the effective implementation of existing international labour standards through capacity-building, technical assistance and strengthened institutional support. The MNE Declaration represented a particularly relevant instrument in support of policy coherence and country-level implementation, including in areas such as supply chains, trade and investment. It was therefore important to continue building on and further scaling up existing tools with demonstrated effectiveness, including the Declaration and the ILO Helpdesk for Business, in line with the non-normative approaches discussed under the item concerning decent work in supply chains⁸ and consistent with the ongoing reform process. Taken together, those tools contributed to the creation of the enabling environment conducive to responsible business conduct and decent work. The Employers' group viewed the upcoming 50th anniversary of the MNE Declaration in 2027 as an opportunity to highlight the practical value of the instrument and the concrete impacts achieved. Possible ways to mark the anniversary should be explored, making use of existing opportunities and taking into account resource constraints. His group remained open to further consultations.
146. **Speaking on behalf of ASPAG**, a Government representative of Bangladesh noted that the Office was making good use of the operational tools of the MNE Declaration, including the regional follow-up, and welcomed the success of the 23 national focal points. He encouraged further promotion of those tools considering the huge number of countries with MNEs in their economies. He highlighted the necessity of cross-border social dialogue to promote the MNE Declaration and applauded transnational company agreements. It was also crucial to continue promoting consultations between governments, employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) and workers' organizations as well as helping national tripartite engagements. In order to ensure significant enhancement of enterprises' contributions to decent work, the ILO needed to establish broader engagement with MNEs. His group welcomed the increased use of the ILO Helpdesk for Business, especially by MNEs.

⁸ GB.356/POL/1.

- 147.** Trade, investment and the operations and governance of MNEs constituted important levers of inclusive economic growth. He therefore welcomed the launch, in partnership with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), of the community of practice for investment promotion agencies and the partnership between the ILO and the International Financial Corporation (IFC) to enhance the decent work impacts of IFC projects. While building on those initiatives, the Office should explore ways to establish similar links and synergies with global and regional trading authorities, considering the ongoing uncertainty in global threats affecting job-rich growth and the sustainability of enterprises.
- 148.** He considered the 50th anniversary of the MNE Declaration a timely occasion for looking back, taking stock of the successes as well as the gaps, and reinvigorating ILO efforts to translate the MNE Declaration into sustainable and job-rich growth for enterprises, including MSMEs, with enhanced compliance with the principles of responsible business conduct, human rights due diligence and decent work.
- 149. Speaking on behalf of IMEC,** a Government representative of France stated that the MNE Declaration remained a cornerstone for promoting decent work and responsible business conduct in a rapidly evolving global economy. He commended the Office for its ongoing efforts to strengthen its implementation, particularly through the support provided by national focal points, which played a crucial role in adapting the MNE Declaration's principles to national contexts and in fostering tripartite dialogue to ensure that the social dimension of business operations is fully integrated into national policies. Their work was essential for building capacity, sharing best practices, and addressing the diverse challenges faced by countries in promoting decent work and responsible business conduct.
- 150.** He encouraged the Office to continue its engagement with other international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to stimulate policy coherence on due diligence and responsible business conduct. He noted the role of the ILO Helpdesk for Business in providing confidential and accessible support to navigate complex labour issues and called for ensuring it remained a dynamic and responsive tool for all stakeholders.
- 151.** IMEC supported the organization of an anniversary event on the margins of the Conference session or another relevant meeting to celebrate achievements and provide momentum for the promotion of the Declaration in the years ahead, while taking into account the Organization's financial constraints. IMEC reaffirmed its strong support for the MNE Declaration and the ILO's promotional activities and its readiness to collaborate with the ILO and all partners to ensure the Declaration remains a living governance instrument capable of guiding the world of work.
- 152. Speaking on behalf of the Africa group,** a Government representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo underscored the relevance of the role played by the MNE Declaration in a particularly challenging global environment. Given the contextual reality, MNEs were called upon not only to act in a responsible fashion but also to contribute to economic and social progress in strict respect of labour standards promoting decent work. For that reason, the Abidjan Declaration of 2019 included the promotion of the MNE Declaration among the commitments defined within the framework of the key priorities of the African decent work agenda. He called upon the Office to reconsider the promotion of the MNE Declaration as one of its priorities in response to discussions on document GB.356/INS/7 and to continue supporting constituents and enterprises through awareness-raising, technical assistance, information-sharing and capacity-building.

153. The Africa group highlighted the importance of diversifying strategic cooperation partners, supporting the ILO Helpdesk for Business, and promoting company–union dialogue. It also called for consideration of the conclusions of the second World Summit for Social Development (2025) and the Marrakech Global Framework for Action against Child Labour.
154. The speaker noted the national workshops in Africa, which had led to the appointment of new national focal points, bringing the total number in the region to 14. The Africa group approved the measures proposed in the document to ensure the best implementation and promotion of the provisions of the MNE Declaration and supported the draft decision.
155. **A Government representative of India** expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Office to promote the MNE Declaration, recognizing its important role, including its voluntary nature which promoted decent work and respect for labour standards while preserving innovation and economic dynamism and fostering a balanced environment where business growth and social progress advance together. He noted the progress made in strengthening the operational tools, including the ILO Helpdesk for Business. He described India's involvement with international efforts to advance responsible business practices, its contribution to the Global Coalition for Social Justice, and its significant progress in building a robust framework for responsible enterprises. India recognized the continued promotion of the MNE Declaration as a useful instrument for advancing ethical and sustainable business practices and decent work and looked forward to continued engagement in these efforts through multilateral cooperation.
156. **A Government representative of Japan** emphasized that the MNE Declaration was one of the primary international instruments promoting responsible business conduct and contributing to the realization of decent work for all. She mentioned several initiatives Japan had taken to promote effective and meaningful respect for human rights throughout corporate activities. Japan also supported several ILO programmes focused on decent work in supply chains to broaden utilization and effective application of the MNE Declaration in the Asia-Pacific region. She emphasized that the steady dissemination and better use of the Declaration provided the most effective and impactful solutions in promoting responsible business conduct. She hoped that future efforts to promote responsible business conduct would progress based on consensus among all constituents.
157. **A Government representative of Brazil** reaffirmed her country's long-standing commitment to promoting the MNE Declaration as a vital compass for responsible business conduct as the instrument approached its 50th anniversary. In the context of complex global supply chains, the ILO's work with the private sector was fundamental to ensuring decent work and should be reinforced and expanded, including through strengthening strategic partnerships. She called for greater policy coherence in setting Office priorities to reflect that, including in the context of the ILO reform process to ensure that the necessary pursuit of financial efficiency did not result in the hollowing out of the ILO's technical capabilities to engage with the private sector during this historical milestone of the Declaration.
158. **A Government representative of Colombia** highlighted the link between the MNE Declaration and the promotion of sustainable enterprises and responsible business conduct, in particular concerning trade, investment and supply chains. He commended the Office coordination and technical cooperation with other UN agencies, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, to broaden the reach of the MNE Declaration and support its effective implementation. He called for further development of tools that promote dialogue between MNEs, governments and other social actors, including on decent wages, sustainable work environments and grievance mechanisms. He stressed that labour rights were human rights

which all enterprises had a responsibility to respect and promote. He regretted that the session on the MNE Declaration during the 20th American Regional Meeting had been cancelled as a missed opportunity for its promotion in the region.

159. **A Government representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran** expressed support for the ILO's efforts to promote the MNE Declaration. The vision that MNEs should contribute positively to economic and social progress in host countries reflected strongly endorsed principles. He drew attention to the reality faced by some countries being excluded from the global economy, not because of non-respect of decent work principles but because of unilateral measures.
160. **A Government representative of South Africa** emphasized that the MNE Declaration provided an essential normative compass grounded in international labour standards and tripartism, guiding enterprises, governments and social partners in their efforts to advance decent work. In his country, the MNE Declaration provided the common normative foundation that ensured that policy frameworks promote decent work, enterprises adopt responsible business conduct and productivity gains translate into inclusive and sustainable outcomes, which was the ILO's strength. Programmes linking trade and investment with decent work like SUSTAIN with the Productivity Ecosystem for Decent Work demonstrated the ILO's unique comparative advantage in delivering such results. That work should remain intact through the ILO restructuring.
161. **A Government representative of Uzbekistan** affirmed that the MNE Declaration was an important voluntary framework providing practical guidance for governments, enterprises and social partners in promoting decent work. It offered a balanced and internationally-agreed reference grounded in ILO standards and tripartite principles while also being practical and flexible. It provided a common understanding and could play a useful role in promoting consistency while taking into account different national circumstances and levels of development. She appreciated the ILO's role in supporting the practical implementation of the MNE Declaration, including through advisory services and capacity-building activities for all partners. The continued promotion of the MNE Declaration contributed to more balanced and inclusive approaches to global supply chains based on dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility.
162. **A Government representative of Mexico** considered the MNE Declaration a key instrument for the mandate of the ILO because it set out its normative and non-normative work and translated international labour standards into practical guidance based on social dialogue and tripartism. The Declaration offered a benchmark for simultaneously progressing in terms of competitiveness, inclusion and social justice. Its voluntary nature had proven to be a strategic advantage. Sustainable enterprises were a key driver for the creation of decent jobs, provided that they operated in a context of good governance with solid labour institutions and coherent public policy that ensured productivity investment and protection of labour rights. Initiatives regarding decent work in supply chains needed to complement and reinforce the promotion of the MNE Declaration. She commended the Office's emphasis on capacity-building and coherent policies, particularly to help MSMEs and facilitate their involvement in supply chains in different national contexts. The 50th anniversary provided an opportunity to consolidate and reinforce those efforts.
163. **The Employer spokesperson** stated that his group did not support the proposal to hold a dedicated event for the 50th anniversary during the Conference session because the agenda was already extremely busy and constituents' capacity was limited. He welcomed further informal discussions on how to mark the anniversary, mindful of the limited capacity and

ongoing reprioritization exercise. He noted that reorganization of the Office was a prerogative of the Director-General.

- 164. The Worker spokesperson** welcomed the support for the MNE Declaration expressed by all speakers. He reiterated the call for celebrating the 50th anniversary with a high-level event during the Conference session to take advantage of the presence of most constituents. Such an event would strengthen the position of the MNE Declaration and improve its effectiveness for workers and employers throughout the world.
- 165. A representative of the Director-General** (Department Director) noted the very strong commitment expressed to promote the guidance of the MNE Declaration to advance decent work at the national level, including through linkages to local enterprises, supply chains, trade and investment. The increased demand for technical assistance was very encouraging and he noted that strong funding partnerships would make it possible to address them. She thanked the speakers for the comprehensive guidance which would inform future work.
- 166.** The increase in national focal points helped to facilitate the inclusion of the tripartite constituents in policy dialogues significantly impacting decent work, including industrial policies, enterprise development, linkages to small enterprises, responsible business conduct, trade and investment. A virtual community of practice for the national focal points was in the process of being established so that they would have a forum to exchange and share experiences.
- 167.** She also noted the broad support for the other operational tools of the MNE Declaration, including the ILO Helpdesk for Business. With support from funding partners, the Office was developing further tools to assist companies in conducting due diligence, including a platform that integrated all ILO country-level information to assist the companies in due diligence efforts.
- 168.** Noting the ambition to promote the MNE Declaration and sustainable enterprises, and the related requests for continued support from the Office, she explained that the discussions on documents GB.356/INS/7 and GB.356/PFA/4 would determine the overall strategic and budgetary priorities and define the overarching framework going forward. The Programme and Budget for 2026–27 set out the direction of the work on the MNE Declaration. It had been regrettable that the Office had to cancel the webinar planned to be held during the American Regional Meeting due to financial constraints.
- 169.** She took note of the views concerning the celebration of the 50th anniversary, which the Office would explore further in consultation with the constituents and subject to the financial constraints. She expressed confidence that the Office would find a good way of using that very strategic opportunity to mark the anniversary of that unique instrument.

Decision

170. The Governing Body:

- (a) recognized the integral role of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022 (MNE Declaration), for the delivery of the ILO's core mandate and appreciated the progress made in supporting constituents and enterprises in making better use of its guidance and tools to advance decent work;**
- (b) requested the Director-General to take into account the Governing Body's guidance on:**

- (i) **the continued promotional activities to support constituents and enterprises in making better use of the MNE Declaration, within the ongoing ILO reform process;**
 - (ii) **further strengthening the strategic partnerships on responsible business conduct and sustainable investment, including the opportunity presented with the 50th anniversary of the MNE Declaration;**
- (c) **requested the Office to provide a progress report on the promotion of the MNE Declaration on a regular basis.**

(GB.356/POL/5, paragraph 27)